

The Book of Deuteronomy, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 8: Love and Obey; Blessing and Curse

Deuteronomy 11:1-32

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Doctrinally, this lesson holds two truths together. The first is the call to love and wholehearted obedience that Jesus Himself names the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:37). Moses grounds obedience not in raw command but in remembered grace; because Israel had seen what God did, they were to love and obey Him with all their heart and soul. That principle stands for every generation: love is the root, and obedience is the fruit.

The second truth requires careful handling. The blessings and curses of chapter 11, with their promises of rain, harvest, and long life in the land, are covenant-historical promises given to national Israel under the Old Covenant and tied to that particular land. They are not a prosperity formula guaranteeing health and wealth to Christians who obey. We must not turn this text into a transaction in which godliness purchases material gain, a notion the New Testament expressly corrects (1 Timothy 6:5-10). The blessing now comes to us in Christ, who bore the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13-14), and our inheritance is a better and heavenly one (Hebrews 11:13-16).

Beyond doctrine, the lesson aims at formation. It presses us to saturate our hearts and homes with God's word, to teach the next generation diligently, and to let love, not fear or greed, be the engine of our obedience. The student should leave not merely informed about Israel's covenant but moved to love God more wholeheartedly and to live that love out where they actually dwell.

Question 1

Student Question:

In Deuteronomy 11:2-7 Moses appeals to what Israel's own eyes had seen, including the Exodus and the judgment on Dathan and Abiram. What does this teach about the relationship between God's acts and the obedience He asks of His people?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Moses builds his appeal on experience: "Consider today (since I am not speaking to your children who have not known or seen it), consider the discipline of the Lord your God, his greatness, his mighty hand and his outstretched arm" (11:2). He then lists what they saw, the signs in Egypt, the destruction of Pharaoh's army at the sea, God's care in the wilderness, and the judgment when the earth opened and swallowed Dathan and Abiram (11:3-6).

The logic is important. God's acts come first; the call to obey follows. "You shall therefore keep the whole commandment" (11:8) is grounded in "your own eyes have seen all the great work of the Lord" (11:7). Obedience is the response of people who have already witnessed God's power and care. It is gratitude in action, not a bargain struck with a stranger.

This guards us against two errors. We do not obey to manufacture a relationship with a God we have never encountered, nor do we treat obedience as optional once we have. Rather, having seen God's saving acts, supremely in Christ, we respond with glad obedience. Remembered grace is the proper soil in which obedience grows.

The pattern runs through Scripture: "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). God acts, and His people respond. When the order is reversed and obedience is made the price of God's favor rather than the response to it, both grace and obedience are distorted.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's saving acts as the basis of obedience
- Obedience as grateful response, not bargaining
- The danger of obeying to earn relationship
- Remembered grace as the soil of obedience
- The recurring biblical order of grace then response

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Moses appeal to what their eyes had seen?
- How does remembered grace shape the obedience God asks?
- What goes wrong when obedience is made the price of favor?

Question 2

Student Question:

Moses says it was the adults' own eyes, not their children's, that saw these things (11:7). What has your own life, not someone else's testimony, shown you about God, and how does that shape your obedience?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Moses stresses that this generation had seen these things for themselves: "your own eyes have seen all the great work of the Lord that he did" (11:7). Faith that endures is rarely secondhand. At some point each of us must move from "I have heard about God" to "I have seen what God has done in my own life".

Take time to recall the evidences in your own story: prayers answered, sins forgiven, burdens carried, providence that you could not have arranged. These are not as dramatic as a sea

parting, yet they are God's real fingerprints on your life. Remembering them is not nostalgia; it is fuel for present obedience.

When obedience grows costly, it is often because we have forgotten what we have seen. Keeping a living memory of God's faithfulness steadies us. The God who has already shown Himself faithful to you is the same God asking for your trust today, and that history makes obedience reasonable rather than blind.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Moving from secondhand to firsthand faith
- Recalling God's personal faithfulness
- Memory as fuel for present obedience
- Forgetting as a root of disobedience
- Trusting the God who has already proven faithful

Discussion Prompts

- What has your own life shown you about God's faithfulness?
- How does forgetting His past work weaken present obedience?
- What practice could keep God's faithfulness fresh in your memory?

