

The Christian's Job Description: Discipleship and God's Kingdom

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Vineyard Core Series
Deuteronomy 10:12-22**

Some years ago Scott Adams, who did the cartoon, Dilbert, put out a request to his readers on his blog. He asked people to describe their own job in one sentence, preferably in a humorously, derogatory way.

My job is to...

1. Take numbers on pieces of paper, rearrange them, and put them on different pieces of paper.

What job is that?

Tax Accountant

How about this:

2. Find as many synonyms for "explosion" as possible.

Novelist for teenage boys

3. Spend most of the day looking out the window.

The job?

Pilot

4. Help people hate each other

The job?

Divorce Lawyer

5. Stand on a field and get yelled at for hours

The job?

Baseball Umpire

6. Talk as other people sleep

The job?

College Professor

SLIDE

7. Repeatedly fix what you repeatedly break

The job?

IT Director

8. Clean up an animal that makes more money in a year than I make in a lifetime

The job?

Assistant Horse Trainer

9. Shepherd clients through the process of setting their products on fire

The job?

Consumer products tester

Here is my all-time favorite:

10. Be a human napkin

The job?

Stay-at-home mom of three pre-schoolers

As I read these job descriptions, I thought to myself: I wonder what most Christians would say is their job description. If you were to write down in a few sentences what your job description is, what would you write? Maybe some things like this:

- Go to church most weekends
- Fight with kids and spouse on the way to church
- Show up at church not more than 15 minutes late
- Sit in the back
- Eat little pieces of Styrofoam and wash down with grape juice from the world's tiniest cup

- Occasionally laugh during the sermon
- Try to be nice person
- Leave early from church to beat the traffic
- Occasional other meetings as fits your schedule

You look down the list and you say to yourself: is this the job description that God sent his Son to die on a cross for? Is this God's mission in the world – just to get some people to try to be nice, go to meetings when it is convenient, put a few dollars in a bag? For this, Jesus died and rose from the dead? There's got to be something more.

Since New Year's I've been doing a series that I've titled Vineyard Core. It is really the essential elements of what the Christian life is all about. What does it look like for a person to live under the rule of Christ?

Picture of a Pentagon with God's Kingdom in the center, worship at the bottom, community on one side, and then discipleship on the opposite the other side.

I've called today's talk, The Christian's Job Description: Discipleship and God's Kingdom. Let's pray.

Deuteronomy 10:12–22 (NIV)

12 And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

14 To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. 15 Yet the LORD set his affection on your ancestors and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations—as it is today. 16 Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. 17 For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. 18 He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. 19 And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt. 20 Fear the LORD your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name. 21 He is the one you praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes. 22 Your ancestors who went down into Egypt were seventy in all, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky.

This text sets out not only for the Old Testament people of Israel, but also God's New Testament people, the church, what is a pretty significant part of the Christian job description. Before we engage in any undertaking, we ought to know what's required of us. And this is not just for paid employment. If you are going to volunteer for a task – to

serve in our food pantry, to teach in our children's ministry, to host a small group in your home – one of the questions you ought to be asking is what are the job requirements? What do you want me to do?

And I would extend this understanding to our personal relationships. What does it look like to be a good mom or a good dad? What's the job description of a father, or a mother, or a friend? If you're going to get married, what are the expectations of being a husband, or of being a wife?

So many disagreements are created because folks have wildly different understandings of their job descriptions. That's what you thought being a father was? You bring home a paycheck? Sorry. I've got ten other items on your list.

So, what's God's expectation of you, if you sign up to be in relationship with him? Let's look at v. 12:

Deuteronomy 10:12 (NIV)

12 And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,

Fear the Lord

There are well over a hundred references to the word "fear" of God in the Bible. To fear God, or being a God-fearer, is synonymous with being a follower of God. The person who is in relationship with God is called a God-fearer. Those who have their backs turned towards God, who have nothing to do with God, are said to not fear the Lord.

Now, it is absolutely the case that the fear of God is found more often in the Old Testament than in the New Testament. But it is not missing from the New Testament. Here is what we read in Luke 12:5:

Luke 12:5 (NIV)

5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.

