

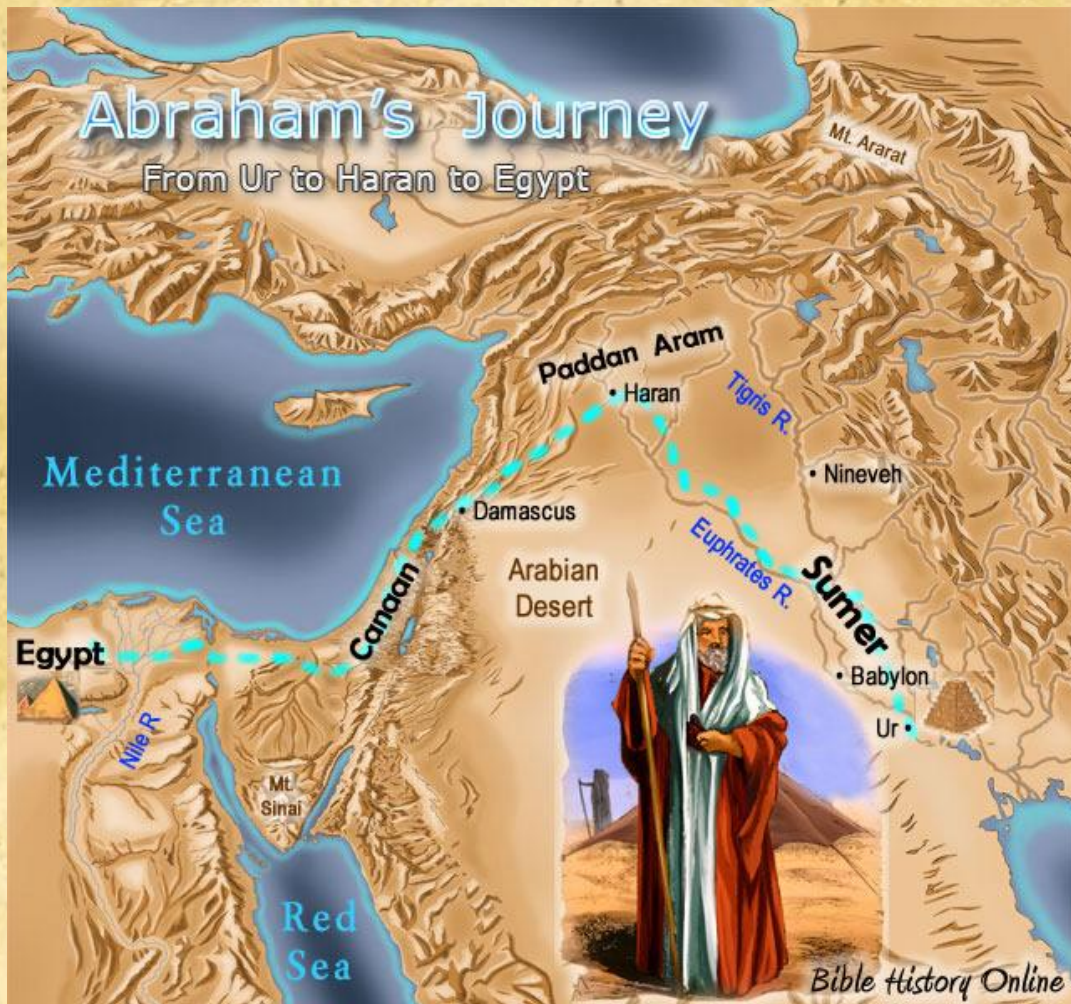
*Chapter 4*  
**EDUCATION OF JESUS**



*(“Jesus In The Temple At Age Twelve” from Salemsborg Lutheran Parish, Lindsborg, KS.)*

## EDUCATION OF THE JEWS

Before facing the challenge of exploring the educational background of Jesus, it is crucial to view the attitude of the Jewish people throughout history concerning the development of the mind. Certainly, Abraham provides evidence of the importance for education and its very early germination among the Hebrews. Since he was thought to have been a member of the nobility in his country of Chaldea, and the father of the Jewish people, it is central to the exploration to view his educational foundation.



