

Present Truth in Deuteronomy To Love the Lord Your God

Lesson #4 for October 23, 2021

Scriptures: Deuteronomy 4:37; 6:4-5; 10:12; 11:1; Ephesians 2:1-10; Revelation 14:6-7; Mark 12:28-30.

1. In the Jewish religion, one of the most important prayers is taken from Deuteronomy 6. It is known as “the Shema,” [sic] based on the first Hebrew word of the prayer, from the root, *shama*’, which means “to listen,” or even “to obey”—a word that appears again and again, not just in Deuteronomy but all through the Old Testament.

The first line of the Shema [sic] reads like this:

Shema Yisrael Adonai Elohenu Adonai echad.

It means: “ ‘Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!’ ” (*Deut. 6:4, NKJV*). Many times when Jews pray it, they cover their eyes, the idea being to let nothing distract them from thinking about God. This first line of the Shema [sic] is deemed an affirmation of the monotheistic nature of *Adonai Elohenu*, “the Lord our God,” and Israel’s loyalty to Him alone and to no other “god.” In fact, it also could be read as “the LORD is our God.”—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, October 16.^{‡§}

2. This expression was the beginning of Moses’s first speech to the children of Israel as they were camped on the plains of Moab across the flooded Jordan River from Jericho. It was intended to be the very basis for the Jewish economy and the principle that would set them apart (make them “holy”) as a people from all others.

Deuteronomy 6:1-2: ¹ “These are all the laws that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you. Obey them in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. ²**As long as you live, you and your descendants are to honour the LORD your God and obey all his laws that I am giving you, so that you may live in that land a long time.**”—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Deuteronomy 6:1–2). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].^{†‡}

Deuteronomy 6:1-2: ¹Now 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 Holy Bible: King James Version** (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., Deuteronomy 6:1-2). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc. [abbreviated as *King James Version*].^{†‡}

3. Could it really be true that if Israel had carefully followed the Ten Commandments which had been just repeated to them in Deuteronomy 5, that all would have gone well with them and they would have become a mighty nation? The two great principles embodied in the law of God—to love God and to love our neighbors—are further spelled out in the Ten Commandments. The first four talk about how we should love God, and the last six talk

about how we should love our neighbors. If we really love God with all our heart and our neighbors as ourselves, would that solve the problems in our world today? Yes!

4. But, there is a problem. Can you command someone to love?

In the Hebrew, the word “your” for *your* God, *your* heart, *your* might, **is in the singular**.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath afternoon, October 16.^{†§} [Why is that?][‡]

5. Loving is not something we do as a group. If each individual in the group is not individually loving, the group is not loving.
6. A major part of our lesson for this week discusses the question of what it means by the term *to fear God*. They were commanded to *fear* God. Can you really fear Someone and love Him/Them at the same time? In the Greek from the New Testament, there are four words for love: (1) *Philia* means brotherly love or familial love. (2) *Epithumia* means passion. It can mean love or could mean even hate in certain circumstances. (3) *Eros* means sexual love. And, (4) *agape* means a principled love. Those, of course, are Greek words. **Principled love means to love something or someone because it is the right thing to do; it means to treat them as if they are of worth.**
7. The English translation of the Hebrew word for *fear* can mean everything from honor or respect to abject terror. This is a limitation in the Hebrew language of the ancient script. Based on the context in which the word is used, one must decide what the meaning is in that setting.
8. That becomes apparent when we consider a modern translation and compare it with the *King James Version*.

Deuteronomy 10:12: And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to **fear the LORD thy God**, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.—*King James Version*.^{*†}

Deuteronomy 10:12: “Now, people of Israel, listen to what the LORD your God demands of you: **worship the LORD** and do all that he commands. Love him, serve him with all your heart.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

9. We should not have any problem with honoring God, respecting Him, even regarding Him with awe. Certainly, He is powerful. He symbolizes justice and righteousness, and He represents everything that is right.

Ephesians 2:1-10: ¹In the past you were spiritually dead because of your disobedience and sins. ²At that time you followed the world’s evil way; you obeyed the ruler of the spiritual powers in space, the spirit who now controls the people who disobey God. ³Actually all of us were like them and lived according to our natural desires, doing whatever suited the wishes of our own bodies and minds. In our natural condition we, like everyone else, were destined to suffer God’s anger.