Acts 9:31 (NIV)

31 Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.

Acts 10:34-35 (NIV)

35 God does not show any favoritism, but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.

The fear of God is not shrinking in terror from God. The fear of God is really an all-embracing, all-encompassing umbrella term for being in relationship with God, standing in awe of God, taking God seriously, taking God's threats seriously, trusting in God's promises, submitting to God. To fear God in the Bible is to have a genuine experience of the living God. There does contain an element of quaking in your boots, of falling on your face, of surrendering, submitting, and yielding to God.

Because the fear of God is such an all-encompassing concept in the Bible, I just want to take one aspects of the fear of God. There are many, but the one I want to look at is this - the fear of the Lord involves the fear of sin.

Fear of sin

Here is what we read in Proverbs 8:13:

Proverbs 8:13 (NIV)

13 To fear the LORD is to hate evil;
I hate pride and arrogance,
evil behavior and perverse speech.

Friends, have you ever sat down and just wrote out a list of what habitual sin does in your life? If you are a Christian, if you believe yourself to be in a personal relationship with Christ that's making a difference in your life, what is the effect of habitually doing what God does not want you to do, or habitually failing to do what God wants you to do? What's the effect of sin in a Christian's life?

If you were here for my Romans series, you heard me teach that sin will not keep a saved person from going to heaven. We do not earn our way into salvation. If you've been embraced by the love of God, then nothing can separate you from his love now, or eternally. Nothing that you do, nothing that is done to you – we don't earn our way into God's favor. You didn't get in by cleaning up your life, and you don't stay in by cleaning up your life. Getting in and staying in are entirely a matter of God's grace. Salvation is all of God and none of us.

So, if sin won't keep you from eternal life, what is the impact of sin? Why should the Christian fear sin? Because sin breaks our fellowship with God. It doesn't break your union with Christ, but sin breaks your communion with Christ. If you are in habitual sin, you cannot be regularly experiencing the presence of the Spirit in your life.

So many folks say, "You know. I have no real experience of God. I believe that God exists. I go to church. I engage in Bible study. I occasionally pray. But I have no experience of God."

Now, I know we're all wired differently – some people are more stoic in their emotional life. Certainly, our family of origin, and our religious backgrounds, and our temperaments, will affect our capacity to experience relationship, and even experience God. But I tell you, one of the great barriers to an experiencing God is habitual sin. If you are habitually engaged in sin, something you know God doesn't want you to do, or you are not doing what God wants you to do, you can have more religion in your life, but you are going to have less spiritual reality. You're going to have less experience of God because you are regularly grieving the Holy Spirit. The result of habitual sin is that your relationship with God will become more unreal, more of an abstraction, more intellectual, much less of a relationship of love and trust.

If you are engaged in habitual sin, it will cause guilt. If you slow down and think about your present spiritual state, and you see that you are engaged in habitual sin, you will see that you have offended God and have offended against his laws.

And here is the terrible thing. When something bad happens – you get in a car accident, your kid gets sick, your finances take a hit, you struggle at work or in a relationship – if you are filled with guilt, you're going to believe that God is out to get you. You will think to yourself: This bad thing happened because of my sin.

There is a great illustration of this back in the book of Genesis. Joseph's brothers were jealous of Joseph because Joseph was the favorite in the family. They got even with him by selling their brother into slavery. Joseph was taken to Egypt where he was sold as a slave. Eventually, because God was with him, Joseph rose to become the ruler of the land. 20 years later, Joseph's brothers are still living with unresolved guilt and when disaster strikes in their lives, here is what we read:

Genesis 42:21–22 (NIV)

21 They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come on us."

22 Reuben replied, "Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn't listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood."

That's what you're going to feel like, if you habitually sin. Bad things come into everyone's life. And when bad things come into your life, friends, you are going to say to yourself, "This bad thing happened because of my sin." And on the other hand, if you habitually sin, it is going to be harder and harder for you to believe that God will give you good things. You think to yourself, "Why would God want to bless me with an answer to my prayers, healing, or with a job, or with a relationship, or with success, when I know that I'm doing what God hates?"