Thus, given his geographical location and upper class family status, he most certainly would have been in close contact with the Chaldean, Egyptian and Hitite methods of learning. History indicates the civilization of Babylonia (Mesopotamia and Chaldea) was extremely far advanced; with reading and writing considered a general attainment for the population throughout the country. Surprisingly, according to Professor Sayce, in "Education Among The Jews" by Paul E. Kretzmann, Ph. D., schools and libraries were flourishing long before Abraham was born, with special attention focused on both the arts and sciences. Also, Egyptian schools and libraries were numerous and well known for a proliferation of teachers, pupils, poets, and prose writers; making the literary culture very familiar to citizens and visitors.

Josephus even stated, “He (Abraham) communicated to them (Egyptians) arithmetic and delivered to them the science of astronomy; far before Abram came into Egypt, they were unacquainted with those parts of learning.” (Antiq. Of the Jews, Book I, Chapter VIII, 2). Then moving forward in time, such patriarchs as Isaac and Jacob, held extremely prominent positions that required the ability to read and write fluently.

Thus, during the centuries when the Jews were without a stable government, or were being suppressed by a foreign power, the seeds planted by their ancestors for the need of educating their people had grown so deeply into the soil of their mindset, that although appearing scarce at times, proliferated into a strong argument for knowledge that still remains solid even today. They had internalized the concept that to survive as a Jewish people, they must pass down from generation to generation the religious laws God had bestowed on them through Moses. Otherwise, when displaced to far corners of the world, their proud heritage would fade into non existence.

One reason this deeply rooted philosophy existed was because the Jews regarded their children as gifts from God. Old Testament Scripture is replete with verses proclaiming this attitude. **Psalm 127: 3-5** can be used as an example: **“Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.”**

Furthermore, Chapter 6 of Deuteronomy states the greatest reason for the Jews to stress the necessity for reading and writing was so the people would always love their God with all their heart, soul, and strength. This reminder was to occur through the act of writing the decrees and commandments on the doorframes of their houses, on their gates, and to be worn on their clothing and person.



*Tefillin* (*Askenazic*: [/ˈtʃɪlɪn/](#); *Israeli Hebrew*: [\[tʃiˈlin\]](#), תפילין) also called *phylacteries* ([/fiˈlæktəriːz/](#) from Ancient Greek *φυλακτήριον* *phylacterion*, form of *phylássein*, *φύλασσειν* meaning "to guard, protect") are a set of small black leather boxes containing scrolls of parchment inscribed with verses from the [Torah](#), which are worn by observant Jews during weekday

