

4 Now, Israel, hear the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land the Lord, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. **2** Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you.

6 Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” **7** What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him? **8** And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?

9 Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.

Got It Going On

There is so much unfortunate music and looking back it wasn't always much better. Some songs would burrow their way into your head, where the tune would get stuck, and if the refrain were annoying enough it'd be stuck there for at least a week. This song's refrain had something to do with, “Got it going on.” There are many songs that have to do with people, places, or even things who have got it going on. So maybe you're wondering what is “it” that they've got going on? When people say, “They've got it going on,” it's said because they have multiple things going for them. Job, stability, finances, work ethic, looks, life in general.

According to this definition, Israel has got it going on. Moses tells God's people the surrounding nations will be singing their praises, someday Israel would be great and they will have many things going for them, wisdom and understanding are just two of them. Technically it isn't Israel that is being praised but rather the nations will look to them and say, “Israel's God has got it going on.” Israel will have it going on because they are connected to God. Israel will have it going on because they are connected to God's Word. Did they feel great because God has blessed them with his Word and his presence?

Do we feel great because God is so near to us and has given us his Word? How many wake up each morning rejoicing with Bon Jovi, “We've got it going on”? If we realized how great it is that God is near us, that he has given us his Word we just might. Have we become accustomed to being so

closely connected to God? Maybe like Israel over time we too forget as the popularity goes to our head and we believe we are great and that we got it going on. Maybe you're on the other extreme and think, "I've got nothing going on." You don't feel important and even feel as if God has removed his presence and blessing from your life - leaving you discouraged and depressed. Whether you wake up rejoicing or long for sleep so you can forget or are somewhere in between God's promise to Israel and to us is that he is near and because of him we have so much going on.

Israel has so much going on. God delivered them from Egypt, led them through the sea on dry ground, miraculously provided for them in their wanderings, and now they are about to enter the Land that God will give them so they can make a home, a place to call their own. The opportunities abound. They have got it going on. Moses wants them to understand that and rejoice in it. He wants them to realize the blessings that God has given them but most importantly he wants them to Hear, to Learn, to Obey and remember even after they have everything going for them. When the world around them looks to them and says, "There is no other nation so great! He wants them to remember what and who made them such wise and understanding people. It wasn't Israel itself that was great.

The Law and the LORD made Israel great. Moses was clear on this point, "*It is not because you were more numerous than all the other peoples that the Lord favored and chose you – for in fact you were the least numerous of all peoples*" (Deuteronomy 7:7) Moses says, "*You had nothing going on.*" After they become rich and prosperous, enjoy God's blessings Moses wants them to remember, "*it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people*" (Deuteronomy 9:5-7). You were as dumb as a pop song, useless, you brought nothing to the table. As they find success in a rich nation it would be easy for them to lose sight of God and who it is that makes them great.

Therefore, "*Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."* What great nation is there that has gods near to it like the LORD our God? What great nation is there that has statutes and ordinances righteous as all this law? The answer to these questions, of course, is "none!" The Israelite nation is incomparably great because it is so closely connected to its God. God is in the midst of the people. The nations took note. The people noticed. Even the Queen of Sheba came to see if all the rumors were true.

We have so much going for us, even if we don't often realize it. God has delivered us from sin, death, and the devil. He has given us the truth of his word. God has given us us Word, his expectations and his promises. Often these are the gifts that we take for granted because we are busy. Sometimes like college students finally finding employment and you feel like you're on the verge of the Promised Land. The World stands before you and there is so much to do, so many things calling

for our immediate attention. At other times it feels like the world around us is shrinking and we're left with so little.

No matter what your situation Observe: that doesn't mean view from afar. It means to Listen, Hear, Obey (put into effect) these Words because the reality is we have nothing going on apart from God. We may take it for granted that we will always have God so near, that we will always have his Word. There is a danger in that. We may turn away from Him and focus on how we feel. Look to life to gauge God's feeling for us or look to the thoughts and moods we find in our heart to determine our status before God. That's just one way we subtract from God's Word. We also add to it when we think we need to bring something to the table. The only thing we add to our salvation is the sin that makes it necessary to say otherwise is a denial of God's Word.

It amounts to a denial of his word when we remove the certainty and replace it with a man made assurance based on my feelings. Hear, Observe, Obey - Listen. If only we would we would wake up rejoicing daily looking forward to serving God and maybe those around us would look and say, *"What a great people full of wisdom and understanding. What a great people whose God is so near?"*

Where is God? He's here where he reveals himself. The Bible is the record of times God has spoken to his people, but what good is it if we don't listen? What blessings we take for granted when we neglect his word because we have more important things to do? Hear, Observe - this is the best thing. It's what God's got going on.

Sometimes it feels like God is with us at other moments you feel like he is far away. The question isn't so much whether you feel God is near, because your feelings are irrelevant. It doesn't matter how you feel but rather the question we should be asking is this, "Is God near?" What does God tell us through his prophet Moses?

When we hear law we're immediately thinking of the do's and don'ts of God's Word, the commands. But when Israel heard Torah they thought not only the commands of God but also the promises of God. When they heard that first word, "Shema" - They would be thinking *"The Lord our God, the Lord is one."* There is one God and he is with us. He is the one leading us. He is the one who still provides for them. The Psalmist proclaims, *"Oh, how I love your law!" I meditate on it all day long."*

It's the Torah - the Word of God which not only warns and commands but promises, *"I am with you... I am near you... and I am for you."* Yet it won't always feel like it. After Israel disobeyed God and turned away from him. God was good on his promise, "I'll take you out of this land and undo all I've done for you." But he didn't leave them. He went with them into captivity. He was a God that was near them.

He came so close to them that he touched them. Every year we celebrate the mystery of the incarnation at Christmas. God came among us, lived under the law. He came near to us, so he could be with us. He gave up his life on the cross to prove he is for us. He rose from the dead and tells us the same thing. He gave us his Word without which we would only rely on our feelings. Feelings which are so often wrong, feelings which often condemn us and fill us with despair or leave us feeling as if we've got it going on and fill us with self righteousness.

But in God's Word we find the truth, the facts that overrule our feelings. God has promised to be near. He has promised to be with his people. He comes to us and speaks in his Word. Through the Word and the Spirit he works in us, drawing us to faith to trust in Jesus. He speaks words of forgiveness and peace. Because here he announces, "Your sins are forgiven." For all those time we've added to or taken away from his word, ignored it, taken it for granted or looked to our feelings instead of to the truth. Here God announces what he has done to bring us near to him. He brings us near to him by placing his name over us with water and his word, by giving us himself to eat and drink, and by sending pastors to proclaim his Word to all people.

Our response? We have a God who's got it going on. Be glad. Gladly observe the word and joyfully put it into practice. The world around us will see it. Our primary purpose in our calling is not conflict but witness by showcasing the wisdom, righteousness, and understanding of the divinely given law. By rejoicing in our God and his Word.

You might not feel like you've got it going on. But that doesn't matter when you have everything going for you. A God who is near, a heaven that is your home, and his Word which proclaims what he has done to bring you near to him. Don't forget that, let them burrow their way into your head like an annoying song because in Christ you've got it going on. Amen.