

Lesson 13: December 2, 2018

Bible Background • DEUTERONOMY 6:1–9

Printed Text • DEUTERONOMY 6:1–9 | Devotional Reading • MARK 12:28–34

In the midst of life's challenges and uncertainties, people search for a foundation on which to make decisions. What is that foundation? God instructed the Israelites that the basis for meeting all of life's circumstances is to love God absolutely, and Matthew records that Jesus repeated those instructions.

Words You Should Know

A. Shema *shema* (Heb.)—Deuteronomy 6:4-9, which form a twice daily prayer for some devout Jews, means to hear and understand.

B. Statute *choq* (Heb.)—Policies, less strict than commandments.

Say It Correctly

Firmament. Shema. shuh-MAH.

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: AFFIRM that loving God requires obeying God's word; EMBRACE the commandment to love God with all of ourselves; and DISCUSS ways to share God's love with the next generation.

In Focus

Grandma Mabel was the matriarch of her family. She was a strong Christian woman, who upon the death of her husband of twelve years had raised their two sons and daughter in a middle-income neighborhood in a declining city. She raised them with convictions and let them know that in spite of their great loss, they were going to be all right—they were going to make it; God would see to it. Grandma Mabel taught them Christian values and lived those values before her children. On her nurse's salary and the insurance that her husband left them, they were able to survive and thrive. Even more, because of their father's Christian legacy and what Grandma Mabel had continued to teach and live, all three children followed Christ and shared Him by the way they lived. Each graduated from college and found success in their chosen fields. One son was a social worker and the other an accountant. Her daughter became a teacher.

Grandma Mabel often reminded her children, their spouses, and her grandchildren how prayer and obedience to God's Word brought her through hard times. Prayer and obedience to God's commands held her family together. Prayer and obedience to God's commands helped her survive heartaches and the lonely days and nights.

In today's study, Moses teaches the wilderness generation that God still expects them to follow His commands when they go into the Promised Land.

How has seeing other people remain devoted in their faith impacted your own faith?

Keep in Mind

"And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deuteronomy 6:5, KJV).

Focal Verses

KJV

Deuteronomy 6:1 Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it:

2 That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.

3 Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.

4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:

5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

NLT

Deuteronomy 6:1 These are the commands, decrees, and regulations that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you. You must obey them in the land you are about to enter and occupy,

2 and you and your children and grandchildren must fear the LORD your God as long as you live. If you obey all his decrees and commands, you will enjoy a long life.

3 Listen closely, Israel, and be careful to obey. Then all will go well with you, and you will have many children in the land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, promised you.

4 Listen, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone.

5 And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.

6 And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today.

7 Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up.

8 Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders.

9 Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

People, Places, and Times

Moses. He was the leader, presenter of the law, and prophet of Israel who God used to lead His people out of slavery in the land of Egypt. God gave the covenant laws, including the Ten Commandments, to Moses at Mount Sinai amid smoke and flames (Exodus 19:18). Canaan. It is a country just to the west of the Jordan River. The name was also used in an extended sense to refer to all of Palestine west of the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea. Thus, Jerusalem was considered to be part of the land of Canaan.

Background

Deuteronomy is the fifth book of the Law (Pentateuch) written by Moses. The Jews called it "five-fifths of the law." The word "Deuteronomy" means "repetition of the law." The name was a mistranslation in the biblical Greek Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate of a phrase that means "copy of this law" (17:18). It was written for the new generation of Israelites who had come out of the wilderness and were looking forward to occupying

the Promise Land (Canaan). It was Moses' farewell address before he transferred leadership to Joshua. He wanted to partially restate and explain the importance of the laws before he died. He emphasized the significance of obedience to God's commandments. Moses reminded the Israelites that blessings were rewards for obedience, while curses were the consequences of disobedience. He reflected on God's redemption from slavery in Egypt as well as God's punishment for their disobedience while in the wilderness. Because of what God had done, they were urged to trust, love, and obey God. In Deuteronomy 6, Moses offered an explanation of the first commandment, which should be the foundation for all we do and believe.

Why is it good to remember and reflect on our past as Christians?

