

Lessons of Faith from Joshua

God Is Faithful!

Lesson #12 for December 20, 2025

Scriptures: Joshua 21:43-45; 23; 2 Timothy 2:11-13; Revelation 14:10,19; Deuteronomy 6:5.

1. Is there any question about the statement, “God is faithful”? Have there ever been issues raised regarding the character of God? Is He arbitrary? Severe? Harsh? Unforgiving?

[From the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*=BSG:] When John F. Kennedy addressed the United States at his inauguration, on January 20, 1961, his speech was only 1,366 words, but it left an indelible mark on the American mind. As he encouraged his country to focus on their responsibilities instead of their privileges, he said: **“With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God’s work must truly be our own.”**—BSG* for Sabbath Afternoon, December 13.^{†‡}

[BSG:] As Joshua, the aging leader of the Israelites, sensed that he was nearing the end of his life, he decided to address the leaders of the nation and the Israelites (*Joshua 23 and 24*). Joshua 23 is focused more on the future and on how to worship God—exclusively. Joshua 24 reviews God’s faithful acts in the past, with the purpose to prompt a decision concerning who alone deserves to be worshiped: Yahweh [*sic*].

... We will study together the first speech of Joshua, in which he glances back at the victories of Israel but at the same time traces the path of future success for Israel.—BSG* for Sabbath Afternoon, December 13.^{‡§}

[From the *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*=T-BSG:] **The Bible relates history with a specific purpose. The authors are not neutral observers; they always aim to convey a theological message.** They depict the inspired version of what happened but are also interested in the meaning of history. Divine inspiration gave biblical historians the right glasses to see history. The prophetic meaning of the book of Joshua is more evident in the Hebrew tradition, which includes the book [of **Joshua**] in the section called **“Nevi’im”** [*sic*] (**The Prophets**). The history between Joshua and 2 Kings is known as the “Former Prophets,” and it is part of the historical background that sets the stage for understanding the major and minor prophets, which are known as the “Latter Prophets” in the Hebrew canon.

Joshua’s final speeches in the book present its theological core. The main message can be summarized in three words: “God is faithful.” Because He also is powerful, not one of His promises can fail. **The book presents the biblical perspective that history progresses in line with God’s sovereign purpose, regardless of Israel’s response.** However, it points out that for Israel to receive and maintain God’s blessings, they must also be faithful. Regrettably, subsequent generations did not heed this admonition, as shown in the canonical flow of Scripture. In this context, Joshua and Judges represent two sides of the same coin: the first is **God’s**

unwavering faithfulness, and the second is **Israel's persistent unfaithfulness**.—*T-BSG** 158.^{†‡}

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] **It was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be thus delayed.** God did not design that His people, Israel, should wander forty years in the wilderness. He promised to lead them directly to the land of Canaan, and establish them there a holy, healthy, happy people. But those to whom it was first preached, went not in “because of unbelief.” Their hearts were filled with murmuring, rebellion, and hatred, and He could not fulfill His covenant with them.

For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. In neither case were the promises of God at fault. **It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years.**—Manuscript 4, 1883.—Ellen G. White, *Evangelism** 696.1-2.^{†‡}

[<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p30.3859&index=0>][†] [Notice that this was written in 1883! Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. We have apparently “wandered in the wilderness” for over 180 years since 1844! Are we that much worse than ancient Israel?][†]

Joshua 21:43-45:⁴³ So the LORD gave to Israel all the land that he had solemnly promised their ancestors he would give them. When they had taken possession of it, they settled down there. ⁴⁴**The LORD gave them peace throughout the land, just as he had promised their ancestors.** Not one of all their enemies had been able to stand against them, because the LORD gave the Israelites the victory over all their enemies. ⁴⁵**The LORD kept every one of the promises that he had made to the people of Israel.**—American Bible Society. (©1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation®* [GNT] (*Today's English Version*) [TEV], Second Edition, Joshua 21:43-45). Philadelphia: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible-TEV** or *GNB-TEV**].^{†‡}

[BSG:] These verses constitute the climax of the book and its theological summary. They highlight one of the major themes of the whole book: **the covenant faithfulness of Yahweh** [*sic*], who keeps His promises and fulfills His oaths. This short section also summarizes the entire content of the book so far. [Joshua 21:43](#) speaks of the allocation and settlement of the land (*Joshua 13–21*), while [Joshua 21:44](#) refers to victories won over the enemies and control gained over the land (*Joshua 1–12*). All this retrospective is viewed through the prism of God's faithfulness. **The Israelites must always remember that they can never claim the victories over their enemies or the land as their inheritance—except through God's loyalty to His given word.**—*BSG** for Sunday.^{†‡§}