Here is the third thing sin does. Sin causes shame. Like our first parents did in the Garden, we who sin against God hide from God, and we hide from other people. We

don't want to let other people in to our lives because we think: If you knew what I was into, you would hate me. Sin causes us to hide from ourselves and to engage in what Freud called "defense mechanisms." We rationalize away our sin. Anyone in my situation, with my circumstances, would do what I did. We deny that something is wrong. We redefine sin. We repress it. We compartmentalize. Well, most of my life is going well. It is just this one area. Sin causes us to engage in all of these defense mechanisms.

And sin opens the door to the Evil One. The Bible says that Satan is looking for a foothold in your life. He is constantly feeling around the edges to see if there is a crack. Satan is constantly knocking on the door. Do you really want to open the door to darkness – not just for you, but for your loved ones, your family members, your children? Do you really want to open the door? We see this, friends, over and over again where a parent has opened to the door to darkness and their children, sometimes their grandchildren, suffer as a result.

To fear the Lord is to fear sin.

Here is the second part of our job description.

Deuteronomy 10:12 (NIV)

12 ...to walk in obedience [lit. the ways of] to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,

The NIV translates the Hebrew here "to walk in obedience to him." Literally, it means "to walk in the ways of God."

Walk in the ways of the Lord

Keeping the way of the Lord, or walking in the way of the Lord is a favorite expression in the Old Testament. Walking in the way of the Lord marks Israel out as distinct from all the nations, who walked in the ways of other gods. It is distinct from walking in the ways of the nations, or walking in your own way, or in the way of sinners. To be a Christian is to do life in a distinctive way. A Christian is someone who walks in the way of Jesus.

Christopher Wright, a great Old Testament scholar, says that there are two distinct pictures being painted here about walking in the way of the Lord. The first is that of following someone on a path watching their footsteps and following the way that he is going. We're talking about the imitation of God. But the idea is that you observe how God acts, and you try to follow his pattern.

The hymn writer says:

O let me see Thy footsteps

And in them plant my own

The other is trying to follow a map. To give you a little word picture, I would like you to imagine a time when you were driving around somewhere in an unfamiliar city and you got lost. You drove down different streets and you just simply could not find where you wanted to go. I don't know if you have ever had this experience, but I have on a number of occasions been where I saw the highway that I wanted over to my left and I am driving along and there is just no road that intersects that highway. You pick one of the roads that appear to intersect the highway and you discover that the road goes under the highway, but there is no on-ramp. The on-ramp on your GPS is closed.

You know, at those moments I want one of those springs that can somehow lift my car up onto the highway. Isn't there any kind of lift here or spring mechanism that will just pop my car up there? Can I drive up the grass? But it seems like I can't get there from here. Do you know that experience?

Now, you know the blessing and the relief that comes when you finally stop and ask directions from someone who knows how to get on the highway. He says, "Oh, the on-ramp is down a mile from here on such and such a road." Or, you finally stop and take the time to read the map that is in your glove compartment. You pull off to the side of the road and read the map, instead of trying to figure it out, guys, for yourself. Because real men can figure out how to get on a highway, you don't need a map. You don't need directions. But you suppress your testosterone for a while and look at the map. You know the relief that comes when you see, "Oh my goodness. Okay, here is where I need to go"?

Well, Christians are people who believe that there really is a road map that will get us where we want to go, and the map accurately describes life. It is called the Bible, the way of the Lord. Thinking people are people who follow a road map drawn by folks who know the area. You are not unthinking or a blind conformist if you follow a map.

Maybe you have a simple goal of finding some internal peace. You are an anxious person. You say, "How am I going to get peace in my life? I just need a little peace." Maybe you say, "I have a goal; it is to break free of this particular addictive habit. I find myself completely stuck in a repetitive addictive habit that is tearing my life down." Maybe you say, "You know, I have a goal of raising kids who succeed in life. I just want to raise good and healthy kids." Or "I just want to have a stable, loving relationship that lasts. I'm tired of being with losers. I'm tired of fighting. I'm tired of breakups. I just want the kind of relationship that I do see that some other people seem to have. I want to find a great guy to date and maybe to marry." How do I get from here to there?

