

A Call to Remember and Obey

Deuteronomy 8:2-6 (NLT) ² Remember how the LORD your God led you through the wilderness for these forty years, humbling you and testing you to prove your character, and to find out whether or not you would obey his commands. ³ Yes, He humbled you by letting you go hungry and then feeding you with manna, a food previously unknown to you and your ancestors. He did it to teach you that people do not live by bread alone; rather, we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. ⁴ For all these forty years your clothes didn't wear out, and your feet didn't blister or swell. ⁵ Think about it: Just as a parent disciplines a child, the LORD your God disciplines you for your own good.

⁶ So, obey the commands of the LORD your God by walking in His ways and fearing Him.

I believe that Moses was not only talking to the multitude that day as they camped on the east side of the Jordan River, but I think he was also talking to us. Those of us who are believers are in different places in our walks with God. And His word is applied to our hearts perhaps a bit differently because we are in different places. Some of us have learned many of these lessons, and some of us are at a place where we need to learn these lessons. I challenge each of us to allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us where we are. And I would encourage you to pray as we go through this passage today and ask God to apply it to you as well as to apply the truths to everyone listening. If you have already learned/incorporated into your life these truths, please pray that the Holy Spirit will work on us as we hear them. I hope that you will be intentional today to keep your heart open to the Holy Spirit.

The first word that Moses speaks here is "remember". Sometimes we don't want to remember what we have been through because it has been so hard. But Moses says, "remember" because it is in those memories that he is going to bring up, that these folks will be able to drive down new stakes on which to hang their faith in the LORD God. Sometimes one of the best things we can do is to write down what God has brought us through. The truth is, over time, we tend to forget the brilliant colors that God has poured into our lives as we walked through different pieces of the journey. The flip side of that is that sometimes the pain was so deep that we just want it to be gone.

Moses says, "remember how the LORD your God led you through the wilderness for these forty years." This wilderness that they had been led through was one of severe heat and dangerous situations lurking almost around every rock. From scorpions and snakes to the lack of water and food for them and places to graze their herds, the wilderness had been difficult, to say the least. And they needed to remember those hardships in order to remember the faithfulness of their God and the lessons He had taught them. God had a specific reason for bringing them through the way He did. The difficulty of the journey was for their learning, their training. He needed them to have a foundation for obedience because they were going to cross over into the land of Canaan, and they would have to apply the lessons they had learned while in the wilderness.

And God has brought us through things, whether pleasant or unpleasant, that we need to remember in order to keep the faithfulness of our God in focus. He has and is giving us, in all the parts of our journey, specific reasons to remember His faithfulness in the difficulties, during those lessons. Some of those lessons, we might be able to quickly verbalize; some of those lessons are kept out of sight perhaps because we are still learning the ramifications of the lesson.

Now I want you to realize that up to this point when Moses is speaking to them on the east side of the Jordan, they had been recognizing everything that they had endured for the last forty years, as punishment for the disobedience of their parents. However, now, Moses is not just telling them that they were being punished but he is telling them that the whole journey was an opportunity to know God personally and as a community. I think we understand the personal opportunity; however, I'm

not sure we understand the community. We live in a nation that has taught us that we are to be independent individuals, And we have a tendency to separate ourselves from the body of our Lord Jesus, when we are experiencing pain. Many times, we hide away thinking that we will figure it out by ourselves. But the Scripture tells us that we are to ensure that we continue getting together routinely so that we can support one another. Hebrews 10:25 tells us that we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together like some folks do, but we are to get together more often to encourage one another even as we see the day of the LORD approaching. We must fight the urge to seclude ourselves particularly when we are going through rough times. I don't think that God is wanting to make us into an island. We need the fellowship, encouragement, and even rebuke found in body of our Lord Jesus! We are family. Paul tells us that we need each other even as our physical bodies need every part of that body. And we are to work together to continue to grow the Kingdom of God here in central Texas.

The next part of that verse in Deuteronomy says, "humbling you and testing you to prove your character". God needed to humble them – to bring them through distress so that they would recognize/experience their need of help and their dependence upon God. During that time, God placed them in situations to drive them to reveal what was in their heart – whether or not they believed in the all-powerful God who is full of love and righteousness. God tested them like a teacher tests their students.

And I would ask you: Are you in a place where you feel so hemmed in that you are wondering why God seems to have brought you this way? It is true that many of our difficulties are the results of our own behaviors when we were not following God. But sometimes, it is not what we have done wrong. However, even in those times, God is working to use the difficulties to show us what we are made of, show us whether or not we are relying on Him. In your distress, have you realized how much you need God? Our God is determined to humble us so that we rely on Him instead of on ourselves. He wants to reveal to us what is in the deep places of our being so that we can turn to Him completely.