2. Review the covenants or agreements between God and man since the days of Adam.

The Covenant (Agreement) with Adam (the Adamic Covenant)

[T-BSG:] The fundamental promise of the Adamic covenant involved

numerous offspring and dominion over the earth (*Gen. 1:28*). Human beings, as bearers of the image of God, were meant to thrive as co-rulers of God by reproducing life and governing over creation. However, this divine blessing is disrupted by human disobedience. Despite this disruption, God's plans were not thwarted. In the new reality, childbirth became painful (*Gen. 3:16*), and human interaction with the earth was directly impacted (*Gen. 3:17–19*). Nevertheless, despite human failure, God remained committed to His plan and promised that the seed of the woman would destroy the serpent and restore the lost dominion (*Gen. 3:15*). The tragic chapter of Genesis 3 closed with Adam's naming Eve (in Hebrew, "life"), who would become the mother of all life (*Gen. 3:20*), clearly indicating that death would not have the final word.—*T-BSG** 159.^{†‡§} [Satan is very jealous of us! If he could reproduce, he would fill the universe with little "satans"! But he can't!][‡]

The Covenant (Agreement) with Noah (the Noahic Covenant)

[T-BSG:] By Genesis 6, sin had led humanity almost to the point of no return. In the moral realm, there was a process of de-creation, reverting the good creation to a state of only evil all the time (*Gen. 6:5*). So, it comes as no surprise that **de-creation takes place in the natural world, as well, bringing the earth to the initial state of watery silence**. The silence was broken only by Noah and his family on the ark. After the Flood, God renewed the Adamic covenant with Noah, using the same phraseology found in Genesis 1:28 (*compare with Gen. 9:1*). As a new Adam, Noah was blessed with the promise of **many descendants and dominion**. However, Noah also failed.—*T-BSG** 159.^{†‡§}

The Covenant (Agreement) with Abram/Abraham (the Abrahamic Covenant)

[T-BSG:] The primeval history concluded with Genesis 11, where humanity once again rebelled against God. In an attempt to frustrate God's original plan to scatter humanity and to establish a dominion independent from Him (by making "a name for ourselves" [*Gen. 11:4, NKJV*]), humans constructed the Tower of Babel, which became a monument to confusion. Casting doubt on God's faithfulness to His promises, they epitomized legalism by **seeking to save themselves without Him**. From a canonical perspective, the appearance of Abraham at this point was not coincidental. **Abraham's call showed that not everything was lost**. There was still faithfulness on this earth. The same elements of original blessing were found in the Abrahamic covenant: **numerous descendants and dominion** (*Gen. 12:1–3*). This covenant marked a fresh start for creation. Indeed, the parallels between the Abrahamic and Noahic covenants were remarkable and indicated that they were different phases of the same covenant. However, **like Adam, Abraham failed by heeding Sarah's advice to take Hagar as a wife**. The parallels between Adam's fall and Abraham's actions are evident.—*T-BSG** 159-160.^{†‡Ω§}

The Covenant (Agreement) with Moses (the Mosaic Covenant)

[T-BSG:] Even when God's people were slaves in Egypt, His plan for them was progressing. The echoes of Genesis 1:28 were evident in Exodus 1:7:

“But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, **multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty**; and the land was filled with them” (NKJV). There was only **one element missing: dominion**. And that was where Pharaoh’s concerns started. He devised a plan to decrease Israel’s number to prevent them from becoming stronger than the Egyptians, who, in turn, would be dominated by them. In this context, Pharaoh was thus intervening in God’s original plan, and for this reason he and his kingdom were judged.—*T-BSG** 160.^{†§} [The Devil knew that God had a plan, and he was determined to prevent that plan from happening!][‡]

The Covenant (Agreement) with David (the Davidic Covenant)

[T-BSG:] The initial conquest under the leadership of Joshua was a success, but it still needed to be completed. In addition to the need to finish occupying the territory, God’s people needed to keep what was conquered. The period of Judges shows the failure of the second generation to do that. In His mercy, **God raised deliverers (called judges in the book) to defend Israel**, but as the story progressed, even these judges became unfaithful, and chaos ensued. **God called Samuel to be a priest, judge, and prophet simultaneously**. As he grew older, though, the people realized that his children would not follow in his footsteps, and, motivated by the example of other nations, **they asked for a king**.

