

# What to Pack

by Dr. Marsha Boyd-Mitchell



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**“These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”**

*Deuteronomy 6:6–7, NIV*

Prior to 2020 I did a fair bit of travelling for my work. We were excited at the Christian school to be recruiting students internationally. I was also asked to speak at different venues with the Christian Action Federation portfolio, and sometimes I'd be flying for that purpose or to serve other boards that I represent. The suitcases

were never idle very long, and I often wore one out and found myself shopping for another. While I had never conquered the art of being a light packer, I had it down to a science regarding what I wanted to take with me and what would serve me best on the journey.

The last time I was on a long trip was January 2020. I was in Hong Kong and South Korea, and was scheduled to go back in March but then the travel advisories regarding the pandemic started appearing.

Fast forward to 2022 and I am back on the road again. A student recruitment trip

to Germany, Denmark, and Turkey became available after the long break from travelling. My briefcase on wheels needed a wiping down with a damp cloth as it had collected a fair bit of dust in my closet.

Getting packed was not as easy as I had remembered. I didn't have many things I needed on hand, and it felt like it did when I went overseas for the first time. I had to think back and prioritize in my mind what was essential and what I could live without. With limited space and luggage weight restrictions, I set out

to research about temperatures, meetings I would be attending, and how many casual days would be a part of my experience. Once I was in the air I could not go back and regroup: what I packed was what

I would live with for the upcoming two and a half weeks. I could purchase things along the way, but doing that would cost me time and money.

When I was preparing, it struck me about the suitcases that we all pack during the first 18 years or so we are on the planet. During the years we spend in the home of our parents we are collecting ideas, worldviews, a work ethic, relationships, and faith. When we strike out on our own, we figuratively decide what works for us and what we want to take with us for the rest of the journey. In essence, we figure out how

to live our lives by the lives that were modeled in front of us during our formative years. This doesn't mean we follow everything we've learned or observed; in fact, we may decide what we don't want to do based on how our parents portrayed the picture.

Psychologists would say that the home is still the primary influencer in the life of a young person. While media, schooling, church, and friends play big roles, it can be comforting to know that mom and dad are the primary influencers of what kids pack with them in their “suitcase.” God's design from the beginning has been to entrust children to parents, and that through this institution faith is taught, caught, and reinforced. I have a friend who writes a parenting blog entitled, “18 Summers,” and that just about sums it up.

These words spoken in Deuteronomy confirm the parents' role for the spiritual training activities and disciplines for the children in the home. Those of us who are on the sidelines as aunts and uncles, grandparents, or Christian friends should be helping fill that figurative suitcase with great examples of faith on display.