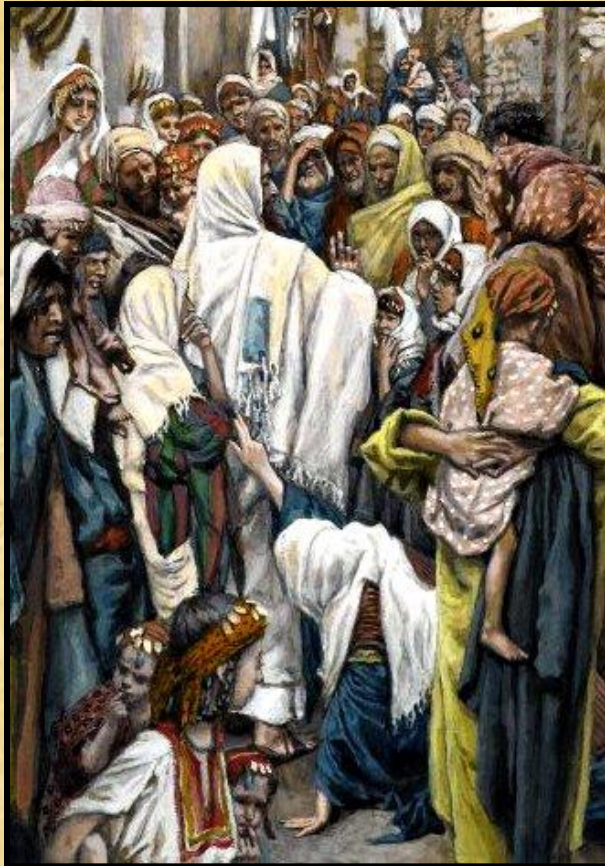


*morning prayer. The Hebrew noun tzitzit* [\[tʃiˈtʃit\]](#) (*Hebrew*: ציצית, *Modern tzitzit*, *Tiberian* *sʰisʰit*) is the name for specially knotted ritual fringes, or tassels, worn in antiquity by [Israelites](#) and today by observant [Jews](#) and Samaritans. They are attached to the four corners of the tallit (prayer shawl) and tallit katan (everyday undergarment.)  
*Wikipedia*



A mezuzah (*Hebrew*: מְזוּזָה "doorpost"; plural: מְזוּזוֹת mezuzot) is a piece of parchment (often contained in a decorative case) inscribed with specified Hebrew verses from the Torah (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21). These verses comprise the Jewish prayer "Shema Yisrael", beginning with the phrase: "Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is One". A mezuzah is affixed to the doorframe in Jewish homes to fulfill the mitzvah (Biblical commandment) to inscribe the words of the Shema "on the doorposts of your house" (Deuteronomy 6:9). Wikipedia

It is thought that Jesus, as a devout Jew, would have worn the religious items described above, but not in an ostentatious manner. Matthew 6: 5 lets us know that he would never have been dressed for showing off in public by stating, "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men."



Another Scripture that lets us know that Jesus wore the religious attire of the Jews and was also recognized by the people as a Rabbi who had healing power can be found in **Matthew 9: 20** as follows:

"And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment".

(Painting of Woman Touching Hem of Jesus' Garment by Tissot)

In Chapter 6 from Deuteronomy, they were also precisely told to impress the laws on their children; another clue as to what God

thought about the value of being educated. In addition, throughout the Bible, Jesus is identified as a teacher 45 times; and with the similar Aramaic term another 14.

In the book by Paul E. Kretzmann, Ph. D. called "Education Among The Jews", a complete outline of the Jewish educational system was presented. Even though scholars have indicated that instruction for the children was done via oral tradition, there are also those who feel, based on the history as far back as Abraham that children were instructed to read and write. It is certainly well known that the Jewish people carried on the teachings of their religion by having the Scriptures committed to memory and debated the application with great enthusiasm. In fact, they had memorized them so well that, during a debate, only a portion of a Scripture could be used, knowing the listener/s would interpret the idea by recalling the remainder of the verse in his own mind. Sometimes, this type of behavior would cause a hot debate to ensue. As Christians, if we don't have an understanding of the methods used in debate at that time or know the Scripture being used by memory, the main point will be lost. We will revisit this in the next chapter when Jesus has chosen his disciples.

Of course, only boys were taught, while girls received simply instruction on how to do chores around the house. Who they married was determined by the father as a business deal. The fact that a wife was expected to reproduce many children was paramount to the survival of the Jewish people. Although the suppressive environment created by the invaders iron fist caused dire circumstances that were almost unbearable, somehow, the Jewish people still found a way to teach their religious beliefs to their children. The question we must debate in our own minds is, if the Jews, at the time of Jesus, had Scriptures committed to memory only, then how was it possible for Jesus to write in the sand? Kretzmann may offer historical information to us by tracing the education of the Jews back to the time even prior to Abraham. Even though the outline presented of the Jewish schools may not have been formalized during the time of Jesus, it is very interesting to note when becoming a Rabbi himself and choosing his disciples, the model he used follows the structure Kretzmann listed as described below:

1) Birth to age 5---Boys were taught at home by their father just as soon as they could talk. Usually by the time a male entered the school setting, he had memorized the book of Leviticus; the most important and difficult one in the Torah. Of course, since prayers were said twice daily, the children knew the Shema; ("Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one", found in Deuteronomy 6:4.)

