



Love



OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IS DEFINED BY LOVE.

DEUTERONOMY 6:1-9,20-25

Decades ago, some parents began putting labels on items around their house. If you visited the home, 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,” “Bathtub,” “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**

DEUTERONOMY 4:44–11:32

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).



As you read through Deuteronomy 6:1-9,20-25, underscore the promises God made to those who kept His commands.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

FEAR OF THE LORD (DEUT. 6:1-3)

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 you are about to enter and possess. ² Do this so that you may fear the LORD your God all the days of your life by keeping all his statutes and commands I am giving you, your son, and your grandson, and so that you may have a long life. ³ Listen, 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.”

VERSES 1-3

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. We each decide to fear and honor Him and keep His instructions.

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).

God had earlier said of the Israelites, “If only they had such a heart to fear me and keep all my commands always so that they and their children would prosper forever” (Deut. 5:29). Verse 2 echoes this thought; God’s law was to apply to the current generation and the ones that follow. Heart-motivated obedience would result in God’s blessing, namely **a long life**. What a meaningful promise for those who had seen the previous generation die in the wilderness.

God promised that once His people were in the land, they **would prosper and multiply greatly**. This echoed God’s promise to Abraham, “your reward will be very great.” He also said Abraham’s descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky (Gen. 15:1; 26:4).

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 in your life?
When have you been particularly aware of those blessings?**

DEVOTED (DEUT. 6:4-9)

⁴ **"Listen, Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart, 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. 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."**

VERSES 4-5

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. When a Pharisee asked Jesus about the greatest commandment, He quoted the Shema and Leviticus 19:18 (Matt. 22:34-39). Orthodox Jews still quote the Shema at least twice a day.

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. The Lord initiated this when He told Moses to say to Pharaoh, "Israel is my firstborn son" (Ex. 4:22).

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.

God alone is worthy of our reverence (or “fear,” v. 2), worship, and **love**. We obey God’s law because we love Him. 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.

VERSES 6-9

When we memorize something, such as a Bible verse, 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.

The **words** that Moses spoke were not his own. They came from God. Having these words in one’s heart would affect how that person lived in covenant with God and in the promised land.

God’s instructions were also to be on their lips. The verb **repeat** is imperative. The Lord’s command was to be the topic of conversation both at home and beyond, in the evening and in the morning. Those who were part of God’s family were to pass God’s instructions to the next generation.

Failing to talk about God’s mighty acts meant those outside of Judaism would not hear, and thus, would not give God His proper glory. The prolonged lack of exposure could spell the weakening or even extinction of the Hebrew witness in Israel and beyond.

Verse 7 calls us to recite God’s commands verbally; verses 8 and 9 tell us to remember them visually. Having God’s words before us will not happen passively. Having them 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).

Jews often attach a small cylinder container to the doorposts of their homes or the city gates. The container is called a *mezuzah*,

Hebrew for “doorpost.” Inside the container is a small rolled-up scroll; on it are the full texts of the *tefillin* verses. Mezuzahs are always tilted with the top leaning toward the inside of the room, house, or gate. The first letter of “Shema” is always inscribed near the top of the cylinder; often the whole word is there.



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



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.)

RIGHTEOUS (DEUT. 6:20-25)

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 if we are careful to follow every one of these commands before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us.’”**

VERSES 20-23

God knew Israelite 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. This will be a one-on-one conversation. 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 and growing in their faith alongside other believers.

Parents were to explain God’s covenant in the form of a story. The story was to begin with the Israelites being slaves in Egypt. The story might begin with Joseph’s brothers selling him to a caravan of traders. Later details might include Joseph rising to prominence in Egypt, the famine, Joseph’s brothers asking for grain, Joseph being reunited with his family, and the people being enslaved for 400 years. They would tell about Moses, the burning bush, and God delivering His people from Egyptian captivity. But the emphasis would not be on Joseph, Pharaoh, or the Israelites’ enslavement. It would be on 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. God’s actions proved that He alone is God.

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 a land they knew and led them into a land they had never seen. 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.

VERSES 24-25

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).

 **How does our behavior reflect what we believe about God?**

 **What does walking in righteousness look like in the life of a believer today?**



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?

APPLY THE TEXT

- + Believers demonstrate their love for God by obeying His commands.
- + We are to be intentional about putting God at the center of our lives, making everything else revolve around Him.
- + Remembering God’s past faithfulness helps us follow God’s commands today.



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.



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?



Memorize Deuteronomy 6:4-5.

Prayer Needs