

Bible Study – Deuteronomy Chapter 6 – The First Commandment

In today's study, we will look at the first commandment in a bit more depth. You will notice the same benefits for obeying and loving God (e.g. long life, prosperity, and numerous descendants) are repeated in this chapter. It may sound like a broken record, but this only underlies the importance of listening and obeying the commandments given to the Israelites. Remember, when something is ever repeated in the bible, there is great significance to the teaching and should be held dearly to our heart.

Read Deuteronomy 6:1 – 9

Moses reemphasizes the benefits for following the laws and decrees that God gave to the Israelites: to enjoy long life, that it may go well for them, and that they may increase greatly. Moses sets the basis for the first of the ten commandments and the reason for it: that there is only one God and that they are to love Him with all their heart, soul, and strength. This was something they were to always remember and to teach to the next generations so that they would remember God's faithfulness to His chosen people.

Q. Verses 4-5 are known as the "Shema" or the Great Commandment. Shema translated means listen (or hear). Do you think that listening just means absorbing what is said? In what ways does it go beyond that?

Q. In verse 4, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." ESV – (other translations are "The LORD our God is one LORD" (KJB); or "The LORD is our God, the LORD alone" (NLT); or "The LORD is our God, the LORD is one" (NIV)). How are we to understand this verse? How does a proper understanding help us to focus on who God is?

Q. When Moses speaks of loving God with all your heart, soul, and strength, what is he trying to convey to the Israelite people? Why does he give it in this specific order (hint: Define heart, soul, and strength)? Why do you think it is hard to love God with all your heart, soul, and strength? What are some practical ways that one can practice loving God with all their heart, soul, and strength?

Q. In verses 6-9, Moses tells the Israelites how to be wholeheartedly devoted to God. How do you remind yourself about who God is and what He has done for you? Do you come to God all the time or only when things are going well (or poorly)? Why do you think it is hard to stay close to God?

Read Deuteronomy 6:10 – 25

Moses reveals the blessings that wait for the Israelites when they conquer the land that God has promised to give them (e.g. cities to inhabit, plentiful food and water ready to have). Moses, however, warns they are not to forget what God has done for them when they conquer the land, and gives a further explanation of the first commandment from Mount Sinai: God is a jealous God and His anger would burn against them if they pursue other gods. Moses reminds them again to be diligent in keeping the commandments of God, along with His testimonies and statutes. Moses also commands parents to give an answer to their son (or children) when asked about the meaning of the testimonies and statutes: It was for their good and it would be righteousness for them.

Q. Has there been a time when you received unexpected blessing in your life? Did you attribute that to God or to something else (e.g. return of a favour or benefit of your good works)?

Q. Moses gives an answer to the younger folk (e.g. son) when they ask about the meaning of the commandments and statutes given by God. How would you answer a younger person (whether it be a child related to you or someone young in the faith) about the reason for following God's commands? Why is it important to inform them of who God is?

We are reminded in this chapter that the LORD God alone is the one who deserves our worship and obedience. There should be no one else that has our wholehearted devotion and worship in this world. We are also told that God is a jealous God and that His anger would burn against us if we were to substitute Him with anyone else. Moses gives compelling reasons why the Israelites (and by extension Christians) should love God with all their heart, soul, and strength, as well as to fear (in reverence) Him: The love and faithfulness of God to His creation should invoke a response of wholehearted love and obedience to Him. Moses instructs that the current generation teach the commands, statutes, and testimonies to the next generation because they should never forget the faithfulness and love of God to their generation. This is also something we need to do for our kids and for their kids so that they may experience knowing God all the days of their life.