At a Glance and In Depth

At-A-Glance

1. Love God By Obeying His Word (Deuteronomy 6:1–3)
2. Love God with Total Devotion (vv. 4–5)
3. Love God By Sharing the Word (vv. 6–9)

In Depth

1. Love God By Obeying His Word (Deuteronomy 6:1–3)

In Moses' first address to the Israelites, he gave a review of the mighty acts of God (1:1– 4:43). In this second address he offers principles for godly living because we must know and act upon God's Word (4:44–29:1). Moses is concerned that the people will possess "the land that floweth with milk and honey" (v. 3) but forget who blessed them with it as well as their promise to devote themselves in obedience to God's Word. It is important to "fear" God and keep His commandments. To fear God means to honor and respect Him. If we love God, we should respect Him enough to obey His commands. If we do so, it will go well with us and future generations. Thus, it is important to teach our children, grandchildren, and younger Christians the Word of God and the importance of showing our love for Him by obeying His commands.

How can our love, obedience, and fear of God influence future generations?

2. Love God with Total Devotion (vv. 4–5)

Verses 4 through 9 are known as the Shema, which is Hebrew for "hear," the first word in the text. Devout Jews recite this prayer twice a day, in the morning and in the evening, in compliance with verse 7.

In verse 4, Moses is like a teacher calling his students to attention. He wants them to listen to his important declaration about God: "The Lord our God is one Lord!" "One" is expressing compound unity, which validates the Trinity. Moreover, this helps us understand the importance of Israel's complete devotion to God alone. We cannot serve other gods because He is a jealous God (5:9).

Jesus repeats the instructions in v. 5 and says that this is the greatest commandment combined with the command to love your neighbor (Matthew 22:37–39). God loves us, so our love for Him must involve our whole being—not only worshipping and serving God but loving our neighbors. If we love God, we must show it by our actions toward others (1 John 3:17).

How do you demonstrate your love of God?

3. Love God By Sharing the Word (vv. 6–9)

Some Jews take these verses literally and bind phylacteries, or small leather boxes containing selected texts from the Torah, on their foreheads and arms. In addition there are some who place mezuzahs, a small box containing this text and parts of the Torah, on the right side of the doorpost. The purpose is to not only keep these commandments but to have physical reminders of the presence of God's Word in their lives. Our love for God is not about legalistic obedience but a life devoted to the living God by teaching and living out His Word daily.

God wants us to always study the Word and apply it to our daily lives so it can help and guide us in our decision-making. We will not be deceived by the enemy if we know the Word by heart and use it.

God desires for us to talk about His Word wherever we find ourselves, day or night. As we teach His Word, our children and others are listening. The Holy Spirit is able to use us to transform lives. People will see God at work in us and be encouraged to seek Him.

What is the most recent opportunity you have had to teach someone younger about the application of God's Word to daily living?

Search the Scriptures

1. Why do you think that Moses repeats the word "Hear" (vv. 3-4)?
2. Why does Moses emphasize the importance of teaching children and future generations (v. 7)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. In what ways do you need to grow in showing love for God?
2. How does the definition of love for God differ or agree with the way that society portrays love?

Lesson in Our Society and Make it Happen

Liberating Lesson

Our love for God must involve our whole heart, soul, and mind. This also includes loving our neighbors. We have to teach and demonstrate for our children and future generations what love encompasses. There is a rise in hate crimes across the United States and the world. If hate is taught to children, they may grow up to hate. But if we teach love of God and others, they more than likely will grow up loving all. This love for all humanity was demonstrated during Hurricane Harvey in August 2017. Many cities were flooded by heavy rains. People of every race, religion, and culture rescued those stranded in their houses and donated food, clothing, and money. This is the love of God personified. We have to love and worship God with our whole beings.

Application for Activation

Traditionally, we show our love and devotion for God through worship, singing, and dance. But we can also worship God in other ways. As you sit in the next worship service, observe and listen for additional ways God wants you to worship Him. During quiet time at home, pray for new ways to teach your children and younger generations the Word. For example, you can hang pictures that include Scriptures, give your children Christian video games, or purchase clothing that has Christian themes printed on them. Most important, every day and night read and meditate on the Word so that it becomes a part of your daily life.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light On The Text

Deuteronomy 6:1–9

In the preceding chapter, Moses rehearsed the Sinai law for the Children of Israel and the circumstances under which it was initially given. He urged them to always keep the law of God so that they could reap the benefit, which was long life in the land the Lord had promised them. The next nine verses define the law, how the people were to keep it, and to what extent they should keep it in order for them to reap the benefits that come with it. They were to preserve the law by teaching it to the generations to come. The portion under discussion today constitutes what practicing Jews call the Shema, which is also the basis for the Christian belief in the one eternal God.

1 Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: 2 That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.

