

SESSION 9

Love

DEUTERONOMY 6:1-9, 20-25

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IS DEFINED BY LOVE.



Decades ago, some parents began putting labels on items around their house. You might see a label with the word “Curtain” pinned at the window. Or “Toybox” in the playroom. Or “Switch” beside the door. Labels were on many items in the house: “Chair,” “Table,” “Bed,” and “TV.” This is a type of passive information saturation. Studies showed that the system helps children incorporate reading into their lives without realizing they are learning.

WHAT’S AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO HELP A CHILD LEARN?
WHY IS THIS METHOD EFFECTIVE?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The name Deuteronomy comes from a Greek translation that means, “second law.” The source of the name comes from Deuteronomy 17:18, which instructed a king to “write a copy of this instruction for himself on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests.” The book of Deuteronomy is an amplification and further explanation of the law God gave Moses at Mount Sinai. The book serves as a celebration of the Israelites renewing their covenant with God.

Recall that those aged twenty and above at Sinai died during the four decades of wilderness wanderings (Num. 32:10-13). Thus, the words of Deuteronomy were for a new generation, those who had not heard God’s words at Sinai. In chapter 5, Moses recounted the Israelites’ experience at Mount Sinai. He told how God had appeared and spoken to them from a fire on the mountain. Then, Moses began to retell what God said.

As we read Deuteronomy 5, we recognize familiar words from Exodus 20, the Ten Commandments. God’s people were to

have no other gods before Him, no idols. They were to honor His name and observe the Sabbath (Deut. 5:7-15). The commandments continue through verse 21. It was an amplification of what God had spoken to an earlier generation at Sinai.

Chapter 6 focuses on the greatest commandment (Matt. 22:34-38). The first and last verses of the chapter alert us to this focus. They mention “the command” (v. 1) and “these commands” (v. 25). These two words help frame a unified thought.

Within the chapter, verses 1-3 mention that a command is coming up; verses 4-25 explain the command. Thus, some of the terms in verses 1-3 occur again in verses 4-25—for instance, “fear” (vv. 2,13,24); “follow” (vv. 1,3,24,25); “keep” (vv. 2,17,25). The most significant terms that are repeated are “command,” “statutes,” and “ordinances” (vv. 1,2,17,20,24,25).



1 “This is the command—the statutes and ordinances—the LORD your God has commanded me to teach you, so that you may **follow them in the land** **A** you are about to enter and possess. **2** Do this so that you may **fear the LORD** **B** your God all the days of your life by **keeping all his statutes and commands** **C** I am giving you, your son, and your grandson, and so that you may have a long life. **3 Listen, D** Israel, and be careful to follow them, so that you may prosper and multiply greatly, because the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has promised you a land flowing with milk and honey. **4** Listen, Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. **5** Love the LORD your God with **all your heart, E** with all your soul, and with all your strength. **6** These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. **7 Repeat them to your children. F** Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. **8** Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be a symbol on your forehead. **9** Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your city gates. (. . .) **20** When your son asks you in the future, ‘What is the meaning of the decrees, statutes, and ordinances that the LORD our God has commanded you?’ **21** tell him, ‘We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand. **22** Before our eyes the LORD inflicted great and devastating signs and wonders on Egypt, on Pharaoh, and on all his household, **23** but he brought us from there in order to lead us in and give us the land that he swore to our ancestors. **24** The LORD commanded us to follow all these statutes and to fear the LORD our God for our prosperity always and for our preservation, as it is today. **25 Righteousness will be ours G** if we are careful to follow every one of these commands before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us.’”

A. God’s instructions were designed to teach Israel how to live in the promised land. He never issues rules for the sake of having rules. He always has a purpose.

B. Reverence. It is an attitude of respect that acknowledges who God is and His authority.

C. Obedience to the Lord’s commands is a demonstration that one truly “fears” Him.

D. The Hebrew term *shema* means “to listen to, embrace, and obey.” Deuteronomy 6:4, commonly called “the Shema,” has long served as a creed recited by Jewish families at home and as a part of their corporate worship.

E. The center of the person’s being, where one thinks, makes decisions, and holds affections. Along with “soul” and “strength,” it highlights active and absolute love for God.