Christians say, in contrast to most of the rest of America, there is a road map that is a true and reliable guide that will get me from here to there. You see, most of America has been taught that we just need to somehow, through friends and our own wits and

our own gut instincts, draw our own road maps. We are lost on some road, somewhere in America. We see the highway, but we can't find the on-ramp. The teaching that we get in school and the assumption that we drink in through every movie and every TV show and most magazines is "Well, you simply have to find your own way. Draw your own map." Follow your own gut. March to the beat of your own drummer. Look inside yourself for your inner map. And so millions of us just repeatedly drive in circles and hit dead end after dead end and never find freedom or happiness.

There is a way to get there from here. You don't have to live this way. We don't have to be as frustrated as we are with life. The way to get from here to there in the Bible is called the way of the Lord. It is by listening to God – what God has said in this book called the Bible, by responding to God's prompting by his Spirit. That's the second part of the Christian job description.

Fear the Lord. Walk in the way of the Lord. And third,

Love the Lord

Deuteronomy 10:12 (NIV)

12 And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,

Loving the Lord is about as basic a part of the Christian job description as anything else you can imagine. Jesus gave us two great commandments:

To love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

I love what Richard Stearns, the head of World Vision which is the largest Christian relief agency in the world, said years ago in his wonderful book titled The Hole in our Gospel:

Book Cover The Hole In Our Gospel by Richard Stearns

He wrote:

Love God, love people, that's the Bible for dummies.

Whenever you think about this part of your job description, to love God, you need to start where the Bible starts and this with God's love for you. Here is what we read in 1 John 4:10:

1 John 4:10 (NIV)

10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

A century ago, the *New York Times* printed a story about a priest and a boy, who drowned after rescuing many people. It took place in 1906 at a college in Chicago named St. Bede College, a Catholic college for boys. The boys went skating one day with a young, handsome, priest.

More than twenty of the boys grouped and the photographer was waiting for them to become settled for a picture, when the ice opened under their feet.

In an instant the boys were struggling in ten feet of water. The ice was thinner than they had thought, and broke into fragments as the struggling boys grasped it.

Father Simon was a short distance away when the ice broke. As quickly as he could he reached the hole, throwing off cassock and coat as he ran. Then, ordering the other boys to keep away from the cracked ice, he plunged into the river.

One by one he carried five of the boys to the edge of the ice and held them there until the others pulled them to safety.

In all there were twenty boys in the water. Reuter, who was a senior, was one of them, but he could swim. It would have been an easy matter for him to have dragged himself on to the strong ice, but the priest called him to help those who could not swim. Reuter obeyed. Two of the boys who were saved owe their lives to him. When young Reuter had rescued the second boy his strength was exhausted, but he tried to swim out again for another, one of the two who were drowned. The effort was too great, however, and Reuter, together with the boys he would have saved, sank.

Meanwhile the priest was in the water dragging the boys to the edge of the ice and calling instructions to those who were pulling them to safety. When he had rescued all but one of the boys then above water Father Simon clung for a moment to the ice. His strength was gone, and his pupils begged him to save himself. But the priest struck out again. At the last he failed. Numbed and exhausted, he was forced to give up, and with a last glance toward the boy for whom he gave up his life he sank.

By this time other priests had arrived, and while Father Simon and the boy disappeared, the other priests with crosses raised high in the air, read the services for the dying.

John 15:13 (NIV)

13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

But it is not only in dying for us that God showed his love towards us. God showed us his love for us by stepping out of heaven, coming down into this broken world, taking on human flesh, living among us in the person we know as Jesus. Love is so intangible, so hard to get a hold of. What exactly is love?

The Bible says: You want to get a handle on love? It looks like, acts like, and feels like God taking on flesh and coming down and speaking to us on our level.

Have you ever watched an adult talk to a child? One position is to stand erect and to talk down to the child, make the child strain her neck to look up. But love kneels down. Some adults kneel down and look children in the eye. That's what God did in the person of Jesus. Instead of standing above us, making us strain to look up, God got down on his knees and came down to our level.

