LESSON 2

God calls Israel to love through obedience

DEUTERONOMY 6:4–9

CENTRAL TRUTH

Love the Lord by loving His Word.

KEY VERSE

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart" **(Deut 6:4–6).**

Supporting Truths

1. We must love God.
2. We must love God with all that we are.
3. Love for God comes by devotion to God's word.
4. We love because God, and God alone, first loved us.
5. Love for God's word means a life full of God's word.

Objectives

1. State what the greatest commandment is.
2. Explain what heart, soul, and might show about true love for God.
3. Explain what it means to keep God's word in the heart.
4. Show how the command to love comes after the truth that the LORD alone is our God.
5. Describe the way God's word should be in our speech, thoughts, actions, and home.

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

God calls Israel to love through obedience • Deuteronomy 6:4–9

Lesson Summary

Moses' second speech to Israel before his death focused on God's commandments. But before explaining God's commandments, Moses explained the motive and goal of keeping God's commandments: love for God. He urged the people to remember that the LORD, and the LORD alone, was their God. In response to His love for them, they were to love Him with all of their being. To do this, they needed to make God's word the center of their hearts and lives.

Spotlight on the Gospel

The only one who has ever perfectly fulfilled the law to love the LORD with heart, soul, and might is Jesus Christ. All others have a divided heart—divided between love for self and God. But Jesus supplies those who trust in Him with a new heart, allowing them to love God as they should.

LAST WEEK

God requires obedience
Deuteronomy 4:1–40

THIS WEEK

God calls Israel to love through obedience
Deuteronomy 6:4–9

NEXT WEEK

God promises to bless or curse
Deuteronomy 28:1–68

POSSESSION

Lesson Commentary

Love the Lord by loving His Word.

Before Moses died, and before Israel crossed the Jordan into Canaan, they needed to be reminded of God's faithfulness and commands. After reviewing the Ten Commandments (5:1–33), but before talking about them, Moses summed up the very heart of all God's commands: Love the LORD your God (6:4–9). Both Jews and Christians realize that this is the greatest commandment. Orthodox Jews recite it each morning and evening, and Jesus identified it as the greatest commandment (Mark 12:29–31).

THINK ABOUT IT
The command to love God, along with the command to love your neighbor as yourself, sum up the entire law (Matt 22:40)

Devotion to the LORD alone (6:4)

This passage is called the *shema*, which is Hebrew for the first word, "hear" (Deut 6:4). Included in the idea of hearing is obeying, just like a parent, when he tells his child to listen, means that the child should also obey. So the command is to both hear and obey. The one who listens obediently is wise, on the path of life; the one who does not listen is a fool, on the path to death (Prov 19:16). He who listens and obeys is like a house built on a rock, standing firm in the storms of life (Matt 7:24–25). He who does not truly listen, and disobeys, is like a house built on sand, destroyed in the storms of life (Matt 7:26–27). He who listens is like a tree planted by streams of water, full of life even in drought and hardship (Ps 1:2–3). He who does not listen is like dead, dry chaff that blows away in the wind (Ps 1:4).

Israel, and all believers with them, ought to listen to the LORD because He is "our" God (Deut 6:4). The LORD is not a God who is far away and does not care about His people. He loves enough to choose them, to save them, to care for them, to speak to them, and to listen to their prayers. So obedience is not a way to earn a spot as a child of God. Obedience is only true obedience when it is a response of love to the God who has redeemed (Eph 2:1–10). God made Israel His own when He chose them and rescued them from Egypt, and this was a picture of how God makes believers His own by rescuing them from the kingdom of darkness and transferring them into the kingdom of the Son (Col 1:13). Because He owns us, we ought to listen to Him.

Another reason why Israel was to listen to the LORD is because the LORD is one. In other words, the LORD alone is God (Zech 14:9; Isa 40:25; 42:8). This short phrase, "The LORD is our God, the LORD alone" (Deut 6:4) is a cry of allegiance to love the LORD alone and obey the LORD alone, since all other so-called gods are not gods at all. The LORD alone delivers and blesses, so the LORD deserves single-minded love and obedience.

