

3. When God talks, people should listen

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E. F. Hutton & Co. was an American stock brokerage firm founded in 1904 by Edward Francis Hutton. The firm was best known for its commercials in the 1970s and 1980s based on the phrase, "When E. F. Hutton talks, people listen". We all admit that they were very effective commercials. They were the second largest brokerage firm in the United States for several decades until it was merged to Citigroup.

Why would people listen to E. F. Hutton? Because he had something worth while for the investors to listen to. But what our God says is far greater than any human can ever come up with. So when God talks, people should listen. But the vast majority of people don't even pay attention to Him. Rather, they would listen to satan and end up ruining their own lives.

The verb "hear" or "listen" is used nearly 100 times in the Book of Deuteronomy. The traditional Jewish confession of faith which is known as "the Shama" starts with this very word.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

"Hear" in Hebrew "shama" is more than hearing a sound that is a traveling wave of the frequencies within the hearing range of our ears. It means to "hear to understand and obey".

To the OT Jews and the NT Christians, the commandments of the Lord should be more than sound waves impacting our ears. Hearing God's Word is a matter of focusing our whole being – heart, soul, and strength – and become a part of our inner being to change our lives. That is what Jesus meant when He said,

Matthew 11:15 He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

This phrase has been repeated six times in the Gospels, so it must be important to the Lord and it should be to us as well. Hearing and obeying the Word of God was Israel's very life and it should be any born-again Christian's life also.

A. LEARNING FROM THE PAST

Deuteronomy 4:1-4 "Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving you. 2 You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. 3 Your eyes have seen what the Lord did at Baal Peor; for the Lord your God has destroyed from among you all the men who followed Baal of Peor. 4 But you who held fast to the Lord your God are alive today, every one of you.

Many people think that obeying the Lord's commandments is burdensome. It is our privilege and joy when we realize that His commandments are expressions of His love, assurances of His strength, invitations to His blessing, opportunities to grow and bring Him glory. Our response to obeying His commandments opens the door into the treasury of His unending grace.

In v2, the Lord warns us not to change His Word. But many people have the audacity or total stupidity to tamper with the Word of God. The same idea is repeated in

Revelation 22. The Pharisees in Jesus' day jealously guarded the Scriptures, yet they were guilty of taking away from the Word of God by replacing it with their own traditions.

Past is only good for remembering what we did wrong so that we don't repeat our stupidity. When we don't remember our wrong choices in the past, we are bound to make the same mistakes.

According to Numbers 22-25, 24,000 Jews were killed for their disobedient acts against the Lord when they committed idol worship through sex with the foreign women. What the enemy couldn't accomplish with curses, he accomplished with compromise under the name of friendship with the world.

James 4:4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

B. YOURSELF AND YOUR CHILDREN

Deuteronomy 4:9-10 "Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren, 10 especially concerning the day you stood before the Lord your God in Horeb, when the Lord said to me, 'Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'

In my opinion, the most valuable inheritance we can leave to our children and their children is introducing Jesus to them. I am not saying the earthly possession is wrong, but they would not see it as you do. They will waste it faster that you have accumulated. The real treasure is eternal and cannot be stolen – it is knowing Jesus.

It is the responsibility of the older generation to instruct the younger generation and be an example and an encouragement to them. Parents and grandparents must not turn this responsibility over to Sunday School teachers, because they only get to have our children 40 hours a year while we get to have them over 250 days a year.

C. OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE, A JEALOUS GOD

Deuteronomy 4:21-24 Furthermore the Lord was angry with me for your sakes, and swore that I would not cross over the Jordan, and that I would not enter the good land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance. 22 But I must die in this land, I must not cross over the Jordan; but you shall cross over and possess that good land. 23 Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the Lord your God has forbidden you. 24 For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

To Israel people, Moses was larger than life. After all, He was the God's spokesperson. Somehow they thought he was not replaceable. But they needed to see that no man, not even Moses was above the law.

God can and does use anyone. If a ministry does depend on one irreplaceable person, then it is of man, not of God.

God alone is God, and He alone must be glorified. God is jealous over His people the way a husband is jealous over his wife or a mother over her children. He wants

the very best for us, but when we deliberately go our own way, we grieve His heart and miss all He wants to do for us.

Isaiah 42:8 I am the Lord, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images.

D. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS REVIEWED

1) Deuteronomy 5:7 You shall have no other gods before Me.

The first commandment logically flows from understanding who God is and what He has done for us. Nothing is to come before God and He is the only God we worship and serve.

2) Deuteronomy 5:8-10 You shall not make for yourself a carved image... For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, 10 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

This commandment does not forbid making an image of something for artistic purposes. The Lord Himself commanded Israel make images of cherubim for the Ark of the Covenant. He forbids us making of images as an object of worship.

The Roman Catholic church has left the second commandment out in order to justify their way to pray to the statues and divided the tenth into two.