Question 3

Student Question:

Compare the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan in 11:10–12. How does Moses describe the Promised Land's dependence on rain from heaven, and what does it mean that "the eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it"?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Moses contrasts two lands. Egypt was watered "with your feet, like a garden of vegetables" (11:10), a reference to the irrigation labor that drew water from the Nile by foot-driven devices. Egypt's fruitfulness depended on human engineering and a reliable river.

Canaan is different: "a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water by the rain from heaven, a land that the Lord your God cares for. The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year" (11:11–12). This land lives by rain, and rain comes from heaven, not from a pump. Its fruitfulness depends on the watching care of God.

The geography preaches a sermon. In Egypt one could imagine self-sufficiency; in Canaan dependence on God was woven into the very soil. Every harvest would be a reminder that life comes as gift from a God whose eyes never leave the land. To live there was to learn daily trust.

For us the picture endures even though the covenant of the land does not. We still live by gifts we cannot manufacture, under the gaze of a God who watches over His people with unwearied care (Psalm 121:3-4). The land of Canaan taught Israel a lesson every believer must learn: our life is sustained moment by moment by the One who watches over us.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Egypt's self-reliant irrigation versus Canaan's dependence on rain
- Fruitfulness as the gift of a watching God
- Dependence woven into the land itself
- God's eyes always upon His people
- The timeless call to daily trust

Discussion Prompts

- How does the contrast between Egypt and Canaan teach dependence?
- What does it mean that God's eyes are always upon the land?
- Where are you tempted toward self-sufficiency rather than dependence?

Question 4

Student Question:

Moses commands Israel to love the Lord and serve Him "with all your heart and with all your soul" (11:13). Where is your own service to God wholehearted, and where has it become divided or half-hearted?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The covenant call is to love and serve God "with all your heart and with all your soul" (11:13). The repeated "all" is searching. God does not ask for a slice of the heart but the whole of it. Wholehearted service is the standard, not divided or grudging obedience.

It is worth examining where our service has quietly become half-hearted. We may show up to worship while our minds wander, give while resenting the gift, serve while keeping score. The outward act can continue long after the heart has withdrawn. God sees the heart, and He asks for it fully.

The good news is that wholeheartedness is not first about gritting our teeth but about loving more. As love for God grows, divided service heals. The question is not merely "Am I obeying?" but "Am I loving God with all that I am, so that my obedience flows from delight rather than duty?"

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The call to love God with all the heart and soul

- Wholehearted versus divided service
- Outward obedience that has lost its heart
- Love as the cure for half-heartedness
- Obedience flowing from delight, not mere duty

Discussion Prompts

- Where has your service to God become divided or half-hearted?
- What does wholehearted love for God look like in practice?
- How does growing in love heal grudging obedience?

Question 5

Student Question:

In 11:13–17 obedience and disobedience are tied to rain, harvest, and life in the land. How are these promises and warnings rooted specifically in Israel's covenant and their life in that particular land?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Moses ties obedience directly to the land's fruitfulness: "if you will indeed obey my commandments... he will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain... And I will give grass in your fields for your livestock, and you shall eat and be full" (11:13–15). Disobedience, by contrast, brings the warning that "he shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain, and the land yield no fruit" (11:17).

These promises and warnings are covenant-specific. They belong to Israel's national life in the particular land God gave them, under the Old Covenant mediated through Moses. Rain in its season, full barns, and long life in the land were the tangible terms of that covenant relationship in that place and time.

It is essential to read them on their own terms rather than lifting them out as universal mechanical guarantees. God was teaching a nation to depend on Him and was governing their common life as their covenant King. The blessings were real, but they were the blessings of that covenant, for that people, in that land.

Drawing the line carefully protects us from turning godliness into a means of gain. The timeless truth that endures is that God is faithful, that He calls His people to obedience, and that sin has real consequences. What does not carry over is the assumption that faithfulness today guarantees rain, crops, and material prosperity. That belonged to Israel's covenant; our inheritance is fulfilled in Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Rain and harvest as covenant-specific blessings

- Promises tied to national Israel's life in the land
- Old Covenant administered through Moses
- Reading the text on its own terms, not as a universal formula
- Enduring truths: God's faithfulness and the real consequences of sin

Discussion Prompts

- Why are these promises tied specifically to Israel's land and covenant?
- What is the danger of reading them as universal guarantees?
- What enduring truths about God do these verses still teach?

