

FROM FEAR TO
FREEDOM



A STUDY ON THE LIFE OF MOSES

PASTOR'S NOTES - PART 25

THE WRITINGS OF GOD

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Fear to Freedom
 A Study On the Life of Moses
 Part 25: The Writings of God
 Pastor Jeffrey Dean Smith

Jerry Thomas Smith, my father, was born in 1939 in Greenville, TX. His grandfather was a full-blooded Blackfoot Indian. So we are a native American family. Several things about my daddy that I still remember from growing up...

Daddy loved to go fishing. We went fishing all the time when I was growing up. My daddy was an extremely hard worker. He taught all of his boys the value of working hard. He was a very honest man – always a man of his word.

Daddy loved his church. We were there at church for everything. He too taught us the importance of tithing to church. Additionally, my daddy loved the Bill Cosby Show. If you know Bill Cosby, then you too know: “Dad is great! Give us some chocolate cake!”

My daddy loved to build a fire in the fireplace in our living room. Next to the fireplace, is where my daddy’s black leather chair sat. Next to his black leather chair was his table. And I always remembered four things that sat on his table: his coffee, his pipe, his bible, and devotional book.

My daddy had a place where he always had his time alone with God – his black leather chair.

I ask you this morning: Where is your place? Where is your place to meet alone with God?

Today we are going to see that Moses had a place. And at this place, God outlines 5 spiritual requirements for the people of Israel. Last week, I offered to you the first two:

1. A willingness to obey

2. A sensitivity to listen

Today, I want to offer three more. And as was the case last week, what is fascinating about these requirements is just how very relevant these truths are for our lives today. Let’s continue!

3. A consecration to meet

Exodus 19:10-15

We do not know fully what this consecration process entailed. In part, it was a command for God’s people to wash their clothes. Their clean clothes reflected a clean heart. God even required that His people abstain sexually – not because the act of sex was wrong. Instead, because God wanted His people to be fully focused solely on their preparation to meet with a Holy God. He wanted them to be clean – fully clean and the setting apart of oneself to meet with Him.

And do you notice what too this consecration involved – a border. We later will see an ethical border of ongoing consecration to be placed around the tabernacle of God, where the Lord manifests His ongoing presence:

Appoint Aaron and his sons to serve as priests; anyone else who approaches the sanctuary is to be put to death.

Numbers 3:10

God clearly establishes to the people that there is a holiness to who He is and limitations on just how close God's people can come to Him.

Look at what happens next:

Exodus 19:16-19

What must this have been like? Imagine the impact this loud noise had upon the people in the middle of nowhere, the Sinai desert. This is somewhat difficult for us as a humanity today to comprehend because we each live such busy, noisy lives. There is noise all around us. But for these people, they have never turned up a song on the radio or experienced the sound of a plane overhead. They have never heard the sounds of tornado sirens, fire alarms, fourth of July fireworks, or thousands of people gathering to watch Vanderbilt beat the Volunteers in football this fall in Music City.

Imagine when God's people hear the very loud trumpet blast that Scripture describes here! A moment this must have been as with thunder and lightning and a thick cloud over the mountain and the sound of a trumpet heard all across the base of the mountain of God! I'm sure this must have been truly spectacular to witness.

What is the message to God's people in this moment? It's simply three words:

God - is - holy.

And since He is, this leads to the fourth requirement God communicates through Moses to His people:

4. A reverence to display

Moses goes down the mountain again to prepare the people of God to receive God's holy presence:

Exodus 19:20-25

Only those to whom God gave permission were allowed to touch the mountain. Everyone else was to stay completely away from it. God established boundaries to consecrate this place and to

clearly establish a respect and reverence among His people to receive His holy presence. So holy is Jehovah God that no one is to touch or to even go near the mountain of God.

What a powerful reminder this was to me this week the concept of God's holiness coupled with the lack of reverence and holiness our world displays for Jehovah God today.

Think of the casualness so very many people take when it comes to our creator, Yahweh, the father and Redeemer of all things, the holy God.

It's rare to watch a TV show or a movie and not hear someone take the Lord's name in vain. I truly become disgusted when I hear someone say, "Jesus" or, "Oh my God," in a way of irreverence or disrespect to our Father in heaven.

Some people even reference God as a pal, or good friend, buddy, Papa, or "the man upstairs." He is none! He too is not a curse word, just *any* god, or *another* god. No!

He is *the* God. The Alpha and Omega. The beginning and the end. The first and the last. The very author of our lives. He is our Lord. The sovereign Lord. Exalted. Our perfect Redeemer. Our Salvation. He is God.