According to Ezekiel 18, the Lord doesn't punish the children and grandchildren because of their ancestors' sins. But He can permit the sad consequences of their sins to affect future generations physically, emotionally and spiritually. Children are prone to imitate their parents. Since the Eastern people lived in the same house with three and four generations, the older member of the family had a tremendous influence to the younger ones either for good or evil. But the Lord also blesses successive generations of people who honor and obey Him.

The Bible teachers who are in the Faith Movement often use this verse as a basis for their "Generational Curse" Doctrine. It is a wrong doctrine.

3) Deuteronomy 5:11 You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

Using profanity is not the only way to break this commandment. If we use the Lord's name in superficial way or hypocritical way, these also break the commandment.

Jesus taught us about keeping high regard to His name in the prayer pattern He showed us:

Matthew 6:9b Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

When we live according to what the Lord teaches us from the Word of God, we bring honor to His name.

4) Deuteronomy 5:12 Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you.

Nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament epistles for the church to obey with the exception of the fourth commandment about the Sabbath Day. Why? The Sabbath Day was a special sign between Israel and the Lord and wasn't given to any other nation. Believers today have their rest in Christ and look forward to eternal rest in heaven.

Many well-meaning people call Sunday “the Christian Sabbath,” but strictly speaking, this is a misnomer. Sunday is the first day of the week, the Lord’s Day, and the Sabbath is Saturday, the seventh day of the week. The Sabbath symbolizes the Old Covenant of Law: you labored for six days and then you rested. The Lord’s Day commemorates the New Covenant of grace: it opens the week with rest in Christ and the works follow.

Both the Sabbath and the Lord’s Day emphasize the importance of devoting one day out of seven to the Lord in worship and service. Every day belongs to the Lord. In many cases, these people who become legalistic want to show off how spiritual they are over others.

Romans 14:5-6 One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.

5) Deuteronomy 5:16 Honor your father and your mother

Too many people in today’s society worship youth and resent the idea of getting old, and for this reason the aged are often neglected and abused and, in some nations, legally killed – a.k.a. euthanasia. Yes, it is happening right here in the U.S.A.

6) Deuteronomy 5:17 You shall not murder.

Some wonder how God can approve both capital punishment in Exodus 19:12 and this prohibition of murder. The simple answer is that in Hebrew as well as English, there is a distinction between to ‘kill’ and to ‘murder’. As opposed to killing, murder is the taking of life without legal justification – execution after due process or moral justification – killing in defense for self or others.

7) Deuteronomy 5:18 You shall not commit adultery.

It calls for sexual purity and the honoring of marriage as God’s appointed way for the proper use and enjoyment of human sexuality. In ancient Israel, adultery was considered a capital crime, while in today’s society, it’s hardly considered a sin, let alone a crime. Actually, it is highly encouraged and special for this carnal world.

God can forgive sexual sins but He doesn’t promise to interfere with the painful consequences. It’s disgusting the way the media glorifies sex and turn fornication and adultery into entertainment.

8) Deuteronomy 5:19 You shall not steal.

God is concerned not only about the way we treat other people but also about the way we treat other people’s property. If you didn’t get whatever you think you can keep legally, it is stealing and it does not honor the Lord. No exceptions.

9) Deuteronomy 5:20 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

We can break the ninth commandment through slander, tale bearing, creating false impressions, by silence, by questioning the motives behind someone’s actions, or even by flattery.

Slander is a lie invented and spread with intent to do harm. That is the worst form of injury a person can do to another.

Gossip is repeating a report about a person without careful investigation. How many people, especially Christian people, revel in this, and delight in working havoc by telling tales about others. The biggest subject of Christian gossip is about pastors.

What about inappropriate silence? This also can bring forth doubt about the person whose name was just mentioned to the listeners.

10) Deuteronomy 5:21 You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor's house...

This commandment and the first commandment deal with inward attitudes rather than outward actions, but breaking either of these two commandments could lead to breaking all the rest of them. Because of covetousness, people have robbed, committed adultery, lied, and even murdered. If we obey the first commandment and truly love God and worship only Him, then covetousness won't be a problem.

Christian believers who depend on the indwelling Holy Spirit and live by the law of love don't have to strive to obey these commandments, because the life of God will flow through them and enable them to fulfill the righteousness of God.

The old nature knows no law, but the new nature needs no law. There's probably a law in every city and town that requires parents to care for their children, but how many parents think about that law? Parents care for their children because they love them, not because they're afraid of going to jail.

Many churches today have lost the biblical concept of the majesty and authority of God as expressed in His Law. This deficiency has cheapened our worship, turned evangelism into religious salesmanship, and converted the Bible into a self-help book that's guaranteed to make you a success.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) Unless we are a separated people, devoted wholly to the Lord, we can never follow His example.

2) Obedience is always a matter of the heart, and if we love the Lord, we will keep His commandments.