

The Heart Of The Law

Printed Text • Deuteronomy 10:12-22; 16:18-20

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: CONSIDER what our response should be to God's unconditional love; APPRECIATE God's love and justice; and EVALUATE how loving and just we are toward others.

In Focus

In the compelling, soul-stirring song entitled, "No Charge," renowned singer and minister, Shirley Caesar tells the story of a little boy and his mother. The little boy presented his mother with a list of charges for the chores he had done for her and the family. The patient mother read the list and then began to enumerate all the things she had done for him. She included carrying him for nine months and nursing him through the nights when he was sick. Then she said, "No Charge." By the time Shirley finished this song; many people were in tears, especially if they listened to it around, or on, Mother's Day. Across this country and around the world, many parents and grandparents have spent countless hours, days, and years doing things for their families because they love them. They showed and continue to show the unconditional love that our Lord and Savior has for humanity.

Our lesson today reiterates that love is sweet, love is kind, love is understanding, and love conquers all. God's love for us is so great that He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus, to die for our sins. There is no greater love.

Keep In Mind

"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, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?" (Deuteronomy 10:12–13, KJV).

Words You Should Know

A. Fear (Deuteronomy 10:12, 20) yare'(Heb.) – Dreading punishment or destruction; feeling overwhelming awe, wonder and amazement.

B. Heart (v. 12) lebab (Heb.) – The seat of thought and will.

Say It Correctly

Amorite. Am-uh-rahyt

Ashtoreth. ASH-tuh-reth

Balak. BAY-lak

Bashan. BAY-shuhn

Chemosh. KEE-mosh

Moab. MO-ab

Molech. MOH-lok

KJV

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,

13 To keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

14 Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.

15 Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.

16 Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.

17 For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward:

18 He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.

19 Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

20 Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.

21 He is thy praise, and he is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen.

22 Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now the Lord thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude.

16:18 Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment.

19 Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

20 That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

NLT

Deuteronomy 10:12 "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? He requires only that you fear the Lord your God, and live in a way that pleases him, and love him and serve him with all your heart and soul.

13 And you must always obey the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good.

14 "Look, the highest heavens and the earth and everything in it all belong to the Lord your God.

15 Yet the Lord chose your ancestors as the objects of his love. And he chose you, their descendants, above all other nations, as is evident today.

16 Therefore, change your hearts and stop being stubborn.

17 "For the Lord your God is the God of gods and Lord of lords. He is the great God, the mighty and awesome God, who shows no partiality and cannot be bribed.

18 He ensures that orphans and widows receive justice. He shows love to the foreigners living among you and gives them food and clothing.

19 So you, too, must show love to foreigners, for you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt.

20 You must fear the Lord your God and worship him and cling to him. Your oaths must be in his name alone.

21 He alone is your God, the only one who is worthy of your praise, the one who has done these mighty miracles that you have seen with your own eyes.

22 When your ancestors went down into Egypt, there were only seventy of them. But now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky!

16:18 “Appoint judges and officials for yourselves from each of your tribes in all the towns the Lord your God is giving you. They must judge the people fairly.

19 You must never twist justice or show partiality. Never accept a bribe, for bribes blind the eyes of the wise and corrupt the decisions of the godly.

20 Let true justice prevail, so you may live and occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

The People, Places, and Times

God. Known as YHWH (YAHWEH), Lord of Hosts, Almighty, Spirit of the Lord, Holy One, God Most High, Master, Sovereign Lord.

Israelites. An Israelite can be (a) a descendant of the patriarch Jacob; (b) a member of the holy and inclusive community of those who follow the God of Israel, keeping the laws divinely revealed to the prophet Moses, without any ethnic identification; (c) a member of the holy and exclusive community of Israel defined by ethnic and religious purity.

Background

“The book of Deuteronomy concentrates on the events that took place in the final weeks of Moses’ life. The major event of that period was the verbal communication of divine revelation from Moses to the people of Israel” (MacArthur Study Bible, 243). These speeches were then written and given to the priests and elders to pass on to future generations of Israel. It is estimated that they were written somewhere in the 11th month of the 40th year after the Exodus from Egypt. Some other scholars place the time frame from January-February, 1405 B.C. “Having shown the impossibility of self-dependence (chapter 8) and the impossibility of spiritual pride in light of her rebellious history (9:1–10:11), Moses called Israel to exercise her only option for survival: total commitment to the LORD” (Walvoord, 281).