2) Infant School--- Age 5 Boys were taught the Hebrew alphabet by rote. The Hebrew alphabet consisted of letters that also served as their numbers. Additional instruction was completed on the book of Leviticus.

3) Elementary---(Called The House Of The Book) Age 6-9. Although it was found that a fee was required at this point, other writings indicated that the teachers were commanded to instruct the children of the poor without compensation and were not to favor the children of the rich. The Jewish people wanted their entire community to stay bound as one no matter the situation. Pupils squatted on the floor or ground and sat quietly,

listening with fear and trembling. Not more than 25 students were to be present. The curriculum consisted of learning trades, Leviticus, followed by all books of the Torah.

4) Secondary School—(House of Learning) Boys age 10-14 sat in chairs before masters and were taught the Mishna (The first section of the Talmud, being a collection of early oral interpretations of the Scriptures as compiled about AD 200) Even though this dating places the Mishna well after the birth of Christ, it was thought that some form of this type of instruction was already in action, but made formal around AD 200. Since a boy of 13 was considered a man and was expected to perform commandments, it makes sense that something had already been developed as a curriculum, but not yet written as a standardized document.

\*\*\*\*When only age 12, Jesus visited the high school of special renown in Jerusalem in the Temple hall; a place where advanced pupils were admitted and discussions of the Holy Law and Mishna were held. (Luke 2: 46) **“After three days, they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking questions.”** It would have been almost impossible for Jesus to have been given the ear of these “important individuals” unless his entrance was permitted by them. They would have prior knowledge that he possessed some form of education that qualified in their minds reason for admittance. Obviously, they would not have attributed it to divinity; since they thought him to simply be the son of Mary and Joseph, and nothing more.



*Liebermann Jesus 1879 “Debating in the Temple at Age 12*

### SCHOOL BUILDINGS

If a building was not available for instruction, a dwelling became the school house. The teacher sat on an elevated platform and the children squatted before him on the ground. It was an absolute disgrace if a child's attention wavered from the instructor. If a synagogue was close by, it served as a place for religious readings, prayer, lectures, expositions of the scriptures, and had an adjoining room called "house of learning."

Kretzmann's quote from Tract Aboth (IX, 79), provides the reason for thorough drill in religious instruction by stating, "Without the knowledge of religion, there can be no true culture, and without true culture there is no knowledge of religion. Where there is no wisdom, there is no fear of God, and without fear of God, there is no wisdom."

### EDUCATION OF JESUS

After reviewing the history above, some things are obvious, while others remain a mystery. Certainly, education for males was considered paramount, but not for females. Thus, Joseph would have, without doubt, been the responsible party for his son's learning. However, one only needs to read Mary's words from the Magnificat glorifying God after she realized what He was going to do for the world through her to be cognizant of the fact that no matter her age or gender, she also had been blessed with intellect. Our God Almighty, in his infinite wisdom had placed His Son in the capable hands of an outstanding mother and father; namely Joseph and Mary.

Also, it stands to reason that even through the direst circumstances endured by the Jews under enemy rule; some semblance of an educational system for their children would have survived; although almost in shambles at times. Their incredible ability to rebound as a religious group throughout the ages would substantiate this statement.

Therefore, at the risk of going out on a limb alone, the writer will now weigh in with a view of her own regarding the education of Jesus. Based on her training in education and 13 years of experience teaching children to read, it should be recognized there are simply some foundational principles a child must possess before others can take place; namely between the act of reading, followed by the ability to write. Unless a child has a storehouse of memorized words, a system of phonics for sounding out others, and the ability to comprehend sentences, the act of writing cannot occur. Since writing equals all these skills being used in combination and bringing them through the finger tips, a sequential order is necessary.

