

Weekly Devotional by Pastor Ken Nabi

April 5, 2010

Where is Your Bible?

"These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts." Deuteronomy 6:6

This verse is embedded in one of the greatest passages in all of the Old Testament. It permeates the rest of the Old Testament and the new. Moses is talking to the newly founded nation of Israel about loving God with their whole heart in verse 5--"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." And then he tells them to keep these commands always present within the family unit in verse 7—"impress them on your children...." This passage is the one that Jesus refers to in the Matthew 22:37 when he is asked what the greatest command is in the entire bible.

For the Jewish people then and now, Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is to be repeated at least 2 times per day and it is called "the Shema" which literally means "hear" from the first part of Deut 6:4—"hear, O Israel...." Jewish people start every day repeating the Shema and end every day the same way. For the orthodox Jew, the Shema is to be bound up in their heart and literally on their forehead and their left fore arm as well as on the door frame of every home. This is their way to remind themselves of God's word and His promises to them.

While the Jewish people rejected Jesus as the Messiah, we can learn much from their practices. I just finished reading a book called *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus* which is an excellent resource to see how the Jewish culture of the New Testament provided the backdrop for some of Jesus' rabbinic style teachings. I just started reading *Swimming in the Sea of the Talmud* which is a truly Jewish resource about the teachings of the rabbis on the Pentateuch (first 5 books of the bible) and the Talmud (the commentary written on the first 5 books of the bible).

The love of the Old Testament Jewish people for God's word is remarkable and certainly a challenge to us today. How do you feel about God's word? What do your practices reveal about your time spent reading the words of God. We are to love God's word because these words lead us to Him. The Psalmist says "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you (Psalm 119:11)." God's word is like food to the soul when it points us to Christ.

At Community Church, we talk about the 7 marks of a whole hearted follower built around the acronym HEARTED (see web link for details: <http://ccfdl.org/page.php?pid=5>). The first letter is for the word Habits and has to do with the spiritual practices of those who seek after Christ. One thing that is vital to spiritual growth is time in God's word. We are to read it to understand how God has spoken to His people in the past and what he wants to say through it to us today. God still speaks through His word because like no other writings, the bible is alive. Hebrews 4:12 says that "The word of God is living and active...." This is why we want you to be in the practice of bringing your bible to church so you can write in it, get familiar with it, and grow increasingly able to discover God's direction for life.

Before you pick up the paper, check your emails, sign in on Facebook, watch the morning news, or any other technological element—open up the bible (on your PDA if you prefer!) and ask God to speak to you through His word. Learn to listen for His voice and to sense his presence. God

wants to speak to you through the recorded living words we call the scriptures. They are to be upon our hearts as a living constant presence. These words, when understood and obeyed, will bring joy, peace, and direction.

Prayer: Father, thank you for your word recorded by the prophets and apostles and now written for me in the bible. Help me to love your word, be drawn to its nourishment, and to increasingly desire to obey every facet of your word. They are the words of life. Bind me to them and them to my heart.

Your Partner in the Gospel – *Ken Nabi*