F. Parents are responsible for demonstrating what loving God looks like. They are to impress His truths into their children’s lives by “repeating” them in various, practical ways.

G. The Old Testament does not define salvation as being “lost” or “saved,” but by a right standing with God (Gen. 15:6). Prosperity and preservation were important (Deut. 6:24), but righteousness is always God’s ultimate purpose for His people.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Fear of the Lord

(Deut. 6:1-3)

Believers demonstrate their love for God by obeying His commands.

- **What are some practical ways to “fear the LORD” each day?**
- **In what way(s) has God lavished His blessings in your life? When have you been particularly aware of those blessings?**

2. Devoted

(Deut. 6:4-9)

We are to be intentional about putting God at the center of our lives, making everything else revolve around Him.

- **What is a practical way we can keep God’s Word and commandments at the forefront of our lives?**

3. Righteous

(Deut. 6:20-25)

Remembering God’s past faithfulness helps us to follow God’s commands today.

- **How does our behavior reflect what we believe about God?**
- **What does walking in righteousness look like in the life of a believer today?**

Apply the Text

- **How ready are you to explain your faith to your children and/or grandchildren? What would you tell them if they asked? Share with your Bible study group ideas and tips for explaining your faith.**

KEY DOCTRINE:

Family

Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. (See Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 1:5.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Read and reflect on a Bible passage.

Read the Shema (Deut. 6:4-9) slowly and reflectively. Note how it encourages God’s people to love Him with all they are, to pass the faith to the next generation, and to observe carefully His commands and decrees. Also read Mark 12:28-33, where Jesus declared the Shema the greatest commandment. What does it mean to you to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and strength? Consider Matthew 5:16 and 1 John 2:5-6. How does faithful obedience to God’s commands bless both us and others?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Deuteronomy 6:4-5. How do you define love?

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is known as the Shema, the foundational confession of Jewish faith. These verses exhorted Israel to live out its faith intentionally. Specifically, they were to love the Lord their God. The term “love” signifies wholehearted commitment. The phrases “with all your heart” and “with all your soul” encompassed the intellect, emotion, and volition. The phrase “with all your strength” emphasized that a commitment to God requires an act of the whole person.

For some people, faith in God is little more than an intellectual assent that God exists. For others, faith in God involves little more than performing certain rituals. How do these verses correct these misguided beliefs?

Faith in God involves the whole person; loving Him is comprehensive. We are to love Him with all we are, think, feel, and do.

In what ways will you demonstrate your love for God this week?

Agree to text Deuteronomy 6:4-5 to each other over the next few days as a reminder to live out your love for God this week.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Deuteronomy 6:1-3

Contemplate the connection between obedience and blessing.

Deuteronomy 5 contains the Ten Commandments. In chapter 6, Moses transitioned his focus to instructions about fulfilling the first commandment, which called God's people to have no other gods besides Him (5:7). All the "you" and "your" pronouns in verse 1 are plural. In verse 2, they are singular. While we may have a spiritual family, we are each individually responsible for our relationship with God.

To "fear the LORD" means to revere Him. The external evidence of that reverence would be keeping God's "statutes and commands." Jesus taught this principle. He told His disciples, "If you love me, you will keep my commands" (John 14:15).

Heart-motivated obedience would result in God's blessing. God promised that once His people were in the land, they "would prosper and multiply greatly" (see also Gen. 15:1; 26:4). The verb "prosper" connotes a life filled with blessing as people lived by God's ways. A "land flowing with milk and honey" referred to the rich resources of the land and to God's abundant blessings. The phrase is a reminder that God lavishes His blessings extravagantly. He abundantly pardons (Isa. 55:7). Further, He saves "to the uttermost" those who come to Him (Heb. 7:25, KJV).

In what way(s) has God lavished His blessings on you? When have you been particularly aware of those blessings?



Day 2: Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Compare Deuteronomy 6:4-5 to Matthew 22:34-38.

Verses 4-9 are known as the Shema. This is the Hebrew verb for "hear" or "listen," reflecting the first word of verse 4. Jews consider the Shema one of the most important Old Testament passages.

The phrase, "the LORD our God" indicates that the Jews were called to be a family of faith. They were known as God's people, His children.