At-A-Glance

1. Let Your Love Show (Deuteronomy 10:12–22)
2. God’s Administrators (16:18–20)

In Depth

1. Let Your Love Show (Deuteronomy 10:12–22)

Moses lets the Children of Israel know that God requires some things of them. There must be a fear of God because of who He is—His greatness. When the Israelites are instructed to fear God, Moses is not telling them to be afraid. He simply wants them to hold God in awe and submit to Him. We, too, must surrender and submit to God, who should be the Head of our lives. Moses also instructs the people to love God. We know that God is love, and He loved us first. But because of all that God has done for us, we need to love Him in return. And if we truly love Him, we will willingly serve and obey Him. Our love for God will move us to serve Him with our whole heart and soul. And while serving Him, we will have a true desire to walk in all His ways. In addition, when our love for God is pure, it will be our desire to please Him in all that we do. One thing that always pleases God is our obedience. When we are obedient, we demonstrate our sincere love for God

Remove it (v. 16). Moses instructs the people to “circumcise...the foreskin” of their hearts. We must cut away all the sin in our hearts today — pull back all the unrighteousness inside of us and totally surrender to the Lord. When we remove that which is blocking our heart from being true, then we can turn ourselves over to the Lord and have a loving relationship with Him.

There's enough love for everybody (vv. 18–19). Moses reminds the people that God is a just (righteous) God. He also reminds them they were once strangers in the land. Therefore they must treat everyone with love. Even those they didn't know personally, they were to show them love— those they had never seen before and might not ever see again, they were to treat them with love. They were to help the stranger in whatever way they could. If strangers needed food, feed them. If they needed clothes, clothe them. If they needed money, give it to them. The people were to show God's love to everyone because God constantly showed love to them.

God should be the Receiver of our praise (vv. 21–22). Moses lets the Israelites know that God should be the Recipient of their praises; He has done great and awesome things for them. God multiplied 70 persons to be as numerous as the stars in the sky. Sometimes we, too, lose sight of all God has done in our lives. We wrongfully give humanity praise for what goes on in our lives and in the world. But we must always remember that God should be the Receiver of our praise—“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's” (Psalm 103:2–5).

2. God's Administrators (16:18–20)

Moses instructs the people on how to select the judges and officials in the land. He lets them know that God has a say in this selection as well. There are judges that the Lord gives that will provide righteous judgment. We must make sure that we seek God's advice on persons that we put in leadership positions. Those who are called to serve must serve through the leading of God's Spirit. God does not want His leaders being bought and bribed by persons who want things to always go their way. There must be justice in the world, and this comes through those who judge with the Spirit of God leading them. Those who are just in their judging will be blessed by God.

Search the Scriptures

1. What five things does the Lord require of the Israelites (Deuteronomy 10:12–13)?
2. Who did the Lord delight in loving (v. 15)?
3. Which body organ were the people to circumcise, metaphorically (v. 16)?
4. Who shall be appointed to judge the people in just judgment (16:18)?

Discuss the Meaning

Today, do people really fear (reverence) the Lord? Can we serve God without loving Him? If we love Him, then why aren't we (the church) collectively obedient to Him and His Word?

Liberating Lesson

In America, we have many who were not born on American soil but have begun to call America home. We must not mistreat others just because they are foreign to this land. It is our duty to treat everyone with love and kindness, as God has treated us. If we love God, we will follow His command and serve Him with our hearts and souls. God commands that we love one another, including all of those who have come to live in our community as well.

Application For Activation

Begin to show love everywhere you go. Recipients of your love shouldn't always have to be family members or friends. God calls for us to love one another, as He has loved us. That means we must love all our neighbors, near and far. Love is what makes the world a better place. Let people see the love of God in you each day.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

Deuteronomy 10:12–22; 16:18–20

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.

