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# LAKE SIDE CHURCH of Chicago

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## The **LAMPLIGHTER**



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### **SIMPLE, NOT EASY**

**Disclaimer:** I am not a Bible scholar, I'm just someone who needs to understand Bible stories and truths well enough to share them with others—usually children. That “need to understand” is one of the most incredible gifts and blessings that God has given me because sometimes it ends up looking like this . . .

This morning I was doing some reading in Deuteronomy and got to thinking about the section headed “Israel’s Refusal to Enter the Land.” Realizing that Deut is kind of a recap for the generation that was to enter Canaan, I went looking for the passage that talked about the event in context which I found in Numbers 13. Wanting to make sure that I was keeping that in context as well, I skimmed the rest of Numbers (which opens on the first day of the second month of the second year post-Egypt) mostly looking for the wilderness journey storyline—that is to say not so much interested in the numbers or laws.

And, then, I skimmed the book of Deut which I came away from thinking of as kind of a pep-talk, state of the union address, and torch-passing speech from the quite healthy 120-year old Moses (his eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated) that ends with the Lord giving him a panoramic view of the Promised Land—that he had set out for some 40 years earlier but, for the Lord’s reasons, would not have the privilege of entering—before he lays hands on Joshua, dies, and was buried in a secret place.

This wilderness journey overview wouldn’t be complete without a brief foray into the book of Exodus, so I very quickly perused that book as well. And then scanned the section headings in Leviticus to make sure it was pretty much just legalese, which it was (but I did take a moment to read the section titled “Punishment for Disobedience” in ch. 26, sobering stuff that passage).

Obviously, this couldn’t by any stretch of the imagination be considered even a  *cursory study*  of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—more like Moses’ panoramic view of the Promised Land—but as my mind traveled over the landscape of passages the following topography caught my eye:

Numbers 15:37-41: The Lord said to Moses, “Speak to the people of Israel, and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a cord of blue on the tassel of each corner. And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and *remember all the commandments of the Lord, to do them, not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after. So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God.* I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the Lord your God.” (Emphasis mine)

When we consider Moses and the Israelites we might unconsciously hold them to a higher standard of faithfulness and obedience. After all, God spoke to them (albeit through Moses); God performed miracles expressly for them (from the plagues to the Promised Land); and the laws and commandments were composed in their midst. We might think that if we had those advantages surely it would be easier for us to be faithful. But here they are in middle of the book of Numbers and God is already telling Moses to have the people of Israel make *tassels* to wear on their garments so that they can look at *them* and be reminded to do His commandments!! Seriously? God is a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night and they need *tassels*?

The Bible is layer upon layer of God iterating a simple process by which His children might thrive in relationship with Him coupled with example after example of His children’s rebellion, disobedience, and sin. His way is simple: “Remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God.” Our inclination is sinful: we “follow after [our] own heart and [our] own eyes, which [we] are inclined to whore after.” These verses present a simple process juxtaposed against our natural inclination. We must battle our natural inclination. We must remind ourselves of the Lord’s commandments and DO them. We must choose the Gospel over and over again. And it is NOT easy.

Now, believe me, the above progression is not typical of my daily devotions—but rather seems to naturally develop when I find myself curious about something in the Bible. Today’s curiosity started with: 1) having heard that it was suggested that Deuteronomy is a good book for encouragement; 2) thinking about the scores of people returning from camp with a new/renewed hunger for God’s word and a closer relationship with Him; and 3) praying over what to submit after receiving the unexpected opportunity this morning to write today’s LL article.

As to number 1: Is Deuteronomy an encouragement to today’s Believer? Insofar as it addresses God’s faithfulness, God’s holiness, God’s blessings, and God’s warnings, while telling the story of an entire nation’s relationship with God thereby providing some insight into the Believer’s journey from bondage to sin and death to eternal life through Jesus Christ—um, yes!!

As to number 2: God’s process is simple but staying the course is difficult and requires constant vigilance. In fact, our own heart and eyes will deceive us and interfere with our resolve to be faithful and obedient to God. Maybe we need to make for ourselves tassels to look at and be reminded to do the Lord’s commandments.

As to number 3: It is finished.

Karen Hiyama