Why does God communicate such strict and definitive boundaries for His people?

An irreverent view of God leads to an irreverent way of living on the part of God's people.

A shallow view of God leads to a shallow way of living on the part of God's people.

A casual view of God leads to a casual way of living on the part of God's people.

When one holds God in tremendous respect and with the most profoundness of holiness, it is quite remarkable how one's life is then shaped with such a deep reverence for who He is and for what He may accomplish in and through the life of His people.

What I desire and pray and cry out so often to God for as it relates to *this* church is that we, Donelson First, are a church of imperfect people who possess great intentionality to revere, with the upmost of veneration and respect, the one true holy God.

It is my hope above all, that we are known, as a church who reverently and humbly seeks the face of God with a worshipful position of our hearts to receive Him, to adore Him, to exalt Him, and to meet with Him.

Not a feeling; not an experience; not an emotion; not something modern; not something traditional...

My earnest desire is that, above all, we are a church who realize that we do not even have the right to say his name!

But we do so with hearts of unashamed humility...

... recognizing we are nothing *without* Him. We are everything *with* him.

Exodus 20:1-17

Notice God speaks these 10 Commandments to Moses. He does not yet write them down. He does not yet present them to the nation of Israel.

5. A fear to possess

Exodus 20:18-20

Do you notice the connection between the fear *of* God and one's obedience *to* God? Moses tells the nation of Israel that there is a direct correlation between a healthy fear of the Lord and their ability to keep from sinning.

When you fear the Lord, you truly give a vibrant consideration to every choice you make, knowing that with so very many choices one makes, you either honor or dishonor God with your life.

King Solomon wrote this in Proverbs:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Proverbs 9:10

Practically speaking, this verse really makes a lot of sense to me. Does it to you? You see, godly fear is a motivator for you and for me to do what is right. As the King reminds us, the more fear we have, the wiser we become. Therefore when it comes to making right decisions, possessing fear grants you wisdom, thus the ability to practically think through your decision-making and hopefully choose to do the right thing.

Notice too, Moses is essentially drawing a hard line over the huge distinction between “being afraid” and possessing “fear.” Notice again his words:

Exodus 20:20

I recall when my older brother Kent was eight years old, and I was seven years old. We did something I have never forgotten. We went into our neighbors garage, found cans of white spray paint, and we proceeded to spray paint our neighbor's fence. I'm not sure why we did this! I'd like to say it was my older brother's fault. Okay, I'll say it, “It was my older brother's fault!”

When my dad got home that night, and he found out what we had done, I tell you... he instilled the “fear of daddy” in both of us! Again, I have never forgotten that moment nor how my daddy punished us.

I do not know about you and your daddy, but growing up, there was always a healthy fear over my daddy ever present in my mind. And it was this fear that motivated me to do what was right in the eyes of my daddy.

Interestingly, Moses says in the same sentence, “Do not be afraid,” and have the “...fear of God with you.”

Meaning: The fear of God is not the kind of fear that should frighten you and me. Instead, the fear of God is a healthy, reverent fear that should motivate you and me to do what is right in the sight of God.

Listen to this:

4 years ago, the ICAI, the International Center for Academic Integrity, reported that 64% of undergraduate and graduate students admit to cheating in some form in school.

Last year, just three years later, the ICAI reported this number has skyrocketed to 95%.

Additionally, the number of people who died from cocaine use in America in 2015 was under 2,000. The latest numbers, from 2023, show these deaths have drastically increased to over 10,000.

It is obvious the pursuit of morality and holiness has gone missing today in the eyes of culture.

Why? I presume there are several contributing factors to such a decline. But I am confident one such factor:

A lack of fear *of* and *for* a holy and righteous God.

I would even say that such a holy fear is mostly absent even in the Holy Church today. I want to clarify that such reverence to which I refer has nothing to do with one’s appearance nor vocabulary. Many believe that a display of holiness and reverence is represented in the way in which one dresses or in the way in which one is able to articulate their words.

In the time our Savior spent on this planet, He conversed with the Sadducees and Pharisees, who prided themselves on exactly this – their appearance and haughty speech.

Look at what the Christ had to say about this:

So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their (fa-lack-t-rees) phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long.

Matthew 23:3-5

The holiness to which I refer is one involving the heart. And such a deceptive heart is at the center of man's sinful acts to this very day.

Additionally, in Exodus 20:13 one of the commandments that God gave to Moses: "You shall not murder."

You know, there were 24,849 murders in America in 2023. That is 68 murders a day!