To refer to the Lord as "one" stood in contrast to Egyptian and Canaanite beliefs. They worshiped multiple gods. The Lord being one does not negate the Trinity. Quite the contrary; understanding His unity and uniqueness paves the way for us to affirm that He is three in one. In His unity as three in one, the Lord's plan of redemption was fully revealed in His work as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We obey God's law because we love Him. Our love for Him is to be comprehensive; we are to love God fully. The "heart" referred to one's will or intellect; the "soul" was the center of a person's being and what he desired. One's "strength" did not mean muscle power but what a person put his or her energies into. The three terms together pointed to the totality of a person's existence and effort. Stated as a confession: I am to love God with all I am, think, feel, and do.

How are you demonstrating your love for God?



Day 3: Deuteronomy 6:6-9

Reflect on how the Israelites were to incorporate God's commands into their lives.

When we memorize something, we might say, “I know that by heart.” The statement means we recall the words with virtually no effort. The better we know the words, the more we can incorporate their meaning into our thinking, lives, and conversations. That is the intent of verse 6.

God's instructions were also to be on their lips. The Lord's command was to be the topic of conversation both at home and beyond, in the evening and in the morning.

Verse 7 calls us to recite God's commands verbally; verses 8 and 9 tell us to remember them visually. Having God's words in one's heart (v. 6) requires an intentional effort. Through the years, Jews have debated whether the directions in verses 8-9 were literal or figurative. Some believe this was not a literal requirement. Instead, it meant people were to have God's commands always before them, even unseen. A literal interpretation, though, has become the norm. An orthodox Jewish man will use leather straps to attach a small leather box to his forehead and another to his arm. In the box is a small piece of parchment. On it are the words of Exodus 13:1-16; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; and 11:13-21. The boxes are called *tefillin* (also called phylacteries).

What is a practical way you can keep God's Word and commandments at the forefront of your life?



Day 4: Deuteronomy 6:20-23

Underline the word “when.”

God knew the parents' lifestyles would raise questions in their children's minds. Thus, He did not say “if the questions come” but “when.” Those questions would provide parents with teachable moments. There are both singular and plural pronouns in verse 20. Your (singular) son (or daughter) will ask you personally. He will ask, “What is the meaning of the decrees, statutes, and ordinances that the LORD our God has commanded you (plural)?” This singular/plural arrangement sends a two-fold message to parents. First, every parent should be ready to explain his or her faith. Second, parents should be living out their faith alongside other believers.

Parents were to explain God's covenant in the form of a story. The emphasis was to be what God had done. The parents would tell about the “signs and wonders,” meaning the plagues God brought on Egypt. These acts bore witness to His mighty power. They showed the Lord was greater and mightier than even the most powerful nation and ruler on earth.

Moses's description of what God had done was both concise and crystal clear. The Lord had brought them out in order to lead them in. He brought them out of persecution and led them into His promise; out of bondage and into blessing. God fulfilled His promise to the Israelites' ancestors, meaning the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Pray for teachable moments—that you would be ready for them.



Day 5: Deuteronomy 6:24-25

Compare Deuteronomy 6:24-25 to 1 John 5:3.

The parents' explanation would now focus on what God expected of His people in return. He expected them to obey His statutes and to "fear," meaning revere, Him. Again, following God's statutes is the external evidence of our internal reverence for Him. The New Testament echoes this same principle. (See 1 John 5:3.)

Fearing and following God's commands would result in "prosperity" and "preservation" in the promised land. Offering proof, Moses told the people to look at their current lives—"as it is today."

Our obedience to God honors Him. Our behavior points to Him as the One who deserves our reverence. How we conduct ourselves says something about who we believe God is.

The reason behind all the decrees, statutes, and ordinances was so God's children could live in righteousness—a right relationship with Him and He with them.

What about righteousness today? Our righteousness is made possible through what Jesus did on the cross. Paul wrote, "He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21).

In what ways does your behavior reflect what you believe about God? What needs to change?

APPLY THE TEXT

Think about your own life. In what way are you not demonstrating a wholehearted love for God? What changes can you make in order to deepen your love for Him?

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