⁴ But God’s mercy is so abundant, and his love for us is so great, ⁵that while we were spiritually dead in our disobedience he brought us to life with Christ. It is by God’s grace that you have been saved. ⁶In our union with Christ Jesus he raised us up with him to rule with him in the heavenly world. ⁷He did this to demonstrate for all time to come the extraordinary greatness of his grace

in the love he showed us in Christ Jesus. ⁸⁻⁹**For it is by God's grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God's gift, so that no one can boast about it.** ¹⁰God has made us what we are, and in our union with Christ Jesus he has created us for a life of good deeds, which he has already prepared for us to do.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

10. Notice that we, in our natural condition, were children of wrath, or spiritually dead, because of our disobedience and sins. Why would God love people like that? God loves us as His children, and He wants most of all to be our Friend. (John 15:15)
11. In light of all that, the most amazing thing is that God Himself came down to this earth to live that incredible life and to die for us while many of us were hating Him.
12. The children of Israel who were lying prostrate at the foot of Mount Sinai listening to God, and then, later, having the Ten Commandments repeated to them just before crossing the Jordan, certainly, should have recognized all that God had done for them. **Despite their sins and their mistakes and their rebellions, God still loved them.**

Revelation 14:6-7: ⁶ And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, ⁷ Saying with a loud voice, **Fear God**, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.—*King James Version*.^{*†}

Revelation 14:6-7: ⁶ Then I saw another angel flying high in the air, with an eternal message of Good News to announce to the peoples of the earth, to every race, tribe, language, and nation. ⁷He said in a loud voice, "**Honour God** and praise his greatness! For the time has come for him to judge. Worship him who made heaven, earth, sea, and the springs of water!"—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

13. Notice, once again, that the modern versions translate the Greek word translated in the *King James Version* as *fear* with the word *honor* or *respect*. This is what it means in the context of that verse. This is the message that Seventh-day Adventists have been told to carry to the world in our generation.
14. There are many passages in Scripture suggesting why God chose the children of Israel and why He loved them.

Deuteronomy 4:37: **Because he loved your ancestors**, he chose you, and by his great power he himself brought you out of Egypt.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

Deuteronomy 7:7-8: ⁷ "The LORD did not love you and choose you because you outnumbered other peoples; you were the smallest nation on earth. ⁸**But the LORD loved you and wanted to keep the promise that he made to your ancestors.** That is why he saved you by his great might and set you free from slavery to the king of Egypt."—*Good News Bible*.^{*†} [Did God love them?][‡]

15. But, if the children of Israel had a reason to love God because of God's saving them from slavery in Egypt, we, at our point in history, certainly have many more reasons for loving Him after His coming and living and dying for us.

16. We believe that God's omniscience includes His understanding everything from ancient times through all future time. And incredible as that may seem to us, we are told that God loved us, knowing all the problems we would cause even before our world was created.

Ephesians 1:4: Even **before the world was made**, God had already chosen us to be his through our union with Christ, so that we would be holy and without fault before him. Because of his love.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

17. As Ellen G. White said it:

The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. **This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings."** Malachi 4:2.

The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of "the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal." Romans 16:25, R. V. **It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God's throne.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*^{*} 22.1-2.[†]

18. We have a revelation of God's love. That would surely have been far beyond anything the children of Israel could have imagined in their day.
19. For a moment, just consider how different our world would be and how different our relationship with God would be if He were like the "gods" of many of the ancient religions: Arbitrary, vengeful, vindictive, even hateful, and demanding.
20. But, God's love calls for action on our part. Notice these passages.

Deuteronomy 5:10: "But I show my love to thousands of generations of those who love me and obey my laws."—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

Deuteronomy 7:9-10: ⁹"Remember that the LORD your God is the only God and that he is faithful. He will keep his covenant and show his constant love to a thousand generations of those who love him and obey his commands, ¹⁰but he will not hesitate to punish those who hate him."—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

Deuteronomy 10:12-13: ¹²"Now, people of Israel, listen to what the LORD your God demands of you: worship the LORD and do all that he commands. Love him, serve him with all your heart, ¹³and obey all his laws. I am giving them to you today for your benefit."—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

Deuteronomy 11:1: "Love the LORD your God and always obey all his laws."—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

Deuteronomy 19:9: "Then you are to select three more cities. (He will give you this

land if you do everything that I command you today and if you **love the LORD your God and live according to his teachings.**)”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