The phrase, “Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments,” includes the summarized commandments Moses had just rehearsed with them in the previous chapter, and the ones that were to follow. The Lord, Moses says, had ordered him to teach them or to remind them of the Law, which they would keep when they possessed the Promised Land. He rehearsed the Law in their hearing so that they would remember to obey and fear the Lord. The fear of the Lord, which means reverence in one’s heart for God, is the most powerful force for obedience.

Proverbs describes the fear of the Lord as “the beginning of wisdom” (9:10). The kind of “fear” (yare’, yaw-RAY) used here (Deuteronomy 6: 2) is not to be afraid of God as if he were a dreadful and vengeful being ready to punish them for the smallest infraction of His Law. It speaks more of respecting or revering God as the

Father who deserves to be honored and heeded. When we fear God, we respect Him both as the law-giver and as a just and righteous judge, bearing in mind His justice as well as His mercy and patience.

Moses uses three Hebrew words, “commandments” (mitsvah, meets-VAW) which are the hard laws, “statutes” (choq, KHOKE) which are akin to policies, and “judgments” (mishpat, meesh-PAWT) which are the applications of the Law. These terms showed varying degrees of rigidity or functionality as the Israelites sought to set themselves apart from the surrounding cultures and be a light to the nations. These words emphasize the importance of keeping the law of God. The Law was to be perpetuated throughout the history of Israel. The reward for keeping the Law was that the Israelites, their children, and future generations would live long. To live long refers not necessarily to an individual long life, which probably was included, but rather to the long life of Israel as a nation. That is, the Israelites would possess the land for a long time; conversely, if they failed to fear the Lord and keep His commandments, they would lose the land.

Therefore, as each generation remembered to obey the commandments, they would enjoy the benefits of the land, and their days would be prolonged. The Law was intended for their well-being so that Israel could enjoy life to the fullest. For it is given “that it may be well with thee” (from v. 3; cf. 5:33; 6:18; 12:28).

However, Israel’s captivity by Persia and Judah’s exile to Babylon are consequences of their failure to keep the law of the Lord.

3 Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.

“Hear therefore,” or “in view of the benefits,” Moses pleads with them to listen to (hear) and obey (observe) the law of the Lord. The use of these two words is notable. First, the two verbs are near homonyms in Hebrew. This rhetorical device grabs the audience’s attention and helps them remember what is said. Further, the Hebrew for “hear” (shama, shaw-MAH) often means more than just to pay attention to sounds; it implies listening, understanding, and acting on that knowledge. “Obey” is within the semantic range—the word’s range of meanings—of “hear.” It is striking then that Moses follows up with “observe” (Heb. shamar, shaw-MAR), which is also translated as “keep” or “obey.” Its meaning, therefore, overlaps with shama’s but can further mean “guard.” Thus the Israelites are to listen to God’s laws, obey them, and work to preserve them in their memory and their culture.

If they will endeavor to keep the commandments, things will go well with them; they will multiply in keeping with the promise the Lord made to their fathers (Genesis 15:5; 28:14). That promise includes living in the land that flows with milk and honey, which describes the fertility and productivity of the land. In a culture where bread and wine were the basic staples of one’s diet, milk and honey are prime examples of luxuries.

4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: 5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Verses 4–9 constitute the Shema, (similar to 11:18–21, and Numbers 15:37–41) the creed of Israel in the Hebrew liturgy, which pious Jews recite twice daily in their worship. It expresses the heart of Israel’s confession of faith, and confirms first the covenant relationship between Israel (“the Lord our God”) and second the unity of God (“the Lord is one”). The word translated “one” is the Hebrew ’echad (ekh-AWD; Genesis 2:24; 3:22; 11:1, 6) related to achad which means “to unify; collect; to be united as one.” Here, Moses implicitly declared the uniqueness of God of Israel, namely that Yahweh is the one God, and He is not a pantheon of many gods that are worshiped by the surrounding nations. Rather than ruling over one sphere or having one power as other gods did, Israel’s God was God alone over everything, uniting all power. The phrase

in verse four could also be translated “The LORD is our God, the LORD alone.” This translation would emphasize that the Israelites were to worship no gods in addition to Yahweh.

Moses began this declaration by calling for the whole congregation of the people of Israel to pay attention—“Hear, O Israel” (Shema’ yisra’el, shuh-MAH yees-raw-EL)—to this important information, namely the uniqueness of God, and their response to Him. Moses invited the people to give Yahweh their complete allegiance by loving Him with the totality of their being: “with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” Yahweh was to be Israel’s sole object of worship and affection, not other gods. Verse 4 has been regarded as the positive way of expressing the negative commands of the first commandments of the Decalogue (5:7–10; Exodus 20:3–6).