Again God adapted His plan—a move already foreseen in Deuteronomy—and **allowed Israel to choose a king**. Saul seemed to be the perfect fit, but his conduct revealed that he was a king according to the people’s hearts. After Saul’s rejection, David was anointed king by Samuel. God reaffirmed His promises to Abraham in His covenant with David: a great name, a place for Israel, and an offspring (*2 Sam. 7:9–14*). However, **David and his descendants also failed miserably, leading Israel to split into two kingdoms, that were either destroyed (the northern kingdom) or exiled (the southern kingdom)**. Nevertheless, God still stuck to His plan and did not give up on His people. [See what Manasseh, David’s descendant, did as recorded in **2 Chronicles 33:9** (as quoted in Item #12 below).]

This sequence of covenants shows **a pattern of blessing, sin, and grace**. It demonstrates that God’s faithfulness and **loyal love** (*hesed*) remained constant over the ages. Jesus inaugurated the new covenant, which, based on His merits, would not fail as did the previous ones. In the eschatological lines from Daniel to Revelation, it is clear that in Jesus, the original blessings of Genesis 1 and 2 are restored to humanity: the numerous seeds of the woman receive the kingdom. Dominion is restored to the right hands again (*Dan. 7:13, 14*).—*T-BSG** 161.^{†§} [Compare Exodus 19:8 and Jeremiah 31:33-34].[‡]

3. Turning to the time of Joshua:

[BSG:] He gave “all the land” ([Josh. 21:43, NKJV](#), *emphasis supplied*), delivered “all their enemies into their hand” ([Josh. 21:44, NKJV](#), *emphasis supplied*), and according to “all that He had sworn” ([Josh. 21:44, NKJV](#), *emphasis supplied*), “all came to pass” ([Josh. 21:45, NKJV](#), *emphasis*

supplied). The repeated use of the word *kol*, “all,” six times in three verses ([Josh. 21:43–45](#)), emphasizes once again **the truth that the land is the gift of Yahweh [sic], and Israel can take no credit for receiving it. It was the Lord who swore to “give” the land and who “had given” their enemies into their hands.**—BSG* for Sunday, December 14.^{†‡§}

[BSG:] All Israel’s success has to be attributed solely to God’s divine initiative and trustworthiness. This is equally true concerning our salvation: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” ([Eph. 2:8, 9](#), ESV).—BSG* for Sunday.^{‡§} [Compare 2 Timothy 2:11-13.][‡]

4. ***Can we rely on God’s faithfulness as pictured in Scripture as proof that He can be trusted in our day?***

[BSG:] The glorious conclusion of the whole section ([Josh. 21:43–45](#)) carries within it the **fulfilled condition of obedience**. Success is never to be taken for granted; it is always linked to obedience to God’s Word.—BSG* for Monday, December 15.^{†‡§}

5. Unfortunately, the Israelites wanted their enemies to believe that they, the Israelites, were the powerful ones who could conquer their enemies and that it was not just their God who was powerful. This led Israel to turn away from God many times.

[BSG:] **God has given rest to Israel from its enemies, but there are some nations left that still have to be dispossessed. Victory is not an accomplished, unchangeable reality for Israel but an ever-present possibility by constant reliance in faithfulness on God’s available help.**—BSG* for Monday, December 15.^{†‡}

6. See the maps which include Shechem where Joshua called the people together. It is near the place where they had first given their promises to God between the mountains of Gerizim and Ebal. It is a short distance north of Shiloh where the Covenant Box or ark of the covenant was located in the tabernacle which had been built by the children of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai. <https://ibiblemaps.com/joshua-central/>
<https://ibiblemaps.com/joshua-northern-campaign-canaan/>

[T-BSG:] God’s faithfulness became apparent in the relationship with His children within the covenant context. The biblical account portrayed God’s unwavering devotion to His covenant, despite the backsliding attitude of human beings. God’s fidelity was an attribute of His character (*Deut. 32:4, Isa. 49:7*), which was rooted in His “loyal love” (*hesed*) (*Deut. 7:9, LEB*). In fact, God’s loyal love and faithfulness are often mentioned together (*Mic. 7:20, LEB*). The divine commitment to uphold His promises despite shameful human failures is a concrete manifestation of God’s loyal love (*hesed*), evident in every covenant throughout the Bible, from the Adamic to the Davidic covenants.—T-BSG* 158.^{‡§} [See Deuteronomy 32:4; Isaiah 49:7; Micah 7:20.][‡]

7. If we remain faithful to God, we are guaranteed a complete victory over Satan, sin, evil, sickness, death, and temptations! Our final victory will be celebrated around the sea of glass in heaven! No other religion or “ism” can make a promise like that!