You know, my favorite baseball team is the Yankees. It is the best sports franchise of all time. Nothing else is even a close second. The story is told about two old baseball players, two Yankees players – Phil Rizzuto, who was a Yankees shortstop and long-time announcer for the Yanks, and Joe Torre, who was then the Yankees manager. Phil Rizzuto once said to Joe Torre: "You know, Joe, you could manage a whole lot better, if you sat up here in the press box with me. You could see the whole field. You could call down plays from up here." Joe Torre responded and said, "I couldn't manage from way up here. I got to be down on the field. Because it is only down on the field that I can look my players in the eye."

That's what God in love did. He got down out of the press box, as it was; he came down on the field. He lived in our midst. And then he died to save us.

One of the constant questions that people ask is this: If there is a God, why isn't it enough for him for me to be a good person and to live a good life? Why do you Christians say that I also need to love God? Why can't someone get in by being a good and decent person? Why do I also need to have a relationship with Jesus?

Maybe that's your question? Isn't being good, good enough?

Let me give you another illustration. I want you to imagine a single mom, who has one son and she loves her son immensely. And this mom basically structures her life, does everything in her power to see her son succeed. She gets up early every morning to make him a hot breakfast. She scrimps and saves and sacrifices so that she can send her son to a private school because the schools in their area are failing and she wants to give her son the best possible education. She works for years at a job she doesn't like for a boss that is dreadful, but she does it for her son. She saves every penny so that

she can send her son to college. She even does extra work in the evening after her son goes to bed to earn a little extra money. She does it all for her son.

Well, her son goes to college and then mom puts him through medical school. He becomes a success. He lives a decent life. He is honest. He is a hardworking doctor. He does everything right, except this one tiny little thing. He never relates to his mother who made his success possible. When she calls, he has her calls drop into voice mail, but he never calls back. He never returns her phone calls. He never acknowledges her birthday. He never visits. He never speaks to her. He never writes a thank you note to her when she sends him gifts which she continues to do despite his neglect..

What would you think of this son? Would you say, "That's OK as long as he is a good person, if you can call him that. He doesn't need to be in relationship with his mother." Almost everyone would say that there was something horribly insufficient about being a good, decent person and refusing a relationship with the one who made it all possible.

Jesus didn't just scrip and save to send us to college. He died a horrible death on a cross to bring us into relationship with God.

God is not just interested in you living a good and decent life. He wants to be in a relationship of love with you. What does it mean for you to love God? Well, what does it mean for you to love anyone? When you love someone, you spend time with them. When you love someone, it is not just a grim duty to be with them, you look forward to being with them. You don't say, "Well, because I'm such a good person, I will spend 15 minutes with you." When you love someone, you talk to them, you listen to them, you want to get to know them better, and you want them to know you better.

Fear the Lord. Walk in the way of the Lord. Love the Lord.

Submit to the Lord

Deuteronomy 10:12 (NIV)

12 And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,

To serve the Lord in the Old Testament meant to worship the Lord. It also meant to submit to the Lord. Here is the idea. Jesus is Lord. The New Testament writers took the God title, Lord, and they gave it to Jesus. And this title, Lord, goes back to the time with the Old Testament was translated into Greek in the City of Alexandria, in about 200 BC. The Jewish rabbis, who translated the Bible, didn't know how to handle the scared name of God, which was Yahweh. They wouldn't pronounce the sacred name of God. They didn't feel free to even translate it, or transliterate it. So they put the phrase "the Lord" in its place. That's why Yahweh still appears in most English versions as "the Lord."

What's amazing is this Old Testament title for God, the Lord, Yahweh, is given to Jesus in the New Testament by his followers.

What does it mean to submit to the Lord? John Stott, who was one of the greatest Bible teachers of the 20th century, said that submission to Jesus as Lord has multiple dimensions. It has an intellectual dimension. When you say that Jesus is Lord, what you are saying is that I'm going to submit my mind to Jesus. We all like to think our own thoughts, to have our own opinions about what we think is true and what we think makes sense. And if our thoughts contradict God's thoughts, oh well, so much the worse for him. To have Jesus be your Lord means that you have Jesus' thoughts, Jesus' opinions determine what you think and what your opinions are.

