

Loved
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Deuteronomy 6:1-13

It's the season of love! The time of year when the Christmas decorations give way to different red and white decorations and hearts are everywhere you look.

Opening: Before you can love your sweetheart, you have to know them. **How would you advise a young person on getting to know a new love interest? What questions should they ask? What cautions would you give them?**

Valentines Day began as a Roman festival celebrating romance way back in the 14th century. Of course, if you truly love your sweetheart, the season of love should be every day. We should all be quoting Elizabeth Barrett Browning from Sonnet 43: *"How do I love thee? Let me count the ways. I love thee to the depth and breadth and height my soul can reach..!"*¹ THAT is romantic intensity!

Today's text has a similar sentiment about the intensity with which God's people are to love Him. It's at once a commandment, a privilege, and a blessing. That's how God works. As we said last week, His commandments are not "burdensome" they are blessings. If we obey His direction we will be blessed!

We'll see in this lesson that there is a "cycle" of knowing Him, loving Him, obeying Him, and being blessed by Him that can grow deeper and deeper.

Before we can love God we have to know Him. The opening lines of A.W. Tozer's little book, "The Knowledge of the Holy" say it well: *"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."*² Today's text reminds us of the fundamental importance of KNOWING and LOVING God.

Big Idea: Loving God with all your heart, soul, and might leads to obedience. Obedience to Him leads to His blessing. And the cycle repeats and intensifies.

First, some context: Moses is about to die so he is delivering important instructions to the Israelites before they cross into the Promised Land. In chapter five he repeated the Ten Commandments. Now in chapter six he begins giving them “exhortations” (advice and counsel) on how to serve God in the new land. Let’s listen in:

Deuteronomy 6:1–3 (NLT)

A Call for Wholehearted Commitment

“These are the commands, decrees, and regulations that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you. You must obey them in the land you are about to enter and occupy, ² and you and your children and grandchildren must fear the Lord your God as long as you live. If you obey all his decrees and commands, you will enjoy a long life. ³ Listen closely, Israel, and be careful to obey. Then all will go well with you, and you will have many children in the land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, promised you.

- Fear God, obey God, and be blessed. **Does everyone who fears and obeys God have a long life, all will go well, they will have many children, “milk and honey” every day? What DOES it mean?**
- Jesus said He came to give us “abundant life” (Jn.10:10) not only in Heaven but in this life. He also said in this world we would have trouble (Jn. 16:33.) Jesus would not contradict Himself. **What did He mean?**
- He promised us abundant life and eternal life beginning here on earth. How did He define eternal life? He prayed to the Father: ³ *And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.* (Jn. 17:3 ESV) The abundant life starts with knowing God.
- Moses was giving the Israelites general principles on the results of fearing and obeying God. Nowhere in scripture is righteousness equated with riches, or a life of ease, quite the opposite. However, Psalm 37:25 says, ²⁵ *I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread.* (Illustration: A chart of a productive investment over time. Despite ups and downs the trend is UP!)

- We said you can't love God without truly understanding Him, so Moses taught them the fundamental truth about God:

⁴ "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

- That is a simple sentence but the meaning has been debated.
 - Some say it conveys a unitarian God vs a trinitarian God.
 - Some say it conveys "monotheism" but doesn't deny the trinity.
 - Some believe it means the "singleness of purpose" of God who never changes His mind. Some say it's the "uniqueness" of God.
- God is unique, He doesn't change, but what does this verse really say?
- Think about the context of the Israelites compared to all the pagan nations around them. Look across the page in your Bible to the first of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy 5:7. **How does that clarify 6:4?**
- Listen, Israel: Yahweh (the God we worship) is Elohim (God) and He is the only "one." Yahweh whom we worship is the ONE TRUE GOD!
- This made the Israelites unique among the nations. The pagan nations had scores of gods (idols) for every purpose you could think of. The God of Israel is the ONE TRUE GOD; don't be deceived by false gods! (11:16)
- In any ranking (sports, the Fortune 500, awards) there is never a tie for first place. **If two teams are tied in the championship what happens?**
- That's also true of worship. We will all worship someone or something.
- There is only room for ONE on the throne of your heart. If it's not the God of the Bible, then that throne hasn't been yielded to the ONE TRUE GOD.
- How should we respond to the ONE TRUE GOD, Moses?