[BSG:] The victories of the Israelites could not be attributed to their strength and strategy. Similarly, spiritual victory over sin and temptation have been secured through the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but God's people today must constantly rely on the spiritual supplies provided by the Holy Spirit in order to live a triumphant life.—BSG* for Monday.[‡]

8. Why do we still choose to sin? We have been born as self-centered sinners!

[BSG:] Using the same words that were addressed to him at the beginning of the book ([Josh. 1:7, 8](#)), Joshua states that the **task that lay ahead of Israel is not primarily military in nature. It is spiritual.** It has to do with obedience to God's revealed will in the Torah [*sic*].—BSG* for Tuesday.^{†§}

9. The words Joshua used to address the people in these final speeches were very strong. Was it really necessary to use such harsh language? Read [Joshua 23:6-8,12-13](#).

[BSG:] **The danger facing Israel is not the threat of the remaining nations' animosity but the risk of their friendship.** Their weapons might not represent any challenge to Israel; however, **their ideology and values (or counter-values) could prove to be more harmful than any military force.** Joshua draws the attention of the leaders to the crucial fact that the conflict they have been involved in is first, and ultimately, spiritual. Therefore, Israel has to maintain its unique identity.

The prohibition of invoking the name of a god, swearing by it, and serving or bowing to it has to do with **idolatry**. In the ancient Near East, the name of a deity represented his or her presence and power. Invoking or mentioning the names of foreign gods in everyday greetings or business transactions meant recognizing their authority and helped lead the Israelites to seek their power in time of need (*compare with* [Judg. 2:1-3, 11-13](#)).—BSG* for Tuesday, December 16.^{†§}

[Judges 2:1-3,11-13](#): ¹The angel of the LORD went from Gilgal to Bochim and said to the Israelites, "I took you out of Egypt and brought you to the land that I promised to your ancestors. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you. ²**You must not make any covenant with the people who live in this land. You must tear down their altars.**' But you have not done what I told you. **You have done just the opposite!** ³**So I tell you now that I will not drive these people out as you advance. They will be your enemies, and you will be trapped by the worship of their gods.**"...

¹¹ Then the people of Israel sinned against the LORD and began to serve the Baals. ¹²**They stopped worshiping the LORD, the God of their ancestors, the God who had brought them out of Egypt, and they began to worship other gods, the gods of the peoples around them. They bowed down to them and made the LORD angry.** ¹³**They stopped worshiping the LORD and served the Baals and the Astartes.**—GNB-TEV.*[†]

[BSG:] **The danger of intermarriage with the remaining Canaanites consisted in losing Israel's spiritual purity.** The intent of Joshua's admonition is not to promote racial or ethnic purity but rather to avoid idolatry, which can lead to the spiritual collapse of Israel. **The case of Solomon is a dramatic example of the sad spiritual consequences of**

intermarriage ([1 Kings 3:1](#), [1 Kings 11:1–8](#)); in the New Testament, Christians are openly warned against seeking marital relationships with nonbelievers ([2 Cor. 6:14](#)), although, in the case of existing marriages, **Paul** does not advise divorce from the unbelieving spouse but calls them to live an exemplary Christian life in **hope of winning the spouse to the Lord** ([1 Cor. 7:12–16](#)).—BSG* for Tuesday, December 16.^{†‡§}

10. Think of the incredibly sad story of Solomon and his apostasy.

[1 Kings 3:1](#): Solomon made an **alliance with the king of Egypt by marrying his daughter**. He brought her to live in David's City until he had finished building his palace, the Temple, and the wall around Jerusalem.—GNB-TEV.*[†]

11. Read [1 Kings 11:1-8](#).

[1 Corinthians 7:12-16](#): ¹² To the others I say (I, myself, not the Lord): if a Christian man has a wife who is an unbeliever and she agrees to go on living with him, he must not divorce her. ¹³And if a Christian woman is married to a man who is an unbeliever and he agrees to go on living with her, she must not divorce him. ¹⁴For the unbelieving husband is made acceptable to God by being united to his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made acceptable to God by being united to her Christian husband. If this were not so, their children would be like pagan children; but as it is, they are acceptable to God. ¹⁵**However, if the one who is not a believer wishes to leave the Christian partner, let it be so.** In such cases the Christian partner, whether husband or wife, is free to act. God has called you to live in peace. ¹⁶**How can you be sure, Christian wife, that you will not save your husband? Or how can you be sure, Christian husband, that you will not save your wife?**—Good News Bible-TEV.*[†]

