

The Book of Deuteronomy

Lesson 5: The Shema: Love the Lord Your God -- Deuteronomy 6:1-25

There are sentences a people carries in its bones, words said over cradles and graves, words breathed in the morning and at night. For Israel that sentence is here, in Deuteronomy 6: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one". They called it the Shema, from the first word, "Hear". For thousands of years a devout Israelite would say it daily, and many died with it on their lips. It is the closest thing the Old Testament has to a heartbeat.

And right behind that great confession comes the great command: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength". Not love Him a little. Not love Him among other loves. With all of you. Centuries later a young rabbi from Nazareth would be asked which command was greatest, and He would reach back to this verse and say, this one (Matthew 22:37-38). The greatest command was already here, waiting, in Deuteronomy 6.

But Moses is a realist, and so is the Spirit who inspired him. He knows what prosperity does to the human heart. So he warns them about the danger that comes not in the wilderness but in the good land, the houses they did not build, the wells they did not dig, the vineyards they did not plant. "Then beware, lest you forget the Lord". The peril was never that hardship would crush their faith. The peril was that comfort would quietly erase it.

Woven through it all is a tender command about children. Teach these words diligently to your sons. Talk of them when you sit at home and walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise. Tie them on your hand, write them on your doorposts. Tell the next generation the story of how God brought you out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Faith is always one generation from being lost, and God means for it to be passed, hand to hand, heart to heart, around the dinner table and along the road.

Group Discussion: Moses commands that faith be taught "diligently" and woven into the ordinary moments of daily life rather than reserved for formal times. What does that say about how faith is meant to be passed on, and where are the ordinary moments in our lives where this should be happening?

Personal Reflection: Where in your own life is comfort or prosperity quietly eroding your love for God, and what would it look like this week to remember the Lord deliberately rather than drift from Him?

Read Deuteronomy 6:1-25

Study Questions

1. What is the Shema (6:4–5) confessing about God, and why does Moses ground the command to love God in the truth that “the Lord is one”?
2. Jesus calls loving God with all your heart, soul, and strength the greatest commandment. Honestly, what competes for the love that God asks to have wholly?
3. How does Moses say these words are to be kept and passed on (6:6–9), and what does this reveal about how God intends faith to take root in a life and a household?
4. Who in your life is watching how you treat God’s words, and how intentionally are you passing your faith to the next generation?
5. What is the specific danger Moses warns about in 6:10–12 when Israel enters the good land, and what does it reveal about the human heart in times of plenty?
6. Where do you see in yourself the tendency to forget God when things are going well, and to remember Him chiefly when you are in need?
7. What does it mean to fear the Lord, serve Him, and not put Him to the test (6:13–19), and how do these commands guard true worship and trust?

8. When have you been tempted to “test” God, to demand proof or to bargain, rather than to trust and obey Him, and what was underneath that temptation?

9. When the son asks, “What is the meaning of the testimonies?” (6:20-25), how does Moses answer, and what does this teach us about the place of God’s redeeming acts, obedience, and righteousness in the life of His covenant people?

10. Looking back across Deuteronomy 6, name one specific way Jesus is forming you to love God more wholeheartedly, and what concrete step will you take to remember Him and pass Him on?

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Matthew 22:37-38, where Jesus names loving God with all the heart the greatest commandment; Mark 12:29-30, where Jesus quotes the Shema in full; Matthew 4:1-11, where Jesus answers the tempter three times from Deuteronomy 6 and 8; Ephesians 6:4, fathers bringing up children in the instruction of the Lord; Romans 15:4, the Old Testament written for our learning

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