Devotion with all of your being (6:5)

Because God first loved us, we love Him (Deut 7:6–8; 1 John 4:19). Although our love includes emotion, love is primarily a choice. Love is commanded (Deut 6:5), showing that love is not something that just comes and goes apart from our control. ***Love*** for God is *loyalty, a choice to actively live for God*—fearing, serving, and holding fast to God, obeying His commandments, and keeping His word (7:9; 10:12; 11:13; 30:6, 20; John 15:10).

Three times our love for God is emphasized as all-encompassing (Deut 6:5). First, we are to love Him with all our heart. Today the heart usually represents emotion. While emotion was included in the Hebrew understanding of the heart, it primarily represented the center of thought and understanding, as well as the part of the body that makes decisions. So loving God with all our heart means being loyal to Him in the way we think, the way we feel, and the choices we make.

Second, we are to love God with all our soul. The soul stands for the immaterial part of a person, and is often used to represent the entire person. So loving God with all of our soul means loving Him with all our energy, all our being, all of who we are as a person.

Third, we are to love God with all our might. The word for "might" means something like "still more," or "very much," or "to the extreme." It includes our physical being, but it also includes all our possessions.

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

God calls Israel to love through obedience • Deuteronomy 6:4–9

One who loves the Lord in this way unifies every aspect of his life around one pursuit—love for God (Ps 27:4). This person serves no other master. To him, the LORD alone is God. the LORD is his life (Deut 30:20).

Devotion through the LORD's word (6:6–9)

Since loving God involves obeying His commands, we need to know what God has commanded. We can only love God by knowing and doing God's word, and the one who loves God will also love God's word, because it shows him how to love God. So Moses focuses the next four verses on fully embracing the word of God. God's word is to be on our hearts—at the center of our thoughts and desires (6:6). God's word is not to be obeyed ignorantly or legalistically, trusting in obedience to earn God's favor, but with understanding and heartfelt desire.

THINK ABOUT IT
Loving God with all of our might means loving Him with all of our abilities and resources, and doing this to the fullest

Love for God needed to be taught diligently from one generation to the next (6:7a). "Teaching diligently" is like a workman using a hammer and chisel to engrave a message on a slab of granite. Teaching children to love God can be a long, tedious process, requiring consistency and patience.

Since words reveal the heart (Matt 12:34), one who loves God will be characterized by speaking God's word (Deut 6:7b). He talks of God's word while sitting and walking, lying down and rising, which means that he talks of God's word all the time. He talks of God's word inside the home and outside the home, meaning that he talks of God's word everywhere. No matter the time, the place, or the activity, God's word comes spilling out of his mouth (Josh 1:8).

Finally, Israel was to bind God's word on their hands and on their foreheads, and to write it on their doorposts and gates (Deut 6:8–9). Binding God's word on the hand is a metaphor for always acting according to God's word, and binding it on the forehead is a metaphor for always thinking according to God's word (Prov 6:20–21). Writing God's word on the doorposts is a metaphor for keeping God's word as the highest priority in the home, and writing it on the city gates is a metaphor for keeping God's word as the characteristic of the entire community.

THINK ABOUT IT
What do your words show about your own love for God?

Like living water filling the heart, God's word is to overflow from our hearts to our children's. It is to pour out of our mouths and flow out of our hearts. Unfortunately, our hearts lack understanding and are deceitful (Deut 29:4; Jer 17:9), and rotten hearts produce deadly water (Jas 3:12). Fortunately, God is gracious, not just giving the law but also promising new hearts with His law engraved upon it (Deut 30:6; Jer 31:33). This promise comes true through Christ, when a believer's old self dies and Christ's life comes into him (Gal 2:20). Then, when the word of Christ dwells in us, it can pour out of us (Col 3:16). And in thankfulness to our one God who saved us, we can love Him through faithful obedience (Col 3:17)
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Lesson Outline

Love the Lord by loving His Word.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE

1. **The LORD is the one and only God (6:4).**
2. **Love the LORD with all your heart, soul, and strength (6:5).**
3. **Love the LORD's words (6:6–9).**

