

Deuteronomy 6:4-12 New Living Translation (NLT)

⁴ "Listen, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. ⁵ And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. ⁶ And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. ⁷ Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. ⁸ Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. ⁹ Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. ¹⁰ "The Lord your God will soon bring you into the land he swore to give you when he made a vow to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is a land with large, prosperous cities that you did not build. ¹¹ The houses will be richly stocked with goods you did not produce. You will draw water from cisterns you did not dig, and you will eat from vineyards and olive trees you did not plant. When you have eaten your fill in this land, ¹² be careful not to forget the Lord, who rescued you from slavery in the land of Egypt.

INTRO:

- Last week, Rod introduced our new 6-week series entitled, Listening to God, and asked the question, "Does God speak?". Assuming He does, and reflecting upon the story of the Prophet Samuel as a boy learning to hear the voice of God, Rod redirected the question on to us: "Do we have a posture of listening to God?"
- Each week we will be exploring a different aspect of how God speaks. We necessarily have to divide each topic into weekly segments, and this week our theme is "listening to God thru the Bible, but each topic intersects with the other as we learn to listen to God, who speaks not only through the Bible but also thru Prayer, Circumstances, the H.S. & the Church.
- During the "God is Dead" movement of the 1960's a reporter asked Rev Dr Billy Graham what he thought of the notion of God being dead. He famously replied, "Well he was alive this morning when I was talking to him!"
- Romans 10:17 (NIV) says, "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ".
- I'm basing my sermon today on the acronym for F.A.I.T.H...

F = Foundations for Faith

- The Bible speaks in a foundational way by telling humanity about God, about the world we live in, and about the place of human beings in this world.
- We call this theology (study of God) & doctrine (set of beliefs) & dogma (principles for living). For example, in the scripture that Liz read from Deuteronomy it begins...
- ⁴ "Listen, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. ⁵ And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. ⁶ And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. ⁷ Repeat them again and again to your children.
- From just those few verses alone we learn that God wants us to listen. We call that Scripture "The Shema" which in Hebrew means "to hear"; not just to hear but to respond with actions. For the Hebrew, to hear is to obey!!
- We also learn that God is one God... ONE GOD, not many gods (polytheism)
- We also learn that God is a relational God & desires that we love Him whole-heartedly
- We also learn that God wants us to commit ourselves to His commandments & teach them to our children
- That's just a small fraction of what God speaks to us through the Bible. The Bible teaches us about Creation, the Fall of humanity, the formation of His people Israel, how to live from a health, legal, spiritual, societal perspective. It also teaches us about God's overarching plan for restoring humanity back into relationship with Him through the death, burial and resurrection of the incarnate Christ. The Bible is foundational to our FAITH.

A = Alive/Active and I = Inspired

- But the Bible also speaks to us personally as individuals and as a community. The Bible is not just "words on a page", it has life. In fact, Jesus Himself is called "The Word"...
- At the beginning of his Gospel, John tells us that the Word (Gr. Logos) was always with God from the very beginning. He says in chapter 1:14, "So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son".
- As Hebrews 4:12 (NLT) says, For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NLT) says, ¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. ¹⁷ God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.
- We shouldn't just read the Bible... we should take a posture of allowing the Bible to read us!
- As we read the Bible or listen to it being read, it should speak into our daily lives. Speaking into the inner parts of our lives, revealing our inner thoughts and desires... even when we are not conscious of them... correcting us, teaching us, preparing and equipping us!

- The original authors were inspired by the Holy Spirit in their writing of the Bible and as we read it, we should prayerfully expect the same Holy Spirit to give us insight, inspiration, correction and equipping to form our characters, making us more like Christ and equipping us to continue His work on earth
- The Bible is not just one book but a library of books all bound together in two testaments: Old & New. It is written by numerous authors of different nationalities, over many centuries, with different genres (types) of literature (history, poetry, proverbs, prophecy, novellas (historical biographies), letters, and so on.
- The greatest issue is not so much what is written, nor the style with which it is written, but how we interpret this vast array of very different writings for application to our 21st century lives. The Bible speaks but do we listen, do we understand & properly apply what we hear?
- As Psalm 119:105 (NLT) says, Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.
- We must carefully read and study God's Word so that we accurately apply it to our lives.

T = Trusting

- It's not just about the Bible "reading us" from the inside, but it's also about us responding to what we hear from God's Word... that leads us to the "T" of our FAITH acronym.
- As James 1:22-24 (NLT) says, ²² But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. ²³ For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. ²⁴ You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. – we all know what that is like... our hair gets out of place; we eat our lunch & get a "little something, something" on our face; others see us as we are but we don't!
- If you are going to hear & obey God's Word, you have to TRUST that what God says is true
- In so many ways you have to bet your life on it. As Paul says, "If Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless" (1 Cor 15:14).
- And the writer to the Hebrews declares: "And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him". (Heb. 11:6)
- **ILL 1:** You know the illustration of the boy standing in the doorway of a dark cellar. His Dad, standing below, can't be seen by the boy, but his Dad bids him to jump. Without hesitation the boy jumps into the darkness, TRUSTING that his father will catch him. That's not blind faith, that is TRUST in this Father's word. That is "hearing" and "obeying"!
- **ILL 2:** I'm not going to labour this personal illustration because most of you have no doubt heard it before (more than once) but when I felt called into ministry I thought I heard God speaking to me by the Scripture from Matthew's Gospel, which came to me as a call "to leave mother, father, sisters, brothers and farm for His sake..." I then tested that call with my pastor and the elders of my local church. I knew that responding to that call would cost me and my family the inheritance due to me... and it did, but I have never regretted obey God's Word and stepping out into the dark... the unknown future! I could give you dozens of other examples, that if God didn't respond, I would have fallen flat on my proverbial face
- In John 8:31, Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings."
- If we want to follow Jesus, we must be continually formed into His likeness & equipped by His Spirit and this only happens when we step out in faith on the promises of His Word ☺

H = His-Story

- We have explored how the Bible speaks to us by following the acronym of FAITH.
 - F= The Bible provides Foundations for our Faith;
 - A & I = The Bible is Alive/Active and Inspired by God's Spirit... it is not a dead word;
 - T = The Bible can be Trusted in its authenticity so that when we respond in faith with our very lives, we can be confident that God will fulfil His promises toward us.
- Finally, we come to "H" = His-Story, the Meta-Narrative. Ultimately, the Bible is the story of God and His love story with humanity. Yes, God loves us... loves us so much that he sent his only Son into the world to die, so that we might know forgiveness of sins (our rebellion against God) and find fulfilment and freedom in serving Him and His Kingdom purposes.
- Deuteronomy 6:20-24 (NLT) says, ²⁰ "In the future your children will ask you, 'What is the meaning of these laws, decrees, and regulations that the Lord our God has commanded us to obey?' ²¹ "Then you must tell them [this wonderful story of God's grace], 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with his strong hand. ²² The Lord did miraculous signs and wonders before our eyes, dealing terrifying blows against Egypt and Pharaoh and all his people. ²³ He brought us out of Egypt so he could give us this land he had sworn to give our ancestors. ²⁴ And the Lord our God commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear him so he can continue to bless us and preserve our lives, as he has done to this day.'
- Can you hear God saying to us, through the Bible, that He loves us, that He has rescued us from slavery & sin, but more than that, He has set us free to be all that He created us to be, and that if we continue to hear God's Word; if we respond in trust & obey what we hear, we will live flourishing lives in freedom. The promise of the Bible is that we will have life and life abundant.
- "Listen, O Israel! [Listen, O Christians!] The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. ⁵ And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. AMEN!