In the New Testament, Christ, responding to the inquiry of the young lawyer, added the phrase “with all your mind,” and described these two verses (vv. 4–5) as “the first and great commandment” (Matthew 22:37–38; cf. Mark 12:29–30; Luke 10:27). Notably, Jesus also added the phrase “with all your mind” to His citation of these verses. This was necessary when speaking to the heavily Hellenized (Greek-influenced) culture of Jesus’ day. Israelites at the time of Moses did not have a concept of “mind” that was distinct from “heart.” Whereas the Greeks thought of the mind as the seat of intellect and the heart as the seat of emotion, the ancient Hebrews thought of the heart as holding both.

This type of love requires total surrender of the whole being to God, who has given Himself completely, without reservation, and unconditionally to love the people of Israel. He, therefore, deserves and expects them to reciprocate with the same unreserved and total love for Him. This command to love the Lord is found frequently in Deuteronomy and expresses the response God expects from His people (10:12; 11:1, 19:9; 30:6); it is also found in the covenant renewal after entering the land (Joshua 22:5; 23:11).

Scripture often links the command to love with the command to obey. God speaks to Moses and states, “But I [God] lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands” (Exodus 20:6, NLT). Nehemiah prays to God recognizing the connection of love and obedience to covenant: “O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments” (from Nehemiah 1:5, KJV). Jesus said to His disciples, “If ye love me, keep my commandments. ... He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (John 14:15, 21). Obeying is the natural outworking of loving.

6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

“And these words, which I command thee this day, looks forward to the commands that are to follow.

These commandments were to be stored in their hearts, where nothing could touch them. The word translated “heart” is lebab (Heb. lay- BAWB) and is also used in verse 5. It refers to the seat of understanding, intellect, and intention. It is where we do our thinking, and where our character is formed. The heart represents the nucleus of the human being in which decisions and moral choices, both good and bad, are made. True love, worship, and holy principles come from within the heart, as do the evil issues of life (Mark 7:19–23). The heart is also the seat of consciousness or memory; therefore, to store the commandment in our heart is to keep it in our consciousness as long as we live.

In other words, God's commandments should become a part of our being, and we are to be conscious of them all the days of our lives. Verse 7 uses a literary device common in Hebrew called a merism, which names two extremes in order to refer to the entire spectrum. Thus "when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way" means not just those two extremes, but everywhere. Likewise, "when thou liest down and when thou risest up" means all the time.

This is made explicit in the command that parents teach the commandments to their children diligently. The phrase "to teach diligently" translates the Hebrew word shanan (shaw-NON), which indicates "to sharpen, or to pierce." They were to teach the children the Law constantly and systematically, formally and informally, until these words of the commandments pierce through their hearts. The commandments should be the center of their daily life, in conversation at home, or on the road. They should go to bed at night, and arise in the morning with the law of the Lord embedded in their hearts so that they would not forget it. The Israelites were to teach the commandments to their children, not only to instruct them in the ways of the Lord from an early age (Proverbs 22:6) but perhaps to help preserve the Law and their heritage for generations (Deuteronomy 6:20–25).

8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. 9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

To make the Law a visible and permanent part of their life, the Israelites were to bind them upon their hands as a constant reminder of their allegiance to Yahweh and the Law, and post it on their forehead and on the lintels of their houses. Binding them on their hands is probably a figurative expression of how diligent their allegiance to the Law should be. The imagery is also used in the Jewish rituals of the Passover, in the sacrifice of the firstborn animals and the redemption of the firstborn sons (Exodus 13:9, 16). The same idea is expressed with similar metaphors in a number of the Proverbs, regarding mercy and truth (3:3), obedience to parental commandments (6:21), and keeping God's Law (7:3). The Jews later interpreted it literally and enclosed some written portions of the Law in small cases, called phylacteries (cf. Matthew 23:5), and bound them on their hands and foreheads. The significance of these instructions is well understood, and that is to keep them conscious of God, by a visible and constant reminder of the Law.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

The Most Important Instruction
(Matthew 22:37–40)

TUESDAY

Treat Your Neighbors Justly
(Leviticus 19:13–18)

WEDNESDAY

Fulfilling the Royal Law
(James 2:8–13)

THURSDAY

Don't Forget the Lord
(Deuteronomy 6:10–15)

FRIDAY

Do What Is Right and Good
(Deuteronomy 6:16–19)

SATURDAY

Fear the Lord and Live Rightly
(Deuteronomy 6:20–25)

SUNDAY

The Lord Is God Alone
(Deuteronomy 6:1–9)