21. It should immediately follow from these passages that obedience to God should be the natural response to His love for us. **God always wants what is best for us.** And even though in our sinful, human, rebellious condition it may not seem natural to love God and obey His commandments, ultimately, it is the best possible thing we can do for ourselves.
22. Are there any of the Ten Commandment that seem arbitrary to you? The obvious example in many people’s minds is the keeping of the fourth commandment for the Sabbath. But, just as young men and young women fall in love and wish to spend as much time as possible with each other, we should feel that same way about spending time with God.
23. **The Sabbath commandment is not arbitrary at all, and keeping it is not legalistic—not if one has the right relationship with God.**
24. Try to imagine what stories the older generation of the Israelites told their children in the years they were wandering in the wilderness about what it was like to have been a slave in Egypt. If God had brought you out of that situation, wouldn’t you want to love Him? Would you want to obey Him instead of obeying an Egyptian taskmaster?
25. Unfortunately, many Christians in our day want to separate the Old Testament from the New Testament. They feel like the God of the Old Testament—Who was Jesus Christ—is arbitrary and vindictive contrasted with the loving Jesus of the New Testament—their ideal. However, we recognize that a careful study of the Old Testament and the New Testament reveals that the Old Testament is simply the principles of God worked out under very difficult circumstances mixed in among the truths about God. There is the promise of a coming Messiah, which then, in turn, is fulfilled in the New Testament. **One example of the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament is the fact that there are more than 600 implied or actually-stated references to the Old Testament in the book of Revelation alone! (See also 1 Corinthians 10:1-4; John 5:39; Luke 24:44.)**
26. There is a well-known time when Jesus Himself was asked by a teacher of the law—one of the scribes—which was the greatest commandment of all.
Mark 12:28-30: ²⁸ A teacher of the Law was there who heard the discussion. He saw that Jesus had given the Sadducees a good answer, so he came to him with a question: “Which commandment is the most important of all?”
²⁹ Jesus replied, “The most important one is this: ‘Listen, Israel! The Lord our God is the only Lord. ³⁰Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’”—*Good News Bible*.^{*}
27. Jesus did not hesitate a moment when asked that question; He went straight to the words He Himself had given to Moses as recorded in Deuteronomy 6:4-5.
28. Would it be appropriate for us in our day to present in the best possible context and in the most loving way this message about our loving God to those around us who have not come to know Him yet?
29. We as Seventh-day Adventists have been told repeatedly that the three angels’ messages are our message to the final generations living on this earth. Those messages end with these words:

Revelation 14:12: This calls for endurance on the part of God’s people, those who

obey God's commandments and are faithful to Jesus.—*Good News Bible*.*

30. Correctly understood, obeying God's commandments means being faithful to Jesus and all that He represented when He lived on this earth. And in the final generations of this world's history, every individual will, ultimately, have to choose between: (1) The loving, obedient side, following God's directions and seeking to be more and more like Jesus each day; or (2) The selfish, envious, boastful, and proud steps that Satan originated in heaven in the very presence of God. Which side do we want to choose?
31. **Or, more to the point: Which side do we practice being like every day in every activity that we do?** One of the questions that is sometimes asked is: How can you love God whom you have never seen? We breathe air that we can feel, but we cannot see! We believe in gravity and we can feel it, even though we cannot see it! It should not be too difficult for us to understand that we need to love God, even though we have not seen Him.

The cross of Christ will be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity. In Christ glorified they will behold Christ crucified. Never will it be forgotten that He whose power created and upheld the unnumbered worlds through the vast realms of space, the Beloved of God, the Majesty of heaven, He whom cherub and shining seraph delighted to adore—humbled Himself to uplift fallen man; that **He bore the guilt and shame of sin, and the hiding of His Father's face**, till the woes of a lost world broke His heart and crushed out His life on Calvary's cross. That the Maker of all worlds, the Arbiter of all destinies, should lay aside His glory and humiliate Himself from love to man will ever excite the wonder and adoration of the universe. As the nations of the saved look upon their Redeemer and behold the eternal glory of the Father shining in His countenance; as they behold His throne, which is from everlasting to everlasting, and know that His kingdom is to have no end, they break forth in rapturous song: "Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by His own most precious blood!" [See Revelation 5:12.]—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 651.2-652.0.††

32. Try to imagine the thought that the God who has the power to create worlds and, in fact, did create the entire universe, chose to come down and live and die that incredible death on the cross—apparently abandoned by His Father in what we have come to call the second death—for us. (Matthew 27:46)
33. One of the challenges of understanding the idea of *fearing* and *loving* at the same time is found in 1 John 4:18.

1 John 4:18: There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.—*The New King James Version*.* (1982). (1 John 4:18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

34. Once again, this is an illustration of the challenges of translating from one language to another. *Fear* in this verse means terror or being scared to death. When we have a perfect love for God and recognize that our entire lives are tied up with His love for us, that kind of fear should disappear. That does not mean that we lose our respect for Him; it will only grow. So, why do we love God? One explanation is found in 1 John 4:19.