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Devotion to the LORD alone (6:4).**
   - The LORD must be heard (6:4a).
   - The LORD is the God of His people (6:4b).
   - The LORD is the one and only God (6:4c).
2. **Devotion with all of your being (6:5).**
   - Love God with all your thoughts, feelings, and choices (6:5a).
   - Love God with all your being (6:5b).
   - Love God with all your abilities and resources—love Him to the full (6:5c).
3. **Devotion through the LORD's word (6:6–9).**
   - Set God's word at the center of your thoughts and desires (6:6).
   - Teach God's word to your children (6:7a).
   - Speak God's word all the time and everywhere (6:7b).
   - Keep God's word at the forefront of every thought and action (6:8).
   - Prioritize God's word in your home and community (6:9).

God calls Israel to love through obedience • Deuteronomy 6:4–9

Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.

Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

1. **How many Gods are there?**
   There is only one God, so we should live entirely for Him.
2. **What is the greatest commandment?**
   Love the LORD your God.
3. **How much should we love God?**
   Very much. With our whole self and all our energy.
4. **Where should we keep God's word?**
   In our hearts, we understand God's word, love God's word, and obey God's word.

Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

1. **What is the first command Moses gave?**
   Hear. Moses told Israel to listen and obey.
2. **What does it mean when Israel said that the LORD is "our" God?**
   It means that God had already chosen and redeemed them from Egypt. They were to love and obey God not to earn God's favor, but as a response of love to God's favor.
3. **What does it mean that the LORD is one?**
   It means that He is the only God, and the one who deserves our undivided devotion.
4. **What does it mean to love God?**
   It means to fear, serve, and hold fast to God, obey His commandments, and keep His word. Love for God is loyalty to God out of gratitude for God's love for us.
5. **How are we to love God?**
   With all our heart (understanding, feelings, and decisions), all our soul (all of who we are as a person), and all our might (all of our abilities and resources to the fullest).
6. **Why does Moses talk about God's word right after the command to love God?**
   Because we can only love God as we should if we are immersed in God's word. God's word shows us how to love God and works in our hearts to help us love God.
7. **What should parents do for the children?**
   They should teach God's word to their children diligently.
8. **What should our speech be like?**
   We should be talking about God's word all the time, everywhere, in all sorts of activities.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5

INTRODUCE

FAMILY HEIRLOOM

Bring in a family heirloom and display it to the class (pocket watch, necklace, ring, etc.). Explain that an heirloom is something that an older family member gives to a younger family member so that it is continually passed down through the family from one generation to another (like a mother to a daughter or a father to a son). Use this to introduce God's command for parents to faithfully pass on His word to their children.

ONE

As each child enters the classroom, stamp his hand with the number "1." Tell the children that in today's lesson, they will learn that our God is one God.

ILLUSTRATE

CHEW ON IT

During the lesson pop a piece of chewing gum in your mouth. Ask the children how gum is different from food (we don't swallow gum). Explain that we continually chew on gum, sometimes chewing on the same piece for hours. The gum is always on the tip of our tongue. Tell the children that this is how we are to handle God's word, the Bible. We should always be "chewing" on the Bible, thinking about it all the time. There should never come a time when we spit it out or stop "chewing" on it. The Bible should always be on the tip of our tongue.

HEAR AND OBEY

Read Matthew 7:24–27 to illustrate the difference between hearing with obedience and hearing without obedience.

APPLY

GATE, DOORPOST, HOUSE

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, scissors, and crayons.

Directions: Cut out the pattern and memory verse along the dark, solid line. Color the gate and the door, and then turn the paper over. Glue the memory verse to the center of the house. Finally, fold the door and the gate in along the dotted line.

Gate, Doorpost, House
See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1

TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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AGES 6–8

INTRODUCE

LISTENING GAMES

In today's lesson, we will study the Bible passage called "the Great Shema." It is called this because it begins with "Hear, O Israel." Shema is the Hebrew word for "hear." Use these listening games as you begin class. Talk about the purpose of listening and paying attention when someone speaks.