13 To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command this day for thy good?

After Moses spent a second 40 days on top of Mt. Sinai, he brought down a second pair of stone tablets inscribed by God with the Ten Commandments. He had thrown down and shattered the first set when he came down from the mountain and discovered Aaron and the Israelite encampment worshipping a gold idol shaped like a calf (Exodus 32:2–6, 19; Deuteronomy 9:15–17). In today's passage, Moses detailed a fitting response to God's deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and provision for them in the Sinai wilderness.

He began by asking the question that God's prophets asked the Israelites repeatedly in different ways: "What doth the LORD thy God require of thee . . . ?" (Deuteronomy 10:12; Micah 6:8). In essence, Moses' question was, "If you're going to be one of God's people, what does that involve? What does God expect of you?" Then in verses 12–13, he listed five responses that honored God's grace to them.

The first is to "fear" Him (Heb. *yare'*, yaw-RAY). Fear could mean "dreading punishment or destruction," but just as often, it meant "feeling overwhelming awe, wonder, and amazement." The second meaning fits better here for those who choose to include themselves as one of God's people. As children, we may fear Daddy's disapproval because of his size and strength. His size and strength are also our basis for confidence when we face problems or danger.

Second, Moses said God asked His people "to walk in all his ways" (v. 12). "To walk" indicate the Israelites' actions. Trudging through the hot, dry desert was exhausting. Imagine doing that for 40 years, thirsty, hungry, or in danger (Numbers 21:1–6). The word "ways" (Heb. *derek*, DEH-rek) could refer literally to "a path or a road," but also figuratively to "habits or behavior." Moses said God wanted His people to model themselves after Him and His behavior toward them in all their relationships (Ephesians 5:1, NLT, NIV). In Deuteronomy 10:12, the third instruction for the Israelites

was “to love the LORD thy God” by trusting Him, being thankful for their deliverance from slavery and His forgiveness of their stubborn rebellion (9:5–8, 26–27).

Moses’s fourth instruction in Deuteronomy 10:12 tells how to express that loving trust and gratitude: “serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.” It’s easy to miss what Moses meant here. In English, we connect the “heart” (Heb. lebab, lay-BAWB) with feelings. But the Israelites viewed the heart as “the seat of thought and will.” The “soul” (Heb. nephesh, NEH-fesh) referred here to a person’s seat of human passion and energy. Moses urged the Israelites to show their love for God by faithfully obeying God’s will with all their energy and determination.

In Deuteronomy 10:13, Moses summed up God’s instructions in practical terms: “keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes.” Commandments gave basic general principles; “statutes” (Heb. choq, khome) referred to specific ways of applying those laws in various situations. To keep the Ten Commandments, the heart of God’s law and other laws He gave for applying them, meant to “obey” them (NLT), to “observe” them (NIV), and “keep” them (NASB).

Moses saved the most important truth for last. God said the intent behind all His instructions was “for thy good.” Who would want to live in a world where it was okay for people to steal, lie to or about each other, or kill each other? God wanted to pattern life among His chosen people on His caring and generous attitude toward them, to create a just world where each of them cared about each other as He cared about them.

14 Behold, the heavens and the heaven of heavens is the LORD’s thy God, the earth also, with all therein is.

15 Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.

Until recent times, few people even imagined how immense our world is, much less the universe. Barely 500 years ago, most people on Earth assumed the world was flat and the sun revolved around the Earth, rather than vice versa. During the 1800s, Rev. John Jasper preached for 20 years as a slave and for 20 more as a free man after the Civil War. Crowds of thousands, Black and White, came to hear him preach his famous sermon, “The Sun Do Move.” But 3,000 years ago, God inspired Moses to imagine a reality beyond what anyone could see or imagine—a heaven beyond the heavens.

Likewise, Paul described his other-worldly vision as being “caught up to the third heaven” (2 Corinthians 12:2). The Gospel of Mark didn’t give numbers but assumed more than one (Mark 13:27, NIV, “the ends of the heavens”). Ephesians 4:10 affirms Jesus’ ascension, that He “ascended higher than all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe” (NLT). Moses declared what seldom crosses the minds of most of the world’s population even today—that God is the Creator and Owner of all anyone can see and what we can still only imagine.