God was testing them. The Hebrew word translated as "testing" in English implies an attempt to prove the existence of a particular quality in someone or something. Maybe He is testing some of us today, allowing us to be in a situation so that we can actually see what is in us. Maybe He is testing us to show us whether or not we will hang onto Him or give up because we are so hurt. Now, we can be glad that He shows us or angry that He shows us. However, He is determined to bring us each one of us to the place that we know what is in us. And that allows us to make the decision to ask Him to clean out any impurity that we finally see.

Deuteronomy 8:3 says, "Yes, He humbled you by letting you go hungry and then feeding you with manna, a food previously unknown to you and your ancestors. He did it to teach you that people do not live by bread alone; rather, we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD." God intended, through their hunger, to show them that it was His power that sustained them. God took them into the wilderness where they could not take care of themselves. They couldn't produce their own food or create pastures for their animals. They either trusted God to take care of their needs, or they murmured about this God and Moses who were leading them. The Book of Knowledge Commentary notes this, "When Moses reminded them that they did not live on bread alone he meant that even their food was decreed by the word of God. They had manna because it came by His command. It was therefore ultimately not bread that kept them alive but His Word! 'Bread alone,' that is, bread acquired independently of His word, could not keep them alive." This manna was not something they had known before. God made it specifically for them to sustain them each day.

This was why Jesus refused Satan's temptation to turn the stones into bread when He was in the wilderness (Matt. 4:3–4). Jesus knew that God had not decreed those stones for His food, and also

that His Father would provide food apart from Jesus Himself deciding to work a miracle as Satan suggested.

Here's another thing. God generally doesn't give us, at one time, all that we will need for our whole life or even for our retirement if He allows us to reach that point. But He gives us what we need each day so that we choose to rely on Him in every place during the day. If He gave it all to us in one lump sum, most of us would use it all up very quickly and then have nothing left for the next season. But as He gives it to us, one day at a time, it forces us to look to Him. That's why Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." (Matthew 6:11, Luke 11:3) The purpose is to keep us focused on Him.

We were not created to live independently from our God. The manna taught Israel and teaches us that it is only as we stand obediently under God's sovereign word that will we find true and lasting life.¹ He is the only Source of life!

Obedience to God is a matter not only of understanding, but of will and heart; and our hearts are prone to go their own way. This is where we all must dig deeply so that even in the darkest times, we are intentionally choosing to hold onto our God. He is the only God. His ways are higher than our ways. His thoughts are deeper than our thoughts. His wisdom is greater than our wisdom. And if we choose Him, His love will hold us tightly even in the most difficult of situations.

Verse 5 reminds us that we, as parents, really work to make sure our children are set up for success. We do that by teaching them in all the different areas of their lives. We try to improve their wisdom, their resources and their knowledge by training them in the ways they should go. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it." In the same way, God allowed Israel to go through a learning process in order to give them positive moral lessons. Discipline is never fun. But it is invaluable. The excellent coach disciplines their team so they will rise to the challenge at the end of the game. God disciplined Israel so they could gain the skills needed to trust Him and possess the land in a manner that would bless them. This training would allow Israel to be loyal to their God by keeping His statutes.

And He is discipling and training us in the same ways. He wants us to be successful in following His ways and leaning on Him. He's wanting us to build spiritual strength so that even if we can't see His face, we can trust His heart! Sometimes the journey is hard. Our challenge is to learn through those hard times and incorporate it into the very fiber of our being so that when the difficulties increase or the times become dark, we will be found resting on our foundation, our Lord and Savior Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.

The Israelites were to remember their past in order to better live in the present. In light of all these lessons, in verse 6, Moses urged the people, "So obey the commands of the LORD your God by walking in His ways and fearing Him." This is the bottom-line lesson, which is why Moses says, "So" or as it is translated in some of your Bibles, "Therefore". Given all that they have learned, and all God had taught them, the great lesson they should have taken away was that their best interest lies in obedience. In keeping the commands of the LORD their God, they were to walk in His ways. His ways were practical. If they obeyed, they would prosper. They would thrive.

<https://thebiblesays.com/en/commentary/deu+8:2>)

And the same thing is true for us. Since God has given us all these things and brought us through the fire in some instances, we must obey Him. It is in our best interest to walk in His ways. He is trying

¹ Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Dt 8:1). Chicago: Moody Press.

to prepare us for what is coming. We will be best prepared if we remember the critical lessons He has taught us.

This world is shaking, and it is going to shake even more than it is currently. If you are hanging onto things of this world, your world is going to be shaken. You must depend upon the Creator of our world and His Son, Jesus. You must keep your eyes upon Him. Everything else will fail. Grab hold of the only thing that will remain when the shaking is over. Hold onto the truth of God!