Some scholars have stated that Jesus was uneducated because of being poor, while others attribute his intellect purely to his divinity. Certainly, one thing we know from Scripture is that Jesus was both God and man. (Divine and human) One Scripture that stands out is the fact that our Lord grew in stature and wisdom; referring to the childhood spent in his earthly home with Mary and Joseph as his parents. It is also true that he experienced all aspects of life as a human being. Otherwise, Scripture would not have stated that he had

born our sorrows and walked in our shoes experiencing life from the perspective of a human being.

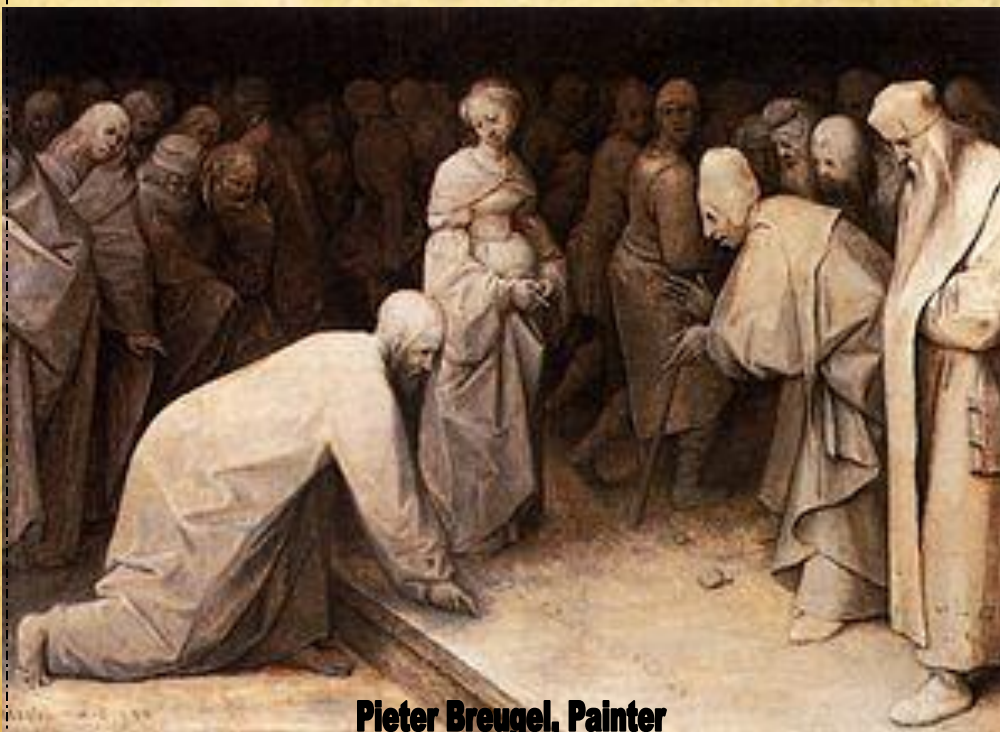
Let us now read verses from the book of John that verify that Jesus understood how to read and bring the words through his fingertips in the form of writing; all while using his knowledge of the Law under trying circumstances created by the teachers of the law and Pharisees as a form of trickery. Please note not only his skills of reading and writing, but that of comprehending the Law in a way that takes it beyond the lines to the application level. He literally used the teachings of the Law as a weapon in defense of God as well as the poor accused woman who was only a pawn. Obviously, they cared nothing for her; given her gender and profession.

### John 8: 2-10

<sup>2</sup> At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. <sup>3</sup> The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group <sup>4</sup> and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. <sup>5</sup> In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” <sup>6</sup> They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. <sup>7</sup> When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” <sup>8</sup> Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

<sup>9</sup> At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. <sup>10</sup> Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”



**Pieter Breugel, Painter**

Jeremiah 17: 13 offers crucial background on understanding this passage. The priest hearing the charge against another was required to stoop down and write the law that had been broken, along with the names of the accused, in the dust of the floor of the Temple. Obviously, in this incident, Jesus was letting the accusers clearly know that,



although they were not keeping the law, he most certainly would regardless of their deceitful behavior. Although research does not show what words Jesus wrote in the sand on the Temple floor, it can be discerned that he was following the religious instruction of the Jewish people.