Question 6

Student Question:

Moses tells Israel to fix his words on heart and hand, to teach them to their children, and to talk of them at home and on the road (11:18–19). What would it look like for God's word to fill your conversations and your home that way?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Moses gives one of Scripture's richest pictures of a word-saturated life: "lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand... You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise" (11:18–19). God's word is meant to permeate the whole day and the whole home.

This is not a program reserved for formal study times. It is the texture of ordinary life: meals, walks, bedtimes, mornings. Faith is passed down and kept alive not mainly through occasional events but through countless small conversations woven into daily living.

Ask honestly how much of your conversation, your home's rhythm, and your children's memories are shaped by God's word. The aim is not a stiff religiosity but a natural, glad familiarity with Scripture so that it shows up in how a family talks, decides, and comforts one another.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- A word-saturated heart and home
- Faith passed on through ordinary conversation
- Teaching children diligently and naturally
- Scripture shaping the rhythm of daily life
- Glad familiarity rather than stiff religiosity

Discussion Prompts

- How present is God's word in your everyday conversations?
- What one rhythm could bring Scripture more into your home?
- How can teaching children feel natural rather than forced?

Question 7

Student Question:

What does the command to bind God's words on the heart, the hand, and the doorposts (11:18–20) reveal about how God intends His word to shape every part of life and every generation?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The commands to bind God's words on the heart, the hand, and the doorposts (11:18–20) use vivid imagery to teach total saturation. The heart is the seat of thought and will; the hand represents action and work; the doorposts mark the home and the comings and goings of the family. Nothing is left outside the reach of God's word.

Whether later Israel applied these words literally with physical signs or understood them figuratively, the intent is clear: God's instruction is to govern inner life, outward conduct, and the whole household. It is not to be confined to a sacred hour but to permeate everything, "from the beginning of the year to the end" of a life.

The generational note is just as strong. "That your days and the days of your children may be multiplied" (11:21) shows that God intends His word to pass from one generation to the next. The faith is not meant to die with those who first received it but to be handed on, fresh and living, to the children.

For believers under the New Covenant, the principle is unchanged even as the specific tokens are not bound on us. God's word is to fill our minds, direct our hands, mark our homes, and be entrusted to the next generation (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14–15). A faith that touches only part of life, or only one generation, is far smaller than what God intends.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Heart, hand, and doorpost as total saturation
- God's word governing thought, action, and home
- Faith handed on to the next generation
- Scripture permeating all of life, not a sacred hour
- The enduring principle without binding the specific tokens

Discussion Prompts

- What do heart, hand, and doorpost together represent?
- Why is the generational handing on of faith so emphasized?
- Which area of life most needs God's word to take fuller hold?

Question 8

Student Question:

Moses promises that if Israel loves and obeys, no one will be able to stand against them and their days will be many (11:22–25). When have you been tempted to obey God mainly for what you can get from Him, and how does loving Him purify your motives?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Moses promises that wholehearted love and obedience will bring security in the land: “then the Lord will drive out all these nations before you... No one shall be able to stand against you” (11:23–25). For Israel these were genuine covenant promises. Yet there is a spiritual danger lurking nearby for any of us: obeying God chiefly for what we can get from Him.

When obedience becomes a transaction, love withers into leverage. We can begin to serve God the way we might court a wealthy benefactor, hoping to secure benefits. But God is not a vending machine, and faith that loves Him only for His gifts is not yet faith that loves Him for Himself.

Loving God purifies our motives. We obey not mainly to extract blessings but because we love the One who first loved us. Even Job, stripped of every blessing, could say “though he slay me, I will hope in him”. The goal is a love for God that would hold even if the gifts were withdrawn, because the Giver Himself is our treasure.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The temptation to obey for personal gain
- Obedience as transaction versus love
- God treated as a means rather than the treasure
- Love purifying our motives for obedience
- Loving God for Himself, not only His gifts

Discussion Prompts

- When have you been tempted to obey God mainly for His benefits?
- How does loving God for Himself change your obedience?
- Would your devotion hold if the blessings were withdrawn?