God's "Wrath" or "Anger"

12. How should we understand the following frightening words describing the "anger" of God?

[Joshua 23:15-16](#): ¹⁵ "But just as he kept every promise that he made to you, so **he will carry out every threat**. ¹⁶If you do not keep the covenant which the LORD your God commanded you to keep and if you serve and worship other gods, **then in his anger he will punish you**, and soon none of you will be left in this good land that he has given you."—Good News Bible-TEV.*[†]

[Numbers 11:33](#): While there was still plenty of meat for them to eat, **the LORD became angry with the people and caused an epidemic to break out among them**.—Good News Bible-TEV.*[†] [Without refrigeration, what do you think happened to all those quail which they had collected?][‡]

2 Chronicles 33:9: Manasseh led the people of Judah to commit even greater sins than those committed by the nations whom the LORD had driven out of the land as his people advanced.—Good News Bible-TEV.*[†]

[2 Chronicles 36:16](#): But they made fun of God's messengers, ignoring his words and laughing at his prophets, until **at last the LORD's anger against his people was so great that there was no escape**.—GNB-TEV.*[†]

13. For a comprehensive discussion of the term, **God's wrath**, which will show that it is very different from what many people believe, see the handout on www.Theox.org:

[BSG:] Israel already has experienced the Lord's anger during the wilderness wanderings ([Num. 11:33](#), [as above in Item #12] [Num. 12:9](#) [below]) as well as in the Promised Land ([Josh. 7:1](#) [below]) and was fully aware of the consequences of provoking Yahweh's [*sic*] anger by flagrantly breaking the covenant. These verses represent the climax of the severity of Joshua's rhetoric. **It is shocking to hear that the Lord will destroy Israel, as the same term has been previously used to refer to the annihilation of the Canaanites.** As surely as the promises of the Lord have been faithfully fulfilled concerning Israel's blessing, **the curses of the covenant (*Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28*) also will become true if the Israelites reject the covenant.... He declares war against sin, irrespective of where it is found.** Israel was not sanctified, and did not acquire special merits, through participation in holy war any more than pagan nations did when they later became the means of Yahweh's [*sic*] judgment against the chosen nation.—BSG* for Wednesday, December 17.^{†§}

[Numbers 12:9](#): The LORD was angry with them; and so **as he departed**.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*†}

[Joshua 7:1](#): The LORD's command to Israel not to take from Jericho anything that was to be destroyed was not obeyed. A man named Achan disobeyed that order, and so **the LORD was furious with the Israelites**. (Achan was the son of Carmi and grandson of Zabdi, and belonged to the clan of Zerah, a part of the tribe of Judah.)—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*†}

14. ***God's wrath or anger is simply His turning away in loving disappointment from those who do not want Him anyway; thus, leaving them to the inevitable and awful consequences of their own rebellious choices, separation from our gracious God.***

15. Israel had a choice. What did they do with it?

[BSG:] At first glance, the biblical teaching on God's anger seems to be incompatible with the affirmation that God is love ([John 3:16](#), [1 John 4:8](#)). Yet, it is exactly in the light of God's wrath that the biblical doctrine of God's love becomes even more relevant. First, the Bible presents God as loving, patient, long-suffering, and ready to forgive ([Exod. 34:6](#), [Mic. 7:18](#)).—BSG* for Wednesday, December 17.^{†§}

[John 3:16](#): For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*}

[1 John 4:8](#): Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*}

[Exodus 34:6](#): The LORD then passed in front of him and called out, "I, the LORD, am a God who is full of compassion and pity, who is not easily angered and who shows great love and faithfulness."—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*}

[Micah 7:18](#): There is no other god like you, O LORD; you forgive the sins of your people who have survived. You do not stay angry forever, but you take pleasure in showing us your constant love.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*}