At this point, ladies and gentlemen, everything in the writer's being proclaims that **Jesus could read and write**; no matter that he was poor and living under the suppression of Roman Rule. After researching the education of the Jews, it is my opinion that from Abraham forward, generation after generation realized the very survival of their people was dependent upon the education of their children.

Finally, one last example in Scripture that shows Jesus not only had the ability to read, but also possessed tremendous understanding of synagogue protocol, was when he read to the people of Nazareth from the Scroll of Isaiah.

(Brooklyn Museum - Jesus Unrolls the Book in the Synagogue (Jésus dans la synagogue déroule le livre) - James Tissot)



*Luke 4: 16-21*

“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up front to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord [is] upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave [it] again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.”

Additionally, I agree that his divinity and humanity were working together at this point in time. As mere humans, we simply don't know when, where, and how they both were interacting. Through God, all things are possible! Even the members of the Sanhedrin who spoke seventy different languages were no match for the Almighty. As you journey through the remaining chapters, you will note how God used such unique approaches and strategies that the most learned individual could never outsmart him. Even the wise could be made foolish by the Great I Am! When it appears to the reader that the enemy is winning, we can rest in total assurance that God is still in control and will bring things about according to his plan. Just as his One and Only Son, the Jewish Messiah, walked in complete obedience the path set before him that led to the cross, we also must listen to the calling of the still small voice during the remaining time we have on earth.

In conclusion, the writer believes there is also a lesson from this chapter on the divinity of God for each person to learn, that clamors daily for attention. If a mere human being allows God to be at work in his life, our Lord will use his divinity to turn ordinary acts into extraordinary happenings for his glory, pleasure and purpose; all because we humbly believe it is the only possible way to follow the path our Heavenly Father has set before us on this journey called life. Although, like Jesus, we can never be both God and man, by receiving our daily bread from our Creator, each day can be greeted with confidence and joy. Amen!

SOURCES:

- 1) “Education Among The Jews” by Paul E. Kretzmann, Ph. D.
- 2) *Antiq. Of the Jews, Book I, Chapter VIII, 2*
- 3) *NIV Application Study Bible*



## **GROWING IN THE WORD**



- 1) **Suggested Hymn:** Go to [devotionalembbers.com](http://devotionalembbers.com) and play **Trust and Obey** found inside the **hymnal** collection as played by organist **Brad Jent**.
- 2) **Open your Application Study Bibles to Genesis 11: 26-32** and read about the genealogy of Abraham. Using the footnotes below, read about the sophistication of the Chaldeans educational system. Did their advanced system for learning surprise you? Then, if you search even before the time of Abraham, you will find that it was already in existence; thus, believed to be the area the wise men called home.
- 3) **Now, go to Daniel Chapter 1: 1-5** and read about his training in Babylon after having been taken into captivity. Using an application study Bible, read the description of their language and academic program. Why do you think captives like Daniel were educated?
- 4) **Given the fact the Jewish people were constantly being taking captives and eventually scattered all over the world, can you see why they felt the need to record the Law, rather than memorizing it from generation to generation?**
- 5) **After reading about the Jewish system for educating their children, what lessons can we still learn from them today?**

### **PRAYER**

**Dear Lord,**

**What a pleasure it was to learn about the importance your people placed on the value of children and their education. May it serve as a model for our thinking process in today's world. Help parents dedicate time each day in praying with their children so they will realize always your place of importance in daily life. There is no greater model than to pray at each meal as a family.**

**Then, when our eyes grow heavy due to the need for sleep, please cause us each to send a sweet fragrance of gratitude toward heaven for your mercy, grace, and love. Remind us to bow the knee as a family before climbing into bed and speak words of adoration to you as our Lord and Savior.**

**Even though our days are busy beyond imagination, write upon our minds the necessity of teaching our children to read a variety of books, but most of all your Word. May we all place the Bible in a prominent location in the home, and use it as the most important resource for wisdom; allowing the words to act as a light for our path. Amen!**