A disciple is not free to contradict the teaching of their Master – what Jesus taught us about God, about life, about death, about himself, about our responsibilities, about money, about sex, about work, about forgiving people who hurt us, about the permanence of marriage. To submit to the Lordship of Jesus is to submit intellectually.

Submitting to Jesus means to submit morally. A disciple is not free to determine truth on our own, and a disciple is not free to determine right and wrong on our own. If Jesus is your Lord, then he determines what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad.

The disciple submits to Christ vocationally. God has a call upon every one of us. It is not just pastors, or missionaries, who are called by God. Every single human being has been created by God for a purpose. What is the purpose for which God has created you? What unique thing are you called to at this time in your life? Maybe at this period of time, your calling is for you to be a full-time mom and raise your kids with all your energy. Maybe its to make a real difference in the lives of your patients, or your clients. Maybe it is to be a light in the university with your fellow students, or your colleagues. Maybe to pursue church planting, or pastoring, or missions, or to be an encourager to others. To say Jesus is your Lord is to submit to him vocationally. Friends, do you know what you are called to? Have you taken time to pray and say, "Lord, what calling do you have for my life?"

The Christian job description includes fearing the Lord, walking in the ways of the Lord, loving the Lord, submitting to the Lord, and listening to the Lord.

Listen to the Lord

Deuteronomy 10:12–13 (NIV)

12 And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your

God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

You know, one of the distinctive things about God in the Bible is that unlike all of the idols, the Lord is a speaking God. God speaks. And he continues to speak. And the response to God speaking is that we need to listen. That's part of the Christian job description – to listen to God. The call to listen to God is in every part of the Bible. In the law we read to love the Lord your God and to listen to his voice. In the Psalms, Today, O that you would listen to his voice. In the prophets, God complained through Jeremiah that: My people refuse to listen to my words. John 10:27 says this:

John 10:27 (NIV)

27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

You know, the main place we hear God's Word is in the Bible. When I came to Christ 40 years ago, the first thing I was taught the very first week is that I needed to read the Bible every day so that I could listen to God. And that's been my practice for 40 years. I open my bible in the morning and one of my first prayers is: "Lord, speak; your servant is listening." Holy Spirit, speak through your Word to me. God speaks through the Bible. God speaks by his Spirit.

The problem is not that God is refusing to speak to us. The problem is that we hear the Lord, but we don't want to listen. We hear God's broadcast, but we change the station. We receive messages from the Lord, but we delete them. Here is what we read in Proverbs 8:6:

Proverbs 8:6 (NIV)

6 Listen, for I have trustworthy things to say;
I open my lips to speak what is right.

God's voice is like a spark that falls on our hearts. When you hear God speaking to you about any area of your life – about your finances, your need to forgive somebody who has deeply hurt you, or you need to make a call to reconcile a relationship, or defensiveness, or your dating, or the way that you are speaking – don't snuff out the spark that's fallen on your heart. How many times have you had the experience of feeling like you were hearing a message from God whether it came through reading the scriptures, or by the Holy Spirit speaking to your heart, or maybe it was through a message you heard here at church through a sermon, or through some unsettling event in your life? You hear God speaking to you, maybe through a friend. How many times have you had a sense that maybe there is something in this from God for me. What do you do with it?

We have a choice – pay attention, listen, obey. It is like blowing on that spark that's fallen on your heart. You blow on it and it creates a blaze. That's how our relationship

with God becomes more real, more personal. We listen to those inclinations. We listen to scripture. We pay attention. We obey.

Or you have the spark of God's Word fall on your heart and you dismiss it. You pour water on it. You say, "Well, that's too hard. It's inconvenient. I'm going to change the channel." Part of the Christian job description is to listen to God.

What does the Lord ask of you? What are God's expectations when you sign up for a relationship with him?

Fear the Lord by fearing sin. Walk in the ways of the Lord. Love the Lord. Submit to the Lord. Listen to the Lord. And finally,

Imitate the Lord

Deuteronomy 10:17–19 (NIV)

17 For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. 18 He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. 19 And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.