[BSG:] However, in the context of a world affected by sin, **the wrath of the**

Lord is the attitude of His holiness and righteousness when confronted by sin and evil. His wrath is never an emotional, revengeful, unpredictable overreaction. The New Testament teaches that Christ became sin for us ([2 Cor. 5:21](#)), and through His death we have been reconciled with God ([Rom. 5:10](#)). Whoever believes in Him will not have to face God's wrath ([John 3:36](#), [Eph. 2:3](#), [1 Thess. 1:10](#)). The concept of the wrath of God presents God as the righteous judge of the universe and the One who upholds the cause of justice ([Ps. 7:11](#), [Ps. 50:6](#), [2 Tim. 4:8](#)).—BSG* for Wednesday, December 17.^{†§} [At the end of the millennium, do we want God to destroy the Devil?][†]

[2 Corinthians 5:21](#): Christ was without sin, but for our sake God made him share our sin in order that in union with him we might share the righteousness of God.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

[Romans 5:10](#): We were God's enemies, but he made us his friends through the death of his Son. Now that we are God's friends, how much more will we be saved by Christ's life!—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

[BSG:] **The only way Israel will be able to avoid the temptation of idolatry and the wrath of God is not by constantly remembering the “don'ts” of the covenant but by fostering a conscious and consistent allegiance to the Lord.** The same verb, “to cleave, adhere” to the Lord (see [Deut. 4:4](#)), also is used to describe the marriage covenant that was intended between wife and husband ([Gen. 2:24](#)) or the loyalty of Ruth to Naomi ([Ruth 1:14](#)).—BSG* for Thursday, December 18.^{†§}

[Genesis 2:24](#): That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united with his wife, and they become one.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

[BSG:] It is important to note that, according to Joshua's evaluation, such faithfulness has characterized Israel as a nation “to this day.” Unfortunately, the same assertion will not be true for later periods of Israel's history, as the book of Judges sadly demonstrates ([Judg. 2:2, 7, 11](#); [Judg. 3:7, 12](#); [Judg. 4:1](#), etc.).—BSG* for Thursday, December 18.^{†§}

16. ***In Judges 2-4, we see repeated times when Israel turned to other “gods,” and God turned away from them in “anger”! He let them do the things they insisted on doing!***

17. ***Can love be forced?***

[Deuteronomy 6:5](#): “Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

[BSG:] In order for the Israelites to continually enjoy the blessings of the covenant, they will have to stay loyal to God. The Hebrew is extremely emphatic: “Be very careful for the sake of your own soul.” The word *'ahabah*, “love,” can refer to a wide range of human affections, including friendly attachment, sexual intimacy, maternal tenderness, romantic love, and loyalty to God. **If we understand love for God as a conscious commitment and devotion to Him, it can be enjoined without violating its true nature** (compare with [John 13:34](#)). God always intended that obedience to His commands should spring from a personal relationship with Him (“I . . . brought you to Myself” [[Exod. 19:4, NKJV](#)]; [Deut. 6:5](#); compare

with [Matt. 22:37](#)) based on what He has done for them in His great mercy and love.—BSG* for Thursday, December 18.^{†‡Ω§}

[EGW:] All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that **when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses**. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 668.3.^{†‡} [See John 17:3.][†]

[\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.3287&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.3287&index=0)[†]

[BSG:] The command to love God also expresses the mutual, but not symmetrical, nature of divine love. God desires to enter into an intimate, personal relationship with every person who reciprocates His love. Thus, His universal love to all constitutes the framework for the manifestation of our voluntary, mutual love.—BSG* for Thursday, December 18.[†]

[EGW:] **Satan deceives many with the plausible theory that God's love for His people is so great that He will excuse sin in them [the theory of universalism]; he represents that while the threatenings of God's word are to serve a certain purpose in His moral government, they are never to be literally fulfilled**. But in all His dealings with His creatures God has maintained the principles of righteousness by revealing sin in its true character—by demonstrating that its sure result is misery and death. The unconditional pardon of sin never has been, and never will be. Such pardon would show the abandonment of the principles of righteousness, which are the very foundation of the government of God. It would fill the unfallen universe with consternation.... **That so-called benevolence which would set aside justice is not benevolence but weakness**.

God is the life-giver. From the beginning all His laws were ordained to life. But sin broke in upon the order that God had established, and discord followed. So long as sin exists, suffering and death are inevitable. It is only because the Redeemer has borne the curse of sin in our behalf that man can hope to escape, in his own person, its dire results.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 522.2-3.^{†‡}

[\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p84.2420&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p84.2420&index=0)[†]

18. ***Do you see clear evidence of God's protection and guidance in your life? Do you see any evidence of God's anger? What should we learn about those subjects from this lesson? Are we clinging to God as we should?***

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Last Modified: November 14, 2025

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