Too, there were 1,026,700 abortions in America last year. That is 2,812 a day! And this is even taking into account new abortion laws that went into effect several years ago preventing abortions in many states in America.

This is not a political statement at all - - just a fact!

Did you know that beginning this past week, free abortions were being offered in Chicago at the DNC, the Democratic National Convention. Planned Parenthood offered, by appointment, free abortions for two days of this week.

Let that sink in a little!

Some say that the Church should remain silent on this conversation. I say, "Absolutely not!"

God makes it very clear when He gives the 10 Commandments to Moses that there is an expectation on the part of humanity that we do not get to decide who lives and who does not. That right is held exclusively by an Almighty God. And as the Church, it is our responsibility to speak up about such atrocities.

Church I am of the belief that as long as humanity continues to embrace a lack of fear for a holy God, there will continue to be such atrocities happening in our world. And if the Church does not speak up about this, and too live in a way exemplifying these expectations, who will? Who will?

You see...

At the onset of this new nation, God is wanting to establish for His people a holy and reverent and righteous and pure fear so that His people do as He desires. Church...

Though much has changed in our world since God communicated this expectation to His people, such an expectation on the part of God has not.

If God has not changed His ways, who are we as mere humans to proclaim, support, or turn a blind eye to such changes embraced by the world?

So, what are we to do with the knowledge of these 5 requirements God demands on the part of His people:

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1. A willingness to obey
2. A sensitivity to listen
3. A consecration to meet
4. A reverence to display
5. A fear to possess

This part of the story suggests several ideologies that you can apply to your own life journey. And I must say, what I want to share with you before we end today, are 5 principles God has truly revealed to me in my personal time of study through the book of Exodus. I am confident these principles will too speak to you this morning:

1. These same requirements are for you.

Last week, we said in unison 8 words that the people of God said to Moses:

Exodus 19:8

Notice these same 8 words appear, though in a different order, again in Exodus 24:3:

Exodus 24:3

Paul said this about the book of Exodus:

Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: “The person who does these things will live by them.

Romans 10:5

I've heard it said by so very many, and even taught by some leaders of the church, that because the laws Moses gave to his people in Israel are recorded in the Old Testament, they no longer carry validity today because Jesus came in the New Testament. How foolish of people to think such. Look at what Jesus said while He was living:

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

Matthew 5:17-18

The Christian is expected to live by these commandments. Paul reminds us of this 1,500 years after the death of Moses. Though we see these expectations established here in Exodus for the nation of Israel, we too should understand clearly that as followers of the Christ, these expectations are for you and for me. It is foolish of us to think otherwise.

2. God's commandments are written by the very hands of God.

Exodus 24:12

My uncle, Dr. (Uncle) Jim Pleitz, was the Senior Pastor for more than 20 years at Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas, TX. Before he passed several years ago, Uncle Jim sent me a letter telling me how proud he was of me and the ministry I had established, obviously, through the hand of God.

For all these years, I've held on to this letter. We have so very many pastors in our family. And from time to time I read uncle Jim's, and letters I have received from another Uncle, Uncle Johnny, who is, at the age of 93, a Pastor in Arkansas, both who, through the years, have taken the time to hand write me letters. These letters are so special to me. I have no doubt, when you receive a handwritten letter from someone, you too hold such a letter in high esteem.

Some may think that the book of Genesis is the first writings we have of God's Holy Words. Such a presumption would be wrong. Here in Exodus, this is the first time we see in all of history when God writes down His Words. Until this moment here at the Mountain of God, the written word of God did not exist.

There are 727,969 words in the New International Version, of NIV, of the Holy Scriptures. The 10 Commandments are the very first writings of all of God's 727,969 Words.

Imagine while on Mount Horeb, Moses watches as God breaks apart a piece of the mountain and begins to write, with His finger, the 10 Commandments! Imagine how monumental this moment was for Moses to witness such history. The very God who had spoken to him through a burning bush, used him to lead His people out of Egyptian captivity and across The Reed Sea, and journey through the wilderness, is now the same God with whom he is privileged to stand on the Mountain of Sinai watching as the Holy God takes a piece of rock, and with His finger, begins to inscribe the Commandments His people are to follow from this moment forward.

Exodus 31:18

God gave us His commandments so that we would know exactly what it is that He thinks and wants for us as His people. What is truly remarkable, these very same words are still here for us today... all of these years later! Because...

God will never change. His expectations will never change. His Word will never change.

3. God wants to meet regularly with you.

We discussed last week that on seven different occasions Moses climbed the mountain to meet with God. On the eighth trip up Mount Sinai, for the first six days on the mountain, Moses was there all alone. Did you know this? Moses is on the mountain for six days before he enters the cloud and meets with God.

