

Forgetting to Remember

(February 28, 2023)

Ever walk into a room and forget why you were there? Ever been in mid-sentence and couldn't remember what you wanted to say? We've probably all done that and it's caused by a "divided mind," or what's known as *multi-tasking*, initially considered a good thing. The successful people could do several things at once, we were told. But is it a sign of success? Multi-tasking has been studied and the effects of it can cause people to become:

- shallow, not deep
- fuzzy, not focused
- distracted, not aligned
- live with duplicity, not integrity [1]

The above things are clearly not good traits. Jesus did not appear to engage in multi-tasking. He was fully involved in whatever He was doing, not distracted by thoughts, worries, concerns or His "to do" list. He was the consummate *real* person.

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own...

The above text is from **Matthew 6:25-34** and teaches us that multi-tasking should not guide our lives because it really does not allow us to be "all-in" on any one thing. Multi-tasking can obviously create an increase in worry and doubt, something our Lord spoke out about. Our natural question is *HOW* does one not worry?? At least part of the answer lies in not multi-tasking but instead, fully immersing yourself in whatever you're doing at that moment; a difficult thing to accomplish to be sure because we are in the habit of multi-tasking to a large degree.

Because multi-tasking is so prevalent in society today, people text and talk on their phones while they drive (or walk down the street), or are otherwise distracted and not fully focused on driving. It's of course, why accidents happen and according to Geico, thousands of accidents and fatalities occur every year due to distracted drivers. It's almost like people *forget* they're driving. If we are not fully engaged in what we are doing, we will end up doing things halfway at best or, as in the case of driving, create situations where we either end up harming ourselves, others or both.

Imagine going out on a date for the first time with someone you really like and constantly being distracted so that the other person you're with concludes you're bored, disinterested or preoccupied with things that are more important than him/her. The message sent is that "*You're not as important as what's going on in my brain right now.*"

The same holds true with our relationship with God. If we aren't "all-in" with God, we cannot grow, we cannot learn to appreciate Him increasingly, and we cannot hope to live the life of an over-comer; aka living the victorious Christian life.

A study from 2022 shows that less than 50% of Christians read their Bibles at all, for whatever reason. [2] Getting to know God starts with reading the Book He wrote for us because it reveals Him. Jesus read the Scriptures, memorizing many of them. His favorite seemed to be the **Book of Deuteronomy**.

In his final addresses to the second generation of Israelites, as recorded in **Deuteronomy**, Moses made a specific point to remind the people of Israel that they needed to be deliberate in *remembering* the Lord. He was to be foremost in their minds. Too often though, the Israelites simply forgot about God. Christians have the same tendency because life can get in the way.

And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you *and* test you, to know what *was* in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. (Deuteronomy 8:2)

While **Deuteronomy** is a summary of Israel's history, it's also the reiteration of much of the Law prior to Moses' death. The Israelites did not have access to a written book they could refer to about God's Law whenever they wanted to do so. We do, yet more than 50% of Christians today do not read it.

The **Book of Deuteronomy** records life for Israel over a roughly one-month period leading up to Moses' death. Some commentators believe Deuteronomy is part of the Graf-Wellhausen [3] theory (or JEPD). I personally don't believe the theory holds any water at all, yet there are clearly those who swear by it and believe it to be true. But in reality, each student of the Bible is responsible for what they believe and why they believe it, so that is left up to the reader to decide.

Jesus' testimony regarding **Deuteronomy** is, in my opinion, the strongest argument in favor of Moses' authorship of the entire Pentateuch, including **Deuteronomy (Mark 12:26)**.

Now about the dead rising—have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'?

In the above quote, Jesus acknowledges that Moses was the author. It is interesting that the religious leaders or "higher critics" of Jesus' day had no response to Him and obviously agreed with Him on the one point at least, that Moses was the author.

Jesus quoted **Deuteronomy** more than any other portion of Hebrew Scriptures. God's Word was obviously important enough for Him to study and memorize it. That should tell us of its importance. If it was important enough for Jesus, it should be important enough for us. Without knowledge of His Word, we lack knowledge of God and we *will* forget Him.

In fact, **Deuteronomy** provides examples of how the Law can be broken and what the results of that would be for the people of Israel. It provides great insight into the whole reason God gave the Law in the first place. Ultimately, it was God's *love* that gave the Law because He intended Israel to be *the* nation that would be His light to the whole world. By keeping His Law, things would go well with them and they would receive many blessings from God. By ignoring or forgetting God and His Law, things would not go

well with them and many are outlined in the book. The problem of course is the *heart* attitude of the nation of Israel time and time again.