1 John 4:19: We love because God first loved us.—*Good News Bible*.*

35. It is interesting to notice that in the Hebrew Scriptures—the Old Testament—, the two books

that talk most of all about love are Deuteronomy and the Song of Songs or Song of Solomon. This should help us to understand that love has to do with relationships.

36. In this lesson we have talked about three major themes: (1) Love and God; (2) Love and fear; and (3) Love and the law.
37. This lesson is an attempt to try to understand in more depth Moses's words recorded in Deuteronomy 6:1-9.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9: ¹ "These are all the laws that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you. Obey them in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. ²As long as you live, you and your descendants are to honour the LORD your God and obey all his laws that I am giving you, so that you may live in that land a long time. ³Listen to them, people of Israel, and obey them! Then all will go well with you, and you will become a mighty nation and live in that rich and fertile land, just as the LORD, the God of our ancestors, has promised.

⁴ "Israel, remember this! The LORD—and the LORD alone—is our God. ⁵Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. ⁶Never forget these commands that I am giving you today. ⁷Teach them to your children. Repeat them when you are at home and when you are away, when you are resting and when you are working. ⁸Tie them on your arms and wear them on your foreheads as a reminder. ⁹Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates."—*Good News Bible*.*

38. Clearly, this passage refers to the Ten Commandments which had just been repeated in Deuteronomy 5.
39. While the first four commandments specifically talk about our relationship to God and the last six talk about our relationship to our fellow human beings, it is also true that if we truly love God and have a right relationship with Him, all ten of these commandments will come naturally.
40. To love God obviously implies that we believe that God exists as a personal Being. We are not just loving an abstract principle, even a profound wisdom or a beautiful story. To understand Him and to love Him implies that we recognize that He is present with us everywhere at all times.

Psalms 119:70,92,97: ⁷⁰ They have no understanding,

but I find pleasure in your law....

⁹² If your law had not been the source of my joy,

I would have died from my sufferings....

⁹⁷ How I love your law!

I think about it all day long.—*Good News Bible*.*

41. David was suggesting that keeping God's commandments is not something that we do in addition to loving God. **If we love God, keeping His commandments is a perfect expression of that love. But, we were born naturally selfish.**
42. To sum up the very essence of this lesson, we read the following from our Bible study guide:

The fact that God commands us to love is not a problem, because “God is love” (1 John 4:8). “To love God” is *the* commandment because it cannot be otherwise; it is the absolute imperative because of who God is. Thus, because God is love, the commandment involves the totality of our being. Love stems from the heart; that is, from within, from what is not visible, from our most intimate thoughts and feelings, our profound intentions. Significantly, the commandment that concludes the decalogue, “‘you shall not covet’” (Deuteronomy 5:21, NKJV), gives, at the end of the law, the inner key to all the commandments. It is not enough to *have* the law, to *have* the truth, to know that we should not kill or commit adultery. Moreover, to refrain from committing adultery or from killing is not enough; we should not even think about it or desire it (Matt. 5:28). Because “love” is a passion, our response of love to God is pressing; it emanates from our heart today (Deut. 6:6). It is not just an act of memory or a hope for the future. It is present and involves our daily life. To love God, who is always present in His love, is to make God relevant in our present life. Therefore, to love God, who loves, is total; it embraces “all”—not only “all your heart,” but also “all your soul” (Deuteronomy 6:5, NKJV), which means “all your person.” And it does not stop there. Because of what love is, it implies intensity. We cannot love God in a mediocre or lackluster way.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 54. §

43. The Jews in the days of Jesus took the words of Exodus 13:9,16, along with the words of Deuteronomy 6 very literally and tied pieces of Scripture onto their foreheads and their wrists. Some of the Jews living today still do that. These little boxes with Scripture in them are called *phylacteries* or *tefillin*. Obviously, God does not intend for us to tie little boxes on our foreheads or on our wrists; but, what do those commands mean?

Meditate on the lessons of faith and devotion that are symbolized in all the gestures of this practice:

- “‘You shall bind’” (Deut. 6:8, NKJV). The law of God should be tightly connected to our physical persons. The binding also suggests the idea of faithfulness and a loving relationship with God.
- “‘On your hand’ ” (Deut. 6:8, NKJV). The law of God should affect our actions.
- “‘Between your eyes’ ” (Deut. 6:8, NKJV). The law of God should affect our mind and our discernment.
- “‘Write them on the doorposts’ ” (Deut. 6:9, NKJV). The law of God should affect our home.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 55-56. §

44. In this lesson we have seen that loving God is an all-encompassing principle. It involves us everywhere we go, whatever we do, whomever we relate to. Is that possible in the 21st century?

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