Exodus 24:15-18

We then know that, on the 7th day, Moses steps up into the cloud to meet with God. Moses then spends 40 days and 40 nights with God on the mountain.

I have thought for so very long as to why God spent so much intimate time with Moses on the mountain. God did not have to do this. He could've given Moses the 10 Commandments and sent him on his way. But he did not. He spent so very much time with Moses. 40 days and 40 nights. How intimate this time must have been between the two of them.

Interestingly, did you know that this was not the only time Moses spent 40 days and 40 nights with God on Mount Sinai? There is a second time he does exactly the same. We will study this time at a later date.

I presume there are many contributing factors as to why God spent so very much time with Moses. I don't want to speak on behalf of God why they spent exactly 40 days and nights together. What I do want to say, what God has made very clear to me in this study...

God desires to spend time with you. He longs for an intimate relationship with you. He knows you better than anyone, and He wants to meet with you regularly.

King David wrote:

You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.
Psalm 139:1-5

Will you consider these 2 questions this morning:

Do I long for intimate time with God?

Do I search for God like one parched in a dry land?

God wants to meet regularly with you. So...

4. You need a place to meet with God.

Exodus 24:1-4

My daddy had his place. I can still see him sitting in his black leather chair, a cup of dark, black coffee with him, pipe in his mouth, and his bible in his lap.

So far we have read 8 times y'all, God calls Moses up to the mountain to meet with Him. Such a repetitive process was not for the benefit of God. No, it was for the benefit of Moses.

Do you have a place? You need a “place;” a “place” to meet with God; a “place” to where you consistently go to get away from the noises of life to be fully engaged and not distracted by the world; a “place” where you know this is the “place” where you and God can meet and listen and talk and worship and journal and be revived, renewed, and restored.

Now of course, yes, you could meet anywhere with God. He is always with you wherever you go.

Having said this, what we are going to see as we continue in this study, is that God was so desiring to have a place to where His people can meet with Him, that He gives very clear, distinct, and extremely detailed instructions on how His people are to construct a tabernacle as a Holy place where His people could go to meet with Him.

Church, I believe this to be fully true:

If you establish a place, *your* place to go and meet with God, you will find that you will do so more consistently and, I dare say, hear more clearly, the voice of God.

There is something truly special about God's people taking very intricate and methodical steps to get away, get alone, and be in a place, a special place for just you and God to meet.

If you have struggled consistently meeting with God in the past, hearing God's voice in the past; I want to encourage you this week, don't let another week pass! *This week*, figure out your place to get alone and to be with God. I rarely use these words...

But I promise you, if you take the steps to do so, your alone time with the Lord will radically change your life for the better! I guarantee it!

Lastly, I couple this reality with this truth:

5. Only the timeless truths of God's Word can change you.

I wonder if you have noticed that God gave something to Moses when they spoke that He never offered to Abraham, nor Isaac, nor Jacob, and nor Joseph. Throughout this study, we have seen that God revealed His will to all of these men. But only to one man did God give His what?...

His written Word. God spoke to Abraham, Issac, and Jacob through a vision. But God spoke *to* Moses, and provide *for* Moses, His Word! This is fascinating y'all!

God did not tell Moses:

“I have a vision I want to bring to you today from God.” No!

God did not reveal a *vision* to His people. God gave the people His Holy written Word. His truths. His commandments!

Exodus 24:12

How sad it is that for so very many people and in so very many churches today, many are looking for a “new” way of worshiping; a “new” way of having corporate church; a “new” way of gathering; a “new” way of teaching what it is that the masses long to hear!

We are a population of people today looking for the “new.” And sadly in the process, the “new” may give people what they *want*, but it too almost always fails to give people what they *need* - - life change that can only be found in the fullness of God’s truths.

Sadly, we are a world consumed with wanting to find and hear and be entertained by the world’s latest “New!” This is why Paul wrote warning a young Timothy:

For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

2 Timothy 4:3

The dilemma is, for church-folk in pursuit of the “new,” so very many are missing the timeless truth of God's word that can change a person - completely.

It is not the “new” that is going to change this generation and evangelize the next generation.

What is going to change us all:

The unchangeable truth of God’s holy Word.

This is the cry of humanity of which so very many are not aware. *This* is what the next generation needs. *This* is what the Church must shout from the mountaintops. *This* is exactly who we are here at the light on the hill in Donelson. *This* is the only truth that will last; that will complete us; that will fulfill us; that will lead us to the foot of the cross forsaking all to follow Him even unto death.