



## Lesson 6: Pass on the Message

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

### Lesson Summary and Objectives

#### Summary

Moses gives a command that sums up much of the previous Ten Commandments, and he emphasizes the importance of older generations passing on the command to younger generations.

#### Learning Outcomes

- Participants can explain the covenant between God and his people.
- Participants can explain the relationship between love/faith/obedience.
- Participants can describe the proper role of the past in determining our choices for the future.

### Teaching Outline

#### Invite

- Name a lesson you remember from your childhood.

#### Inform

##### Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9

- The section begins with a command to “hear” (4a). The Hebrew word for “hear” is *shema* (pronounced shuh-MAH), and for Jews, this section of scripture (aptly referred to as the *Shema*) is pivotal and foundational. One might say it is like a Jewish creed.
- Like the Ten Commandments, this section begins with a decree before moving to actual instruction. The decree is this: “The Lord our God, the Lord is one” (4b).
  - The word “Lord” here in English is representing the Hebrew word “Yahweh,” which is God’s name (cf. Exod 3:14, when God reveals his actual name to Moses).
  - The phrase “The Lord is one” can mean two things:
    - It might mean the Lord is unified and consistent instead of many divided gods.
    - Or it might mean that Yahweh *alone* is God. No other deity is really God.
- Next we get the command: Love God with all your heart, soul, and strength (4-5).
  - In many ways, this is just a way to say “love God with your whole being.”
  - It doesn’t really help us to try to figure out the difference between heart, soul, and strength, mainly because how we think of these images is very different than from how ancient Israelites thought of them.

- For example, they would have pictured the heart as the “seat of intellect, will, and intention,” whereas we often think of the heart as the seat of emotions and feelings.<sup>3</sup>
  - So instead of figuring out the nuances of the different words, just think of the command as a forceful, imaginative way to say, “Love God with your whole self.”
- Next, Moses tells them how to *retain* and *pass on* this command.
- The commands should be on their hearts (6). We might think, then, that Moses is just telling them to be mindful or to memorize the commands internally. But there is more.
- The adults are to “impress them” on their children (7a). How?
  - Talk about them at home and when walking around, when lying down and getting up (7b).
  - “Tie them as symbols on your hands” (8a).
  - “Bind them on your foreheads” (8b).
  - Write them on your home’s doorframes and on your gates (9).
- Walter Brueggemann calls this “saturation education,” and says Moses issues these instructions “so that a child’s imaginative horizon is completely pervaded by signs and reminders of this imperative.”<sup>4</sup>

### Investigate

- Read through verses 7-9 and write down all the verbs. What does this abundance of action tell you about how children need to learn these commands?
- What balance of private and public teaching do you see at work in these commands?
- These verses talk about love *and* obedience. How do you see those two working together here?
- How might the way Moses uses the word “love” and the way *we* use the word “love” be a little different?

### Illustrate

- Moses mentions teaching children sitting at home, walking along the road, lying down, and getting up. Given today’s culture’s routines, what do these scenarios look like for most families?

For example, most parents don’t spend much time walking along roads with their children. What is today’s equivalent?

- Think of where you are in life. Do you have children? Are you a grandparent? An uncle or aunt? A big brother or sister? Given where you are, how could you live out this commandment to pass on the message?
- What does it look like to “talk about [the commandments]”? (v. 7). Does it just mean make sure they are memorized? Are we providing commentary? Is it a one- or two- way conversation?
- Think about the topics you discuss with your family. What percentage might be related to the things Moses names here?

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<sup>3</sup> Christopher J.H. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 99.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 85.

- What are some evidences that we have been successful at passing on the message to future generations?

## New Testament Ties

Read Matthew 22:24-40.

- How do Jesus' two responses sum up the Ten Commandments?
- What does it mean that "All the Law and the Prophets hang on [the commands to love God and love neighbor]"?
- Since Jesus quotes this during *his* time, what does this tell you about the longevity and importance of the command in Deuteronomy 6?

## Inspire

Ideas for closing:

- Sing "Hear, O Israel."

For next week, read Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (again) as well as Deuteronomy 11, and think about the importance and meaning of loving God.