Imitate the Lord. That's the foundation of so much teaching in the Bible. God is like this; he made you in his image, therefore, you imitate God. Here is what we read in Ephesians 5:1-2:

Ephesians 5:1–2 (NIV)

Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

It's important that if you are going to imitate a model that you, of course, choose the right model. For years we've heard of the need in America's inner cities to have mentors or good models for kids to follow. Rather than trying to imitate the drug dealer, whose driving a fancy car and always seems to have cash, folks have said that we need other kinds of models. We need other kinds of examples for young men to imitate. We need examples of business owners and engineers, and school teachers, and bankers. We need men around who are responsible with their children, who are fathers, who are husbands, who are providers for their families. If we are talking about imitating, it is important that we imitate the right people. Not necessarily movie stars or rappers, or people on Reality TV, but the apostle Paul says be imitators of God.

But beyond this, it is not only important for us to choose the right model, we also need to be discerning about what it is about that model that we are going to imitate. Some

people, if they are imitating a person, imitate the wrong things. Even if you are imitating a pastor, you imitate the pastor's hand motions, or speaking style, or their laugh, instead of imitating the pastor's values, the pastor's character, and the pastor's behaviors. We need to use the right model. The Bible says the right model for us to imitate is God.

But then, having chosen the right model, we need to choose the right attributes of God.

Here's the problem of human beings. Here's your problem in life and my problem in life. We almost always try to imitate those attributes of God that are unique to God and we fail to imitate those attributes of God that he does share with us. If you look at the problems that you have in your life, many of the problems are the result of trying to imitate the wrong things about God. You are trying to be like God in places that God is unique and you are not trying to be like God in those places where God is sharing his life with you.

For example, how many of you wrestle over issues of control? As a human being, you were never given control over the universe. God does not ask you to imitate his sovereignty. As parents, we try to control every experience that our child has, good and bad. We try to control all the circumstances surrounding our businesses and the economy. We try to control other people's feelings and other people's actions. We try to control the future and damage suffered as a result of the past. You are not asked to imitate God's control and your attempt to do so leads to massive anxiety and frustration.

Likewise, you are not asked to imitate God's knowledge. I was talking with someone recently and they were sharing with me a problem, a frustration, because another person was not moving along spiritually the way they wanted them to. I said to them, "Your real problem is that you can't figure out exactly how this person is ever going to turn to Christ." They said, "That's right. I can't figure it out." I said, "So you mean you aren't God?" The light went on and they said, "That's it. I'm always trying to be like God and I get frustrated because I can't figure things out, because I don't have all the answers."

One of the secrets to living life well is, first, picking the right model, the one you want to imitate, the person you want to be like. Paul says the model is God. And then figuring out what about that person should you try to imitate and what shouldn't you try to imitate?

So here in Deuteronomy, it says one of the things we're supposed to imitate about God, is his care for the least and the last.

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Widows, orphans, aliens – these were the people in ancient Israel, who lived on the margins of society. They weren't legally protected. They weren't physically protected. They weren't financially protected.

God cares about people who are really vulnerable. The reason that our church comes alongside of women facing unwanted pregnancies, as we did with 400 women last year through our Value Life Ministry, is because God cares about the vulnerable – vulnerable moms who are facing unintended pregnancies and vulnerable unborn children.

God cares about orphans. The reason that we're doing an Orphans Summit here at Vineyard Columbus on February 7-8, 2014 which will focus on the situation of orphans and foster kids here in Central Ohio and across the globe is that it is part of our imitation of God.

God cares about immigrants. The reason this church talks so much about immigrants and devotes so much of our resource to assisting immigrants through our Community Center is not because we have a political agenda of one kind or another. It is because God commands us as part of the Christian job description to care for immigrants.

Listen to this again:

Deuteronomy 10:18–19 (NIV)

18 He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. 19 And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.

Christian, have you thought through your job description as a follower of Christ?

Conclusion.

The Christian's Job Description: Discipleship and God's Kingdom

Rich Nathan
January 18-19, 2014
Vineyard Core Series
Deuteronomy 10:12-22

- I. **Fear the Lord**
 - A. Fear sin
- II. **Walk in the ways of the Lord**
- III. **Love the Lord**
- IV. **Submit to the Lord**
- V. **Listen to the Lord**
- VI. **Imitate the Lord**