

“Domine, volumus Jesum videre,” John 12:21.

“Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,” Mark 9:24.

DEUTERONOMY 11

¹⁸Put these words of mine in your hearts and in your soul, and tie them on your wrists as signs and as symbols on your forehead. ¹⁹Teach them to your children by talking about them when you sit in your house and when you travel on the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ²⁰Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, ²¹so that your days and the days of your children may be many on the land that the LORD promises to your fathers with an oath, as many as the days that the heavens remain over the earth.

²⁶You see, I am placing before you today a blessing and a curse: ²⁷the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God that I am giving you today, ²⁸or the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the LORD your God and you turn away from the path that I am commanding you today by walking after other gods whom you did not know.



How do you remind yourself? In the movie “Inception,” characters figure out how to appear in one another’s dreams. Once inside, they can lose track of whether they are still inside a dream or back to reality. So the main characters each have what they call a “totem.” It is a reminder, a small object they each carry, that holds personal meaning. They know the touch and weight of their own totems. If Leonardo Dicaprio isn’t sure if he’s in a dream, he can reach for his totem and make sure it feels right. At the end of the film, we are left watching a totem spin on a table, but we never find out if the whole movie has been a dream or not.

We have many kinds of reminders. Write out a list. Leave something out so you don’t forget to see it in the morning. Talk a reminder into your phone. Tie a string around your finger. Do we have a reminder for God? Do we have a daily memory hook to get us into the Bible and hear what He has to say today?

God’s reminders are powerful. The sign of the cross. The raising of the arms. The bowed head of humble prayer. There are even praying hands on our phones as emojis. A rainbow, a fish or a triangle each holds power and meaning. The power of a reminder can be the difference between life and death.

The LORD Ties Words Of Life To A Life Of The Word

1. How to live by the Word

Moses and the people were at the outskirts of the promised land. God had already led the people out of Egypt, that land of slavery. Moses had channeled God's plagues and parted the Red Sea with his staff. He had taught them how to worship and brought them through the wilderness. But Moses had learned from God that he would not be allowed to enter. So at the outskirts of the promised land, the people of Israel set up camp, and Moses delivered his final sermon to them. This is known as the book of Deuteronomy, the second giving of the law.

As Moses spoke his swan song, he wanted these words of God to last. He wanted to show them God's mercy and faithfulness was priceless. So he gave the people special instructions. He commanded the people to put God's words in their hearts and in their souls, and tie them on their wrists as signs and as symbols on their foreheads.

The Lord wanted to tie into every aspect of their lives. He didn't want them to leave the words of the Lord in the tabernacle on Saturday. He didn't want them to be part-time believers and worshipers of God. He didn't want them to forget the Lord throughout the week. He said they must teach the children wherever they are, whether sitting around at home or when they were on the go.

How literally did the Lord intend these fastenings? You might say the ancient Israelites took Moses' words very literally. Even today, it is a common Jewish practice to tie small cubes, made of animal hide, with Bible verses inside onto their foreheads (called "*tefillin*" or "*phylacteries*"), or bind tiny scrolls with straps on their wrists. As they leave or enter their houses, it's normal to see a "*mezuzah*," a box beside the door on the wall with a tiny scroll.

We have to remember, there were no books for the generation of Moses; everything was passed on orally. They needed visual memory cues and hooks. They would require constant reminders to bear in mind the words of their Lord, their Rescuer, their Redeemer, their Rock.

But while some may take these words hyper-literally, we could see the truth somewhere in between the literal and figurative. The Lord wants us to think about Him. The Lord wants to be a part of our routine. The Lord wants total devotion. How much devotion? “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind,” said Moses in Deuteronomy 6. Our lives are constantly in one place and out the other. Reminder: When you leave this place, this is who you are. You are still a Christian, and God’s Word goes with you.

What didn’t the Lord expect? Notice the Lord did not expect His people to cover their eyes with His Words. They were not meant to tie their wrists together with God’s Word. His words weren’t meant to block their way out the door. Instead, these people of God had the Word on their hands, where they would instantly see it, between their eyes, where they couldn’t miss it. God’s Word was on the doorposts where they always looked. So it was in their conversations. They were expected to do everything and see everything THROUGH the Word of God.

We still have this reminder. Our lifestyle is still total devotion to God. *Whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, the Apostle Paul tells us to do it all to God’s glory. Jesus says to seek first His kingdom and righteousness, and all our earthly needs will be given to us as well. The Lord did not give His Law to bind His people, but to promise them life.*

2. How to depend on words of life

So far God expected the people to tie His words to their bodies and doorposts. But in these words, the Lord also did some tying together. The Lord tied to His people a promise of life and a curse of death. God said, “Do this ...

²¹so that your days and the days of your children may be many on the land that the LORD promises to your fathers with an oath, as many as the days that the heavens remain over the earth. ²⁶You see, I am placing before you today a blessing and a curse: ²⁷the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God that I am giving you today, ²⁸or the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the LORD your God.

Sometimes this is called the “pledge of life.” It sounds like the Fourth Commandment, the first commandment with a promise, because the promise is

long life on the earth. If they tied God's words onto their face and limbs, the length of His people's days would be extended and increased.

This was going to be a crucial matter to Israel as a nation. They were a theocracy, and the Lord meant to hedge them off from the other godless nations. God erected His civil laws for this Old Testament people so they would be set apart from the other nations and not lose a single Word about the coming Messiah. Whenever they were friendly to the nations around them, all of a sudden God's promises were thrown aside for some alliance or national ambition.

How literally did the Lord intend the promise of life? One thing we must remember is that the Law promises the same thing as the Gospel. They both guarantee everlasting life. So the Lord meant this quite literally! He guaranteed long life. The trouble with following God's Law and actually doing it is that no one is perfect. Sinners fail. The Jews never attained to the level of long life because they could never keep it straight during all our lives, whether sitting at home or going out, whether binding the Law onto wrists and foreheads or not.

However, theoretically, if there were Someone who could keep the Law, instead of sin, always before Him, He could reach the level of eternal life.

How does the Lord keep His promise of life even now? Like the Israelites of old and the Jews of today, we have failed to keep God's Word always before us. It would seem like such a lost cause to hope in these words today. But He gave His one and only Son to take the curse that we deserved. That Son of God always kept God's Word before Him and followed God's will no matter where He went. He achieved blessing for a long life, not on this earth, but in heaven above. But He did not do it for Himself; He achieved it for His people, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. So now with Moses, you can love the Lord wholeheartedly. With David, you can delight in God's Law. With Jesus, you can lay claim to this pledge of life, by faith alone. Amen.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.