Deuteronomy 10:15, in the KJV, begins with the word “only.” At least four modern translations start the verse with “yet” (e.g., NLT, NIV, CEV, and NASB). Both words are weaker than the one Moses used: raq (Heb. rak), which indicated a complete contrast with what was just stated. He “had a ‘delight’ (Heb. chashaq, khaw-SHAK) in thy fathers to ‘love’ (Heb. ‘ahab, AH-hab) them.” The word chashaq is often translated “love,” but meant more than strong affection. Rather, it involved being actively committed to what you love. From all God created, He was especially tied to the Israelites, not just to one generation of ex-slaves wandering in the wilderness. God wanted the Israelites to understand that He chose them from everything He made as His chosen people.

16 Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.

In Israel's early days, circumcision was performed on not only baby boys but also on young men approaching puberty and marriage as they became part of God's covenant people (Genesis 17:9–25; 34:14–15; Exodus 4:25–26). Here circumcision symbolized the intentional commitment to God, the knowing choice of an adult, not an act performed on a helpless newborn infant. To circumcise the heart symbolized a covenantal agreement and was intended to be a permanent, life-altering change, a spiritual transformation in how an Israelite, especially a man, thought of a relationship with God.

Moses used the word "stiff-necked" repeatedly to describe an obstinate unwillingness by Israel toward giving God the love, faith, and obedience His grace toward them deserved (Exodus 32:9; 33:5; Deuteronomy 9:6,13).

17 For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, a terrible, which rewardeth not persons, nor taketh reward.

18 He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.

As the Israelites plodded through the Sinai desert, they encountered many nations. Each group worshiped a different god, some Molek, others Ashtoreth, and more still Chemosh. Moses emphasized that whatever other gods there were, their God, the LORD (Heb. YHWH, yah-WEH) was the one true God. The people passed through the territories of many kings, including Balak, king of Moab (Numbers 22:2–5); Og, king of Bashan (Numbers 21:33–35); and Sihon, king of the Amorites (Numbers 21:21). Moses declared that many kings exerted lordly power over peoples and nations, but the Israelites' God was "Lord" (Heb. 'adown, ah-DOHN) supreme of all other lords.

Here Moses explained the reasons for that claim. Their LORD was the only true God, not a minor god, and thus "great" in the extent of His influence (see Deuteronomy 11:7). "Mighty" was used in Deuteronomy 10:17 to describe a warrior in battle whose breadth of power could overcome whatever opposition he faced (Psalm 65:5–8a). The word "terrible" (or "awesome," NLT) in Deuteronomy 10:17 (Heb. yare', yaw-RAY), had the basic meaning of "fearful," but here Moses referred to a trusting awe of their God because of His past powerful acts (Exodus 34:10).

Too often their treatment of other Israelites was influenced by the status of people seeking justice or by the possibility of material inducements. Their God's actions or judgments could not be swayed in these ways (Psalm 96:10, 13). On the contrary, their God "shows no partiality" (Deuteronomy 10:17c, NIV). Without a father or a husband, children and women were especially vulnerable to abuse and injustice, but when God acts, He does so without any partiality for one person over another. That fairness applied even to the "stranger" (Heb. ger, gare), a word in v. 18 which is often translated "alien" (NASB,) or "foreigner" (NIV, NLT). However, it didn't necessarily mean the person wasn't an Israelite. It could refer to an Israelite from another tribe, anyone who was an outsider, someone with no property rights, living temporarily or permanently in their midst. Not only could the outsider expect fair treatment from their God, Moses told them that God "'loveth' (Heb. 'ahab, AH-hab) the stranger," using the same term he used toward the Israelites in verse 15.