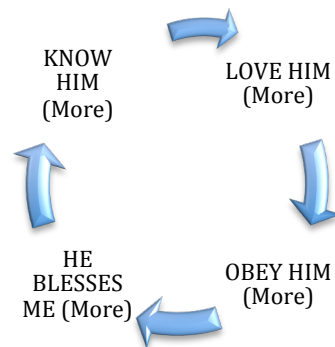
⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

- We're back to *"how do I love thee, let me count the ways."*

- **What does it mean to love God with all your heart, soul, and might? It would seem impossible to do it completely. How can we do it?**
- Verses four and five are the beginning verses of the most important prayer in Judaism known as the “shema” (sh-mah) which means “hear/listen.”
- **Where else have you heard these verses in scripture? How important did Jesus say verse five is? How did He expand on it? If loving God is a commandment, does that mean love is more a choice than a feeling? Is it both?**
- John Piper: *“So where does love come from? It comes from being stunned by being loved by God, right? This love comes from being overwhelmed by the person of Jesus dying on our behalf and rising again, though we have no merit at all in ourselves. When that grips you, then you will taste what it is to treasure Jesus, delight in Jesus, and be satisfied in Jesus.”*ⁱⁱⁱ
- So, Jesus confirmed that Moses gave them the most important commandment. Jesus also told us the ultimate way we express our love to God in John 14:15, “If you love me you will _____.”

- So, if we love God we will obey God. Moses said if we will obey God, He would bless us with a good life. As I thought about this, I thought of what I called the “Cycle of Loving, Obeying, and Blessing.”

- The more I truly KNOW God, the more I will LOVE Him.
- The more I LOVE God, the more I will want to OBEY Him.
- The more I OBEY God, the more He blesses me.
- The more He blesses me, the more I know about Him and His goodness to me, so I LOVE Him more.
- And the cycle repeats and grows with intensity over time.



- As Bill and Gloria Gaither wrote: *“The longer serve Him, the sweeter He grows, The more that I love Him, more love He*

bestows; Each day is like heaven, my heart overflows, The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows.^{iv}

- Though loving Him is a commandment, it's also a privilege.
- Charles Spurgeon wrote: *"God is love, for he commands us to love him. It seems to me a blessed privilege for us to be permitted to love one so great as God."*^{iv}
- In verses six through nine Moses stressed the responsibility of passing this important knowledge and command about God to our children:

Deuteronomy 6:6–9 (ESV)

6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.
7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.
9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

- We said last week, what a responsibility we have for the next generation!
- Then in verses ten through thirteen, Moses gave a warning.
- When you get to this wonderful Promised Land there will be "large and beautiful cities you did not build...houses full of every good thing...vineyards and olive groves you did not plant...you will eat and be satisfied. "BEWARE of the "amnesia of affluence." If you don't keep your focus on God as the source of all your blessings you will begin to think YOU are the source of your blessings.
- Proverbs 30:8–9 (NLT) is spoken to God: *⁸ First, help me never to tell a lie. Second, give me neither poverty nor riches! Give me just enough to satisfy my needs. ⁹ For if I grow rich, I may deny you and say, "Who is the Lord?" And if I am too poor, I may steal and thus insult God's holy name.*

So, What's the Takeaway?

- To love God, we need to know Him, and we can only know Him through His Son Jesus. The first thing we need to know and believe is that the God of the Bible is the ONE TRUE GOD.

There is only room for ONE on the throne of your heart. If the God of the Bible isn't seated on the throne of my heart, then that throne hasn't been yielded to the ONE TRUE GOD.

- Knowing