

Small Group Guide

GOD WHO GIVES US HIS WORD

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

March 14, 2010

Deuteronomy 6

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

Connect...

Encourage learners to share their understanding of the blessing of God. Ask: **How and why does God bless us? What does the blessing of God look like for you? Why do you think you've received God's blessing?**

Study the Text . . .

The Stakes Involved (Deut. 6:1-3)

This chapter contains some of the most foundational verses in all of the Old Testament. The *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) was a statement of faith in God and a commitment to love Him with all that we have. Devout Jews would repeat this statement at set times during the day as an affirmation of the uniqueness and holiness of their God. In distinction from the pagan nations surrounding them, God called upon Israel to boldly proclaim His existence alone. Jesus quoted the *Shema* in Mark 12:29, declaring this text to be the most concise summary of the entire Law.

For Israel, attached to the upholding of this affirmation in word and deed was the blessing of God. In vv. 1-3, we see that God outlines the stakes involved. If they fear God—keeping his statutes, abstaining from idolatry, etc.—they may be assured that things will go well with them in the land. They will enjoy a productive land and long lives in the land. Although unstated in this particular text, the opposite is implied as well. If they do not obey all that God says and go after foreign gods, they may be assured that the land will not be fruitful and their days will be short in the land.

Discuss

- Fearing the Lord is shown to be what He commands. Furthermore, the blessing of God is expressly connected with the upholding and doing of His Word in thought and deed. Have you done what He commands in word and deed?

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- If we are honest, we will recognize that there are thousands of ways that we have failed to uphold God's commands in word and deed? If this is so, how is it that we enjoy the blessing of God? Doesn't God bless those who obey His Word?
- In light of the two previous questions, how does this text lead us to Christ? Think about the life of Christ (see Matthew 4:1-11; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5). How does His obedience on our behalf relate to the blessing of God upon us?
- Ultimately, we enjoy the blessing of God through the obedience of Another, Jesus Christ. We are blessed "in Him." Does that mean that we no longer need to obey God?
- Why do we obey God (see, for example, Galatians 5:13-23)?

The Devotion Demanded (Deut. 6:5-6)

The devotion demanded is expressed in two statements, although careful consideration reveals that verses five and six go hand-in-hand. The Israelites are told in clear terms that their God—revealed as Yahweh—is the only God that exists. All other representations and conceptions of deity apart from Yahweh typify the vain imaginations of men. The God of Israel is the God of the universe and He will permit no rivals to His throne. Indeed, there are none!

In light of the foundational theological truth that God alone is God, the Israelites were commanded to love Him with all their heart, soul, and might. Although we might be tempted to compartmentalize these aspects of love for God, the idea communicated is one of wholehearted devotion. They were to worship and adore God with the totality of their being—intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, physically, etc. If God is indeed the Lord of everything that exists, He is also the Lord of everyone that exists. The truth of absolute Lordship leads quickly and without exception to the command of absolute obedience.

Discuss

- The Israelites were to affirm the uniqueness of God in the midst of a pagan culture. False gods were in great supply. How does their situation intersect with our own?
- What did total devotion look like for the Israelites? What does it look like in your life?
- Is total devotion possible for us?

The Danger Described (Deut. 6:7-25)

Given the stakes involved and the devotion demanded, God commanded the constant reinforcement of vv. 4-5. The Israelites were to teach them diligently to their children in

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the course of everyday life. Morning and evening, on the way and at home, Israelites were to instruct future generations of God's holiness and total Lordship in all areas of life. Even the décor of their homes and parts of their bodies were to bear these instructions. The total saturation of God's Word was to match the total demands involved in the command.

Furthermore, God knew the propensity in every Israelite heart toward forgetfulness and idolatry. They stood on the brink of the Promised Land—milk and honey, olive trees and vineyards, stocked homes and full cisterns. And they stood on the brink of forgetting the God who would make all these things a reality. Moreover, they would be tempted to turn to other gods, disobeying the foundational command of vv. 4-5 and thereby kindling the wrath and anger of Almighty God.

The antidote to this inclination was not a redoubling of their effort but a rehearsing of God's story (vv. 21-25). The Exodus was behind them, but it was to be ever before them. They were to recount generation unto generation the mighty hand of God in their deliverance from slavery. God defeated Pharaoh, God brought them up, and God gave them the land. In consequence of these truths, how could they rightfully turn away to other gods?

Discuss

- How did the instruction of future generations in Israel proceed? Formally or informally? What does this say about discipleship in our context?
- The tendency of the Israelites was forgetfulness that led to idolatry? Do we see that in our own lives? How does this lead us to Christ? How do we avoid this through the power of Christ?