Operator: Choose one child to whisper a phrase or Bible verse to the child sitting next to him. Have the last child say the final phrase out loud to see how well it matches the original.

Tongue Twisters: Tell tongue twisters, and have the children try to say them back five times fast.

TREASURE WALK

Have a small group of children follow directions to find a treasure. Give specific directions to be followed, such as "Start at the door, take ten giant steps toward the poster of a flower, turn left and walk to the wall," etc. Compare following the directions to obeying and the reward to God's promises of blessing.

ILLUSTRATE

FULL IMMERSION

Submerge a bulb syringe in a tank of water. Explain that the syringe represents us and the water represents God's word. Use this to picture how we are supposed to be completely immersed in the word of God. Squeeze all the air out of the syringe and suck it completely full of water. Then take the bulb syringe out of the water and spray all the water out. Explain that this shows that one immersed in God's word also talks about it all the time (comes out whenever his mouth is open).

DIVIDED DEVOTION

Before class, open a can of your favorite soda and pour half of it out. During the lesson, find out if other children also like this kind of soda. Without showing the can to the children, offer "your favorite can of soda" to one of the children. Give the child the half full can of soda (pretend like you drank half of it earlier) and explain that this is what divided devotion to God looks like. It is lacking and repulsive.

APPLY

PHYLACTERIES

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheets, scissors, and glue.

Directions: Copy the phylactery pattern onto heavy paper. Cut the pattern along the solid lines and fold on the dotted lines. Create a small box, which should have two sides with extending pieces. Leave one end open, and insert the four small pieces of paper containing selected Scripture. The box can then be attached to the two long strips of paper to create a headband. These phylacteries serve as a symbol of our need to keep Scripture at the forefront of our minds at all times, to guide us in all that we do.

Phylacteries
See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1

AGES 9–11

INTRODUCE

WHAT IS LOVE?

Ask the children to describe what love is. Read a few secular (but still age appropriate) definitions of love. Explain that love is not primarily a feeling but a choice to sacrificially serve for the benefit of another. Tell the children that today we're going to learn how to demonstrate our love for God.

MIDDLE NAME INTRODUCTIONS

Sit in a circle. Tell each child to find out and remember the middle name of the child on his left. Then go around the circle clockwise and ask each child to say his own middle name and the middle name of the person on his left. After this, ask one child to go around the circle, giving the middle names of all the children. Ask the children what they did to remember the names. Did they repeat them in their head? Say them quietly to themselves? Make an association? Use this activity to demonstrate how we must dwell upon God's word in order to understand it, remember it, and obey it.

ILLUSTRATE

UNDIVIDED DEVOTION

Ask for a volunteer to dribble a basketball. Allow the volunteer to dribble. Then ask the volunteer to dribble with the other hand. Then without looking down. Finally try dribbling a basketball and soccer ball at the same time. Ask the class what happened to the volunteer's ability to dribble the basketball as distractions were added (decreased). So too with our love and devotion for God. As distractions are added are devotion decreases.

READ THE INSTRUCTIONS

Bring in different sets of instructions. Explain that reading the instructions is often the last thing people do when putting something together. This usually results in frustration and an incomplete product. Tell the children that God has given us instructions on how to love him—the Bible! Explain that we can only love God by knowing and doing God's word. This is why we must speak of God's word at all times and in all places (Deut 6:7).

APPLY

ORIGAMI ORIENTATION

Materials: origami book with instructions on how to fold animals; pre-cut origami squares for each child.

Directions: Divide the class into equal groups (representing generations). Ask one child from each group to go outside with an adult, who will demonstrate how to fold a simple origami animal. Child 1 should go back to a different group and ask child 2 to come outside, where he will pass on the instructions from memory. Child 2 should teach child 3, and so on. The teaching process should continue until all the groups have learned how to fold the origami animal. Once all the groups are finished, ask them to compare the first origami animal to the fifth. In most cases, some changes or mistakes will have occurred. Use this activity to discuss how important it is for parents to teach God's law to their children faithfully and accurately so that many generations later God's truth still is taught correctly.