This is clearly the issue for believers as well. No one is saved by keeping the Law. No one. In fact, no one can keep the Law 100% of the time *from their heart*. Outwardly, people can do things that appear to keep the Law, but what is their heart doing? This is why the Law cannot save anyone. Though the Law is perfect and good (**Psalm 19**), it has no ability to force people to observe it anymore than a speed limit sign can force people to observe that. The law comes into force when laws are broken. The Law became a stumbling block and burden to Israel because no one *could* keep it from the heart at all points all the time.

Jesus came, fulfilled the Law in all points without sin, then offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice for us so that we would not have to observe the Law to obtain salvation. Now, once we receive salvation, we are in a far better position to follow God's Law from the heart (doing what is right; what God expects from us). Salvation is what provides the foundation or inner desire to follow the Law or put simply, to do what is right or that which honors God.

Ultimately, **Deuteronomy** "*is the document prepared by Moses as a witness to the dynastic covenant which the Lord gave to Israel in the plains of Moab...*" [4] The covenant in **Deuteronomy** is valid, endorsed by the Israelites and God, and includes promises and rewards for keeping it and curses for not. The theology of **Deuteronomy** is completely tied into the covenant found within its pages. The two cannot be separated. In essence then, to fully understand the **Book of Deuteronomy**, one must endeavor to fully understand the Covenant contained therein.

In fact, Constable goes on to point out, "*The theological values of Deuteronomy can hardly be exaggerated. It stands as the wellspring of biblical historical revelation. It is a prime source for both OT and NT theology. Whether the covenant, the holiness of God, or the concept of the people of God is the unifying factor of OT theology, each finds emphasis and remarkable definition in Deuteronomy.*" [5] That alone may be the chief reason Jesus and others quoted it (over 80 times), as often as they did across the pages of the New Testament.

Another quote from Constable states the following:

Deuteronomy is not just a recapitulation of things previously revealed in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. It is a selective digest of matters most important to the average Israelites in his or her relationship with God...One of the striking features of this book is the frequent references to love that recur throughout it. God's love for the patriarchs and later the whole nation of Israel is obvious in the previous four books...(though)...Moses never articulated it directly. In Deuteronomy for the first time, Moses revealed that it was God's love for Israel that motivated Him to deal with the Israelites as He had. One of the greatest revelations of this book is the motivation of God. God's love for people moved Him to bless.

This does not simply extend to the Israelites, by the way. God used Israel to ultimately extend His love to the entire world (through Jesus), and we see *how* God expressed His love and how He expects us to express *our* love, not only to Him, but to other people.

Ultimately, **Deuteronomy** is a book about love. It shows how God loves the world and it shows how God wants us to love Him back. Remember, that we would have no capacity to love God at all, unless He first loved us (**1 John 4:19**). The question is *how* do we show our love for God? The answer is the same for Christians today as it was in the last month of Moses' life for Israel. Loving God is done by keeping His commands *from the heart*. Love is the true motivation for Christians to obey God (**1 Corinthians 13**).

When Jesus fulfilled the Law and died for our sin, it meant that the end of an era had come and a new one had begun. No longer would people have to keep the Law in order to be "righteous" before God. After Jesus' death and resurrection, faith in His finished work provides salvation like the Law could never do and God then sees us as "righteous" because of the salvation we have received. That salvation also begins to stir our hearts (or should!), to *want* to be obedient to Him in all things. That is the true measure of love for God.

We can put on an outward attitude and demeanor that makes other people think we love God through our words and actions. But if it is not real from within, folks cannot see that. However, God sees it and judges it accordingly, not that we can lose salvation, but we can and will lose fellowship with God until the problem is rectified.

The message of the book then is that God's love for man is the motivation of His government, and man's love for God should be the motivation for [our] obedience. [6]

This is a short introduction to an extremely important book. Are you a Christian? Do you love the Lord your God? If so, are you being obedient to His Law of liberty, which is not burdensome (because keeping it at all points is no longer required to receive salvation), but freeing (**1 John 5:3**).

It is sad that we must be reminded and remind ourselves to not forget to remember God. He must be at the forefront of our minds. He must become the most important part of our lives. Unless He is that, we will all be continually forgetting to remember Him.

[1] <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/artificial-maturity/201701/the-unintended-consequences-multi-tasking>

[2] <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2022/april/state-of-bible-reading-decline-report-26-million.html>

[3] <https://www.gotquestions.org/JEDP-theory.html>

[4] Constable's Notes on Deuteronomy, Introduction

[5] Ibid

[6] Ibid