19 Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

To share in God's holiness required sharing His merciful attitude toward people (Deuteronomy 5:15). Jesus made this the heart of the Gospel: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). Again using the same word that referred to His love for them, He instructs them to have love for the outsider. He reminds them that for hundreds of years, they had been homeless, penniless outsiders in Egypt. They knew the injustice and abuse such people went through (Exodus 2:19–24). The NLT of Deuteronomy 10:19 pinpoints their duty as God's chosen

people to embody love for the powerless outsider: "You, too, must show love to foreigners, for you yourselves were once foreigners."

20 Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God: him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.

To uphold God's awe-inspiring greatness confirmed their belief in His fearful power. Faithful pursuit of His expressed will and purposes nailed down the reality of that belief. Taking a sworn oath in the LORD's name declared acceptance of God as their highest authority. Talk about God's grandeur meant little unless it was backed up "in truth or righteousness" (Isaiah 48:1, NIV). In Deuteronomy 10:20, Moses urged them to "cleave" (Heb. dabaq, daw-BAK), or hold tightly to that belief. Later in Deuteronomy 30:20 (NIV), he charged them to "hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life."

21 He is thy praise, and he is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen.

22 Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now the LORD thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude.

The word "praise" in Deuteronomy 10:21 (Heb. tehillah, teh-hil-LAW), meant hymn of praise; the word "hallelujah" is derived from the Hebrew. Scholars debate whether the praise mentioned here was for God or Israel. Both were true. God's acts of delivering them from slavery and sustaining them in spite of hunger, thirst, and enemies brought them wary respect. Yet in spite of their fearful stubbornness, their lifesaving deliverance came about only because of God's grace through visible acts of power (Exodus 19:4). It was undeniable that God miraculously engineered their exodus from Egypt and provided for them during their sojourn in the Sinai desert. Moses reminded them that God had sustained them through years of abusive treatment and multiplied their numbers and strength for a new future. God had braced the Israelites through centuries of slavery and mistreatment for a greater future. By doing so, He demonstrated His great love and power.

16:18 Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment.

This brief passage lays out the guidelines God gave in His covenant with Israel at Mt. Sinai for building a just society (Exodus 23:1–9). "Judges and officers" referred to those who decided how to settle disputes and those who enforced judges' decisions. Several modern translations of Deuteronomy 16:18, such as NLT, NIV, and NKJV say "appoint" (Heb. nathan, naw-THAWN) judges and officers, which specified intentionally setting persons in a particular place. In other words, both judges and their assistants were to be chosen with care for fairness and honesty. Moses inserted a reminder that their land was a gift from God. By their covenant with God, they obligated themselves to abide by its laws and apply them to all persons and circumstances (Exodus 19:8; 23:1–9; 24:3). The mention in Deuteronomy 16:18 of "all thy gates" and "throughout thy tribes" shows that God intended to ensure justice both locally and nationally.

19 Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

The word "wrest" (Heb. natah, naw-TAW) means "to bend or twist something away from its intended use." In other words, God said: "Don't twist My law around to say whatever you want it to say." Proverbs 17:23 says only a wicked person does that (see, for example, 1 Samuel 8:3). To "not respect persons" (Deuteronomy 16:19) literally meant "do not...show partiality" (NIV). When a judge learned that a dispute involved one of his friends or someone rich or influential from his community, Moses said he should not allow that recognition to influence how he interpreted the law or how it was

enforced. Another warning to judges was not to accept a “gift” (Heb. shachad, shaw-KHAD). Most modern translations such as NIV and NASB use the word “bribe” because accepting gifts can often create a sense of obligation on the part of the recipient. Gifts could cause a judge to say what wasn’t true or look away from what he or she was smart enough to see wasn’t right.

20 That which is altogether just thou shalt follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Only “justice (that) is a joy to the godly” (Heb. tsedeq tsedeq, TSEH-dek) could ensure the stability of the community God wanted His chosen people to show the rest of the world (Proverbs 21:15, NLT). Only certainty of fairness for all could ensure life at its fullest, not for one generation but for those who inherit what the Israelites left behind.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday

Psalm 136:1-9

Tuesday

Romans 2:25-29

Wednesday

Romans 3:1-9

Thursday

2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

Friday

Micah 6:1-8

Saturday

Revelation 15:1-4

Sunday

Deuteronomy 10:12-22; 16:18-20