Question 9

Student Question:

Moses sets a blessing and a curse before Israel on Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal (11:26–29). How should we understand these blessings and curses as covenant promises to national Israel

under the Old Covenant tied to the land, rather than as a formula guaranteeing health and wealth to Christians who obey, and what timeless truth about loving obedience still stands?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Moses brings the chapter to a dramatic climax: “See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God... and the curse, if you do not obey” (11:26–28). He even ties it to geography, the blessing to be pronounced on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal once they enter the land (11:29). The choice is vivid, weighty, and real.

To handle this rightly we must read it as what it is: a covenant set before national Israel under the Old Covenant and bound to their life in the particular land God was giving them. The blessings, rain, harvest, security, long life in the land, and the corresponding curses were the terms of that national covenant relationship. They were the way God, as Israel’s covenant King, governed the common life of a chosen nation in a chosen place. This is covenant history, not a timeless formula.

We must therefore resist turning these verses into a prosperity gospel, as though God guarantees health, wealth, and ease to any Christian who obeys, and sends poverty or sickness to any who fail. The New Testament dismantles that thinking directly, warning against those who imagine “that godliness is a means of gain” (1 Timothy 6:5) and reminding us that faithful saints have suffered want, persecution, and martyrdom (Hebrews 11:35–38). Jesus Himself, the only perfectly obedient one, lived without a place to lay His head and went to a cross. Obedience is not a lever that pulls down material reward; to teach so is to misread both Testaments and to wound sincere believers when hardship comes.

How, then, does the blessing reach us? Through Christ, who “redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13), so that the blessing might come to all peoples in Him (Galatians 3:14). The inheritance He secures is not a plot of ground but a better, heavenly country (Hebrews 11:13–16), and the promises to Abraham find their yes in Him and His church rather than in any future earthly restoration of national Israel (Galatians 3:16,29). We read the land-blessings, then, as belonging to Israel’s covenant and as pointing forward to the far greater blessing now ours in Christ.

Yet a timeless truth still stands at the center of the passage and must not be lost in the careful guarding. God genuinely sets before His people a choice, and that choice matters. Loving obedience is the path of life and stubborn rebellion the path of ruin, in every age. “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15) carries the same heartbeat. The blessing now is chiefly spiritual and eternal, fellowship with God, forgiveness, the indwelling Spirit, and the hope of glory, and it is no less real for being spiritual. So we hold both truths: these specific land-blessings belonged to Israel’s covenant, and the call to wholehearted, loving obedience still presses on every heart that would walk in life rather than ruin.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Blessing and curse as Old Covenant terms for national Israel
- Promises bound to the particular land God gave
- Guarding against the prosperity gospel (1 Timothy 6:5; Hebrews 11:35–38)
- Faithful saints who suffered, and Christ who bore a cross
- Christ bearing the curse so the blessing comes in Him (Galatians 3:13–14)
- The inheritance fulfilled in Christ and a heavenly country, not future earthly Israel
- The enduring call: loving obedience is the path of life (John 14:15)

Discussion Prompts

- Why must these blessings and curses be read as Old Covenant land promises?
- How does this passage differ from a prosperity-gospel formula?
- How does Christ bear the curse so the blessing comes to us?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking back over Deuteronomy 11, name one specific way Jesus is forming you to love God wholeheartedly and to let that love overflow into obedience, in your home and in your daily walk.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapter 11 has moved from memory to love, from love to obedience, from obedience to a word-soaked home, and finally to the great choice on two mountains. The thread running through it all is a heart that loves God because it has seen His goodness and answers Him with its whole self.

Jesus gathers this up when He names loving God with all the heart the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:37) and then says, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Love and obedience are not rivals; obedience is what love looks like when it has hands and feet. The Lord is forming exactly that kind of love in His people.

As you close, name one concrete way Jesus is shaping wholehearted love in you, and let it overflow where you actually live, in your home, your conversations, your daily walk. Perhaps it is a rhythm of Scripture with your family, a divided area of obedience surrendered, or a motive purified from gain to love. Choose one, and walk in it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Love as the root of obedience
- Memory of grace fueling wholehearted devotion
- Obedience as love with hands and feet

- God's word filling the home
- Christ forming wholehearted love in His people

Discussion Prompts

- What one truth from chapter 11 most presses on your heart?
- How is Jesus forming wholehearted love in you?
- Where can that love overflow into obedience this week?