

BFF389 By Every Word, #3

Scott Moore: Welcome to the "Building Faith Families Podcast" with Steve Demme. I'm your host, Scott Moore. Thanks for joining us today. Good morning, Steve. How are you today?

Steve: I'm OK. My son is not well, though.

Scott: Oh, no. What's going on?

Steve: He saw snow coming down this morning.

Scott: [laughs]

Steve: That's snow good to him.

Scott: Bummer.

Steve: [laughs] I'm not sure where he got it. It might be from "Fiddler on the Roof," but he makes a spitting motion. He goes, "Peh!" whenever we see snow [laughs] Before he woke up, I was up earlier with the pups, and I walked into the bedroom, and Sandy was awake.

I said, "It's snowing outside." She goes, "Wow." I went, "Peh!" She and I both just got this big laugh because Johnny brings so much joy into our life. He is such a wonderful character, but he's got his things, and this is one of them. [laughs]

Scott: That's awesome.

Steve: He doesn't like snow because he thinks he won't be able to go to work. That's hard for most people to understand, but he enjoys work and looks forward to it. Anyway, how is life out in Cincinnati?

Scott: Good. We had a nice Thanksgiving.

Steve: Nice.

Scott: Everybody seems to be doing all right.

Steve: I saw the little bruiser all dressed up.

Scott: [laughs] Yes. We did a couple of Christmas pictures with Henry all dressed up with his Santa hat and stuff, so that was very fun. He's cute.

Steve: That was such a trying chapter and the life of your family, and now here we are just taking pictures and smiling.

Scott: [laughs] It's very cool. At the moment, if anybody wants to pray for him, they could. He's at a point where he is got to start eating a little better on his own. If he doesn't, they're going to do a g-tube, as they call it, a gastrointestinal tube where it has to be surgically implanted.

He's got the one that they put through his nose now, and they supplement his feed directly through that. He keeps yanking that out and still isn't eating very well on his own. It's not a terrible thing. It's OK, in the grand scheme of things, if that happens, but it's just stressful on mom and dad.

Steve: Sure. Well, that's how we'll start then. Father, in Jesus' name, here is a request. First of all, we come into your presence with thanksgiving. Thank you that Henry is

doing as well as he is. Thank you that Scott's family has all are closer together and they've enjoyed Thanksgiving, but I pray for that little guy.

I pray for his appetite to increase. Help him to eat on his own. We ask exactly what Scott has requested, and we pray that you'll give extra grace to his mom and dad so that they can somehow let this be your burden and not theirs.

Even though they can't stop caring, I pray that you'll help them, but we commit him to you and ask you to bless him, and bless his body, and bless his little appetite. Bless us now. Give us an appetite for your word and for truth and to hear what you have to say to us today in Jesus' name. Amen.

Scott: Amen. Thank you.

Steve: You're welcome. The last time we were together, we talked about the importance of reading ALL the Bible. As I am working away at this, I thought of one of the key passages that I forgot to mention. That'll be a good segue or bridge into what we're going to talk about today.

This particular verse is found in Psalm 119. Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible. It has 176 verses. Each of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet has their own section in that psalm.

There are 22 letters in the Greek alphabet as opposed to English, which has 26. Aleph...I'm trying not to say my dad joke like, "aleph them." Anyway, aleph is the first chunk. If you look in the Hebrew, the first eight verses all start with an aleph.

The second chunk of eight verses all start with a bet. The third eight-verse chunk starts with a gimel. You have 22 sections, eight verses in each section, and eight times 22 is 176. I remember hearing one time that a certain church back in the day required their ministerial candidates to memorize all of Psalm 119.

My thought was, "Oh no, 176 verses. Come on. Give me Psalm 1 or Psalm 23. I could memorize those, but 176???" Then, I thought, well if it was being memorized in Hebrew that would be a help since each section begins with the same letter. And in the Hebrew, you have some rhyming, and rhythm, all these things that we don't see in the English translation. Did you know all that?

Scott: I did not.

Steve: Well, there you go. You learned something this morning. Psalm 119, verse 160 says, "The sum of Your Word is truth, and every one of Your righteous rules endures forever." I remember reading that for the first time and thinking, "Yes, the sum of Your word is truth. You have to add it all up." I need to read the whole Bible to get the sum of His word.

Anybody that's listened to this podcast for any length of time will know that I may be quoting from Isaiah, Revelation, Genesis, or John, because I read the whole Bible and it's all inspired, or as that verse says, "The SUM of Your Word is truth, and ALL of Your righteous rules endure forever."

I've also found that if you keep reading Galatians over and over, you don't get the full panorama of Scripture or the whole package. You need a little bit of Deuteronomy to mix up with some Galatians and a little of John thrown in.

Today, we're going to read one of my biggest encouragements to read the Bible every day. Let me give a little background first. When Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, he was their leader. He had a personal assistant named Joshua. Joshua was with him on the mount when He met with God in person and Joshua was with him in the tent as Moses was meeting with God.

There's one place where it says that Moses left the tent and Joshua stayed there. Moses and Joshua spent a lot of time in God's presence. They had different roles. Moses was not only the leader. You might say he was also a prophet and priest, whereas Joshua was the general.

Joshua and Moses, together, led the children of Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land. We know that Moses was not permitted to enter into the land, so Joshua led them into the land. These men leaned on God. They depended on Him for counsel and advice.

After the children of Israel have arrived in the land and it has been divided up into operations for each of the tribes, Joshua dies and we go through a dark period in the history of God's chosen people. They would be fine for a while, and then they would rebel against God and His ways. Then in desperation, they would cry out to God for help and He would raise up a judge to lead them.

As long as they listened to that judge and followed God's precepts, they would be fine for 20, 30, 40 years, but eventually, they'd slip and slide right back down into a state of rebellion against God. Then, when it became so bad they would cry out to God again, and He would raise up another judge. Some of the more famous judges are Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson.

The last judge was Samuel, and he was a good judge and a stellar character. He was a judge and inquired of God for them as a priest. He was also a prophet. He was the whole package. Samuel was a wonderful man.

While he was judge, being led and hearing from God, and he led the people well. Sadly towards the end of his life, the people started badgering him for a king. They wanted to be like all the nations round about them, and so God gave them Saul, which we know did not go well.

He was succeeded by David and followed by his son Solomon. For those of you that want to keep that straight, here's how I do it in my head. Saul has one syllable. David has two syllables, and Solomon has three syllables. They were the first, second, and third kings of Israel.

With that context, I'm going to read a portion of scripture from Deuteronomy chapter 17. Before I do, I want to make one more point. I don't know of anywhere in the Bible that it says you ought to read the whole thing cover to cover in one year, but it's a great habit.

It's one of those things that even though it's not commanded, it's still bears really good fruit. It does say that we should read a portion of scripture every day, whether it's a verse or a chapter. I know it's critically important to me. It does something to my mind, my spirit, my soul when I am in God's eternal word.

Now, I don't remember when Deuteronomy 17 came to life for me, but it was many years ago. This chapter is about how to choose a king, and how this king should conduct himself.

I'm going to begin reading in Deuteronomy chapter 17:14. "When you come to the land that Jehovah your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it, and then say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me. You may indeed set a king over you whom Jehovah your God will choose. One from among your brothers, you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you who is not your brother.'"

What we learn is that God's going to pick the man, and this king is going to be a brother, one from among the tribes. He won't be a foreigner. In the next two verses, God gives instructions for what the king should NOT do.

"He must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses since Jehovah has said to you, you shall never return that way again. And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold."

This is pretty clear. It's one of the reasons I love Deuteronomy because it is not mysterious. He says, "Don't get a bunch of horses. Don't go back to Egypt to buy them. Don't marry many women or they will turn your heart away, and don't acquire massive wealth."

That's what he's not supposed to do. In verses 18 through 20, the king is given a specific set of instructions of what he SHOULD do. "When he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law approved by the Levitical priest, and it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life." Notice that phrase, "all the days of his life."

"That he may learn to fear Jehovah his God by keeping all the words of this law in these statutes and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children in Israel."

Let me unpack this because this is the cream of the crop. I slowed down, and I tried to read it with emphasis, especially the verse that says, "He shall write for himself in a book a **copy of this law**." In Hebrew, this would be translated "Mishneh Hatorah." Mishneh means copy. Torah means law. It's a copy of the law.

As we mentioned before, the Hebrew Old Testament was also translated into Greek by and this translation was called the Septuagint, also referred to as the Greek Old Testament or The Translation of the Seventy. In the Septuagint, this phrase, copy of this law, is deutero nomion. Deutero means copy. Nomion means law.

You probably know where I'm going with this. That phrase is where we get the title for the book of Deuteronomy. Deutero nomion. Deutero, copy. Nomion, law. This king, chosen by God is supposed to sit down, talk to the Levitical priests, ask for a copy of the law, and write for himself in a book a copy of this law.

I set out to do that once and I didn't make it through very many chapters. It takes a long time [laughs] to write the whole book of Deuteronomy by hand. But I expect when you're done, you are going to remember it.

There are five promises that accompany his effort.

1. If the king does this, he will develop a reverence for God and learn to fear Jehovah.
2. He will be obedient, "By keeping all of the words of this law and doing them."
3. He will be humble "that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers."
4. He will be balanced, "that he may not turn aside either to the right hand or to the left."
5. He and his family will live long and prosper, "that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children in Israel."

I'm going to sum up what He shouldn't do. Don't acquire many horses. Don't purchase horses from Egypt. Don't marry many wives. Don't get accumulate riches. What you CAN do is write a copy of Deuteronomy for yourself so that you will be reverent, obedient, humble, balanced, and then you and your family will be blessed. Before I go any further, Scott, what do you think about this unpacking of Deuteronomy?

Scott: The things that God said not to do is exactly what Solomon did.

Steve: [laughs] You're getting ahead of me.

Scott: Go ahead. Sorry. That was my big thought.

[laughter]

Steve: We'll just jump into it then. If you look at the life of Saul, very sad. If you look at the life of David, there were portions that were sad, but there was also incredible blessings because David loved God. Knew God. God knew David. God loved David. Solomon, had every advantage. He had a father who knew God. David even told him, "Make sure that you stay in the word. Make sure that you pray." All the things that he'd learned, he passed on to Solomon. Solomon was described as the wisest king in Israel's history. This is a smart man. Not only smart, but he was wise.

In 1 Kings chapter 10 and 11, looking at the life of Solomon, you discover exactly what Scott already observed. 1 Kings 10:28, "The horses which Solomon had were brought out of Egypt." 1 Kings 11:3-4, "He had 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines" and his wives turned away his heart. "For it came to pass when Solomon was old that his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not perfect with Jehovah his God, as was the heart of David, his father.

1 Kings 10:14, "The weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold." Verse 23, "King Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom."

There was not a lot that God told the king to do, and Solomon systematically dropped the ball on each of those commands. I'll tell you how it speaks to me. If the wisest man on the earth is given the clearest directions and if he can't apply them because somehow he thinks he's smarter or wiser or he's better than everybody else, and he'll never make those mistakes, then he does, I better take care of myself.

It is a sad, sad commentary on Solomon's life, but it's a poignant exhortation to me that I hope I never get so smart that I'm going to stop reading the Bible. If God lets me live longer and my glasses keep getting thicker, and if you ever come to visit me in my home, I hope you'll see me sitting there reading the word of God because I want to do this every day of my life.

I don't want to just close on a sad note. Let's look at the positive side. What is a true wise man? This is where I wish this was videotaped, so I could show all the motions and I could sing about the wise man who built his house upon the rock.

The rains came down, and the floods came up, and the rains came, and the house on the rock stood firm. Everybody knows the motions. Most people know the song if you've been around church at any length of time. It's taken from Matthew 7:24-27, right towards the end of the sermon on the mount, which is Matthew 5-7 where Jesus teaches systematically the people.

Let me read this passage, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock, and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on the rock."

I'm going to stop there. I have spoken to many audiences, and I will sometimes read this and say, "What's the difference between the wise man and the foolish man?" I have rarely had anybody answer the question correctly. Rarely. They'll say, "Well, they built their house on Christ."

I reply, "No, that's wrong." "Well, they built their house on the rock." "No. What made it the rock?" The rest of that passage gives the answer, "Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

It's simple. I'm going to read it again real slowly. "Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man. Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man."

I try to unpack this for people, and I say, "Look, these two fellows may have gone to the same church. They may have been in the same Bible study. They may have been in the same men's group, and they took notes. They had notebooks full of insights. They knew the Greek and the Hebrew, the whole thing."

"No, that's not what set them apart. What set them apart is the wise man heard something, and he applied it. He did it. The foolish man left it in his notebook. He did not apply it to his life. That's the difference between a wise man and a foolish man." James says the same thing in chapter 1:22, "Be doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving yourself." This is the difference. It is simple obedience. Don't talk to me about grace and everything else right now. I'm focusing on one thought, which is if you will hear God's word, read it and apply it.

If Solomon had made a copy of that law, which is what God told him to do, and if Solomon had applied the principles and specific commands. Don't get a bunch of horses. Don't get them from Egypt. Don't get a bunch of wives, and don't get a bunch of money. All of which Solomon did, and great was the fall of it to quote Matthew 7:27.

There you go. We have a man that was supposed to be wise and wasn't and a man who was a wise man, and built his house on the rock. Your turn.

Scott: We've been talking about this a fair amount this weekend. I'm getting into some good discussions among my son and the rest of the family, but particularly my son who's home from college. He's running into a variety of people at his Christian college that he goes to, and they're learning lots of stuff.

It's interesting to see where are they applying the word. Where are they not? What parts do they emphasize? What parts do they choose to ignore? Those kind of things.

Steve: It's hard to be in a Christian college these days. You listen to well-meaning people who have a special testimony, and they're kind and they're winsome and they disobey the word of God. I shouldn't laugh when I say that.

That's a hard position for a young person to be in because they think, "Man, this guy knows God better than me. He's got all his wisdom. He's read the Bible." But it's the simple obedience that makes the difference.

Scott: It sounds like it's a simple thing. It's like, "Oh. Well, he was just simply disobedient." When you look at Solomon, and you're paying attention, it seems fairly easy to notice, but it took me a while to realize, "Holy cow. Solomon did everything he was told not to do in Deuteronomy."

I didn't recognize that right away. I'm pretty sure Solomon didn't recognize it right away either. It's not like he just decided, "Lord doesn't know what he's talking about. I'm getting some horses. I'm going to Egypt." It probably happened gradually because he wasn't in the word daily. It's easy to forget when you're not in it.

Steve: In the beginning of 1 Kings 10 the Queen of Sheba came up. She basically said, "Oh, Solomon, you're so wonderful." She built up the guy out of his mind. "Happy are the people who get to hear your wisdom." Everything that I heard wasn't even a half of what the truth is. Oh, you're unbelievable."

Steve: This was reputed to be the golden age of Israel, during the reign of Solomon.

Scott: Yes, but it was already the downfall because he was disobeying everything God said to do.

Steve: And the effects were felt in his home. His family suffered. He suffered. Everybody suffered because he didn't obey God's clear directions. I tell you it makes me hold my breath because I wonder what my blind spots are. That's why we have to keep reading the word.

Father, thank you that you have given us your word. Thank you for Scott that he was smart enough to read Deuteronomy, so when he read 1 Kings, he saw the connection. If we didn't have Deuteronomy, we wouldn't have understood 1 Kings.

Help us to be simple, childlike, obedient, godly followers of Jesus. Help us not to get all caught up in the heirs and the accolades of the Queen of Shebas in our lives. Help us to keep our head down low. Be humble. Be in your word. When we see something in your word, help us to apply it, obey it so we can be like that wise man in Matthew chapter 7. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Scott: Amen. That's our show for this week, folks. Thanks for joining us for the Building Faith Families Podcast with Steve Demme. If you have a question for the show, email Steve at spdemme@gmail.com. If you have a question for me, you can reach me at scott@unsocializedmedia.com. Thanks for joining us. Have a great week.