

# Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Deuteronomy 11:18-21, 26-28

Pastor Randy Ott

## God's Prescription for a Healthy Heart and a Strong Mind

If you watch any television at all eventually you are going to see those commercials for various drugs. The commercials where they have all kinds of beautiful pictures or cute little animation and at the end, a boisterous voice gets very, very fast and very, very low as he lists all the side effects that may come if you take this kind of pill. There are all kinds of pills for everything. One of them shows a little brown creature walking around and a cloud follows it all over and it is raining on it and it says, "Feeling blue, here's the pill for you. It will fix your mind right up." One of the commercials for one of the aspirin companies right now tells us that they only make this certain dosage because that is the best dosage for your heart. So if you take this, it is going to help with all those things.

Those things certainly can be a blessing from our God if we are in situations where we need that kind of medical help. But our God comes to us today and talks about our hearts and our minds, and he doesn't point us to something that is going to block or fix the chemical imbalance in our brains or that is going to open clogged arteries. Our God gives us his prescription for our hearts and minds—what he wants us to "fix" to them. It is nothing chemical at all. It is his love, his grace, his message, his mercy, and his reminders, his law, his gospel, and his Word. God's prescription for a healthy heart and a strong mind that he lays in front of the Israelites and that he lays in front of us is his Word. He tells us to study that Word, share that Word and live that Word. Then he shows us that in his grace, he will bless us even though if we do all these things perfectly, we still haven't earned a thing from his hand. Yet God, in his grace, tells us he will bless us.

Moses first spoke these words in Deuteronomy to the Israelites before they were going to go into the Promised Land. A generation had died that had wandered in the wilderness. Those he was talking to probably didn't recall very clearly the law that was given to them as it was given at Mt. Sinai with all of the thunder and the lightning and the cloud and Moses' face shining and things like that. So Moses goes over the law again—God's covenant with his people again with them in the Book of Deuteronomy. He lays before them all these things that the Lord has for them—his commands and his promises. He says to them, "*Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.*" Fix these words in your hearts and minds—we do that as we study God's Word. The Psalmist says, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." That is how we fix God's Word to our hearts and our minds. We learn it. We study it. We make it a part of our very thought process. The more we know this Word, the more it is going to affect the way we think, the way we look at things, how we view life in general. The more it is

fixed in us, the more it is a part of us and it guides us. That is only going to come from study. That is going to come from time spent wrestling with God's Word, looking at God's Word, seeing what God is saying to us. What is he telling me about myself?

When you read through God's Word, read through a section of it and ask, "What is he telling me about myself? Is he showing me my sin? Is he showing me how he loves me and has taken away my sin? What is he telling me that he wants me to do? What is he telling me about himself? What does it lead me to do?" Wrestle with that Word and struggle with it and make it a part of you—not just reading the words and letting your eyes go across the page and the words go into your mind and out the other side as you go on to the next sentence. Really study it. Dig deeply into it.

It really impresses upon us that that is what he wants us to do when he talks about "*tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.*" Make them a part of what you do and make them a part of what you think. Many of the Jews literally made these boxes and put passages in them and tied them on their arms. If that was a reminder to do what it was saying, that is fine. But God wants us to have this Word be such a part of us—his commands—that they guide us at all times, that they are there in what we think and they are there in what we do.

As you and I go through life, we are going to find a lot of advice from a lot of people. A lot of it is just going to be something that you should spread on your garden. It is going to be useless, but it is going to be there and it is going to be prevalent. It is going to be telling us that certain things that God says is sin are okay. We are even going to have our own sinful nature that is going to tell us that studying God's Word is something that is only for children, because after all that is what it talks about in this text—*teach them to your children.* It is only for the kids until they are confirmed, and then after you are confirmed there isn't that much need for studying God's Word.

If you are going to watch television, if you are going to go to the movies, you are going to need God's Word tied onto your forehead and on your arms and on your hands in the sense that you are going to need to know God's Word so that you can apply it to what you are seeing so that you can watch with a discerning eye so that you don't let these things creep into the way you think and approach things. Otherwise pretty soon God's Word is not God's Word, it's just another book on the level with the Koran. Or pretty soon homosexuality is just an alternate lifestyle and not a sin against God. Pretty soon gossip is just sharing information and it is not really a sin. Pretty soon all the things that you and I do that we know is wrong, we convince ourselves are not really that wrong, it is just our choice and we should have our own choice.

The fact of the matter is that we sin because we don't study God's Word the way we should. We don't find time for it. Think about it in your daily life. What do you find yourself relating things more to? Television shows that you have watched on T.V.? Can you quote Friends verbatim? Can you quote from MASH from a different generation? Can you recognize all of those words and apply it to this situation in your life? Or do you go to the words of Moses and the prophets and the evangelists? If we are honest with ourselves, we probably relate things more to what we see every day. For many of us what we see every day is more from television than it is from God's

Word. You and I have despised God's Word because we haven't always taken advantage of the times to study it. We have already failed to keep everything God has told us to do because we don't figuratively tie these on our hands and bind them on our foreheads. We slap a lot of junk up there instead.

The amazing thing about our God is that even though you and I clearly know what he wants us to do, and we choose to do other things at times, our God still loved us so much that he sent Jesus to live in our place and die in our place. He loves us so much that he forgives us even though at times we are complete and absolute idiots and walk in a different direction than he points us. He forgives us and he loves us. As we internalize that as the Spirit leads us to see that we have sinned, once we get past shoveling out all the excuses and all the rationalizations and we see our sin and we see what our sin deserves—which is hell—when we see that God has taken it away through the life and death of Jesus, then a couple of things happen.

First of all, we rejoice. We rejoice that we have a God that loves us this much. Then secondly, we have a greater desire to study the Word. We have a greater desire to know a God who is that incredible better. It doesn't matter—a lot of the things that you and I can quote—but if we can quote scripture and share scripture with one another, we have something eternal to share. That is what God wants us to do with it. He wants us to study it so that we can share it. Share it with your children. Talk about it *when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up*. Talk about it with them, because that is what God has given as a task to parents—teach children the Word. Share the Word with them.

But you know the truth, don't you? The greatest way you and I are going to share God's Word with our children is going to be how we live that Word, isn't it? We want to have devotions with our families. We want to share the Word with them that way. But they are going to remember a lot more the phrases that we say every day of our lives. They are going to remember what we are saying when things don't go our way. They are going to remember if we are sending our checkbook to hell because it doesn't have a big enough balance. They are going to remember all the things that we damned to hell because we are upset with them, as much as they are going to remember us talk about the love of God in Christ. So share the Word with your children, but not just when they are kids.

Share it with them after they are grown, because God has called all of us to teach and admonish one another and to share the love of Christ with one another. Share the Word with your children and tell them the mighty deeds that God has done, but when they screw up, don't just tell them that they have done wrong. You need to do that. But also tell them that Christ died for that sin. Point them to the love of God in Christ Jesus as the answer to the problems and the sins that they commit. For the times that they are idiots and the times that you are an idiot and sin, confess that sin and show them that in Christ, you are forgiven. That is what God calls us to do. *When you lie down and when you get up*—every aspect of your life—let God's Word permeate it so that it shows through to your children and also to those around you. Share the gospel of Christ in your actions as well as in your words.

That is what God is talking about. Share it and live it. Tie it onto your *doorframes of your houses and on your gates*. As you are in your house and as you go out of your house the reminder is to take God's Word with you. Let it guide your thoughts, your words, and your actions. Live God's Word. It even puts before us that promise of a blessing—a blessing that comes from his grace—but also a reminder of his love that we will be cursed if we do not follow these things. We will suffer things that God doesn't necessarily want us to suffer, but we bring upon ourselves because we neglect him and his Word. Think about it. Live these words that God gives us.

How many people haven't had to suffer things in life because they chose their own path? Because they have turned to alcohol or drugs. Because they have turned to the arms of someone besides their spouse and now their life is torn apart. Those curses do come. But you and I have the answer to those curses. You and I have the answer to those problems. You and I can point people back to the perfect life and innocent death of Jesus who takes away the sins that we commit that bring these problems into our lives. We can remind people that God still loves us in spite of our foolishness.

If you want a healthy heart and a strong mind, spend time in God's Word. Spend time in it alone. Spend time in it with your fellow Christians so that you can come together and learn from one another's experiences. If you sit down and study all of God's Word again as an adult, you are going to find that you have a whole different set of life experiences than you had when you were in 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Those basic doctrines of the Bible are going to come alive as you look back over your life and apply them and see how God has kept his word, how God has blessed us, how God has allowed difficulty into lives when we have gone our own way. But the one thing we will see constantly is God's love for us in Christ remains certain. A healthy heart and a strong mind is always and only going to be centered in the life and death of Jesus Christ.