

EMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH, MORRIS, MANITOBA  
DEVOTIONAL FOR MAY 13, 2020

Deuteronomy 6: 5; “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your mind and with all your strength.”

I am sure that each of us have had an experience that went something like this. We were or are busy with something and a parent calls us. We hear our parent's voice in the background but it passes in one ear and out the other. We do not respond. Our parent then calls again, perhaps raising his or her voice and after this process escalates to critical status. we finally answer. It is at this point our parent asks, “How many times do I have to call you before you respond?” My advice at that question is not to answer but to remain silent because one cannot answer it without raising a parent's ire further. The point I am making is that the number of times we hear something is in some ways parallel to the seriousness of the call or request.

I am not sure how this practice of deciding the importance of an issue by the number of times it is mentioned came to be. I do know that it is in many ways consistent with North American western culture. If you are listening in class you will find yourself writing down the things the teacher repeats. Our thought process tells us that the repeated point must be important because it is repeated. I have heard sermons and I personally have preached the importance of some truth by this method. This is important because it is mentioned more than once. This is true of the New Testament and those writing under the influence of the Greek culture. However, the same cannot be said to those writing under the Hebrew culture of the Old Testament. Hebrew is written and composed very differently.

In the Hebrew mind, repetition is normal. An ABBA pattern is used over and over again, It has nothing to do with a certain singing group. It works as follow for example. God says He will do certain things if the people obey and, if the people obey, God will co certain things. This pattern is a normal part of the Hebrew language and to them is not repetitive. written Hebrew also uses couplets regularly. This is the practice of saying the same thing two different ways consecutively. Psalm 119 is a prime example of this. This is a long way to make the following point. Whereas, English and western languages use repetition to emphasize a point, Hebrew uses a single statement to evoke the same emphasis. The two languages are opposite in this regard. A single statement stands out in Hebrew for emphases.

I say this to give us all a reminder just how strong the biblical command is in the passage written out above. To the Hebrew mind this screams out the command to love God. Furthermore, it reminds us how deeply we are to love God. It is a matter of focus. Serving God, loving God is to be the focus of our lives. This focus is not to be distracted by other things as they pare in comparison and they become obstacles to true service. This focus takes over our entire lives in all its aspects.

It involves our emotions; our hearts. It involves our thinking; our minds. It involves our physical bodies; our strength. Historically, we as evangelicals have loved God well in the thinking area but have been guarded in the emotional and physical areas. This is changing somewhat for the better. In my years as an evangelical pastor I have been asked to stop people from clapping during a service. My response always has been this; “If God's Spirit influences you to clap in praise, then clap.” It is truly OK, to express joy or sadness in the expression of our relationship with our Heavenly Father.

Moses was reminding the people, with great emphasis, that they should love God with the totality of their beings. This totality involved every aspect of their beings. This is still the best advice I can give for our relationship with God today.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your forgiveness when I have not loved you with all my heart, my mind and my strength. Continue to influence me by your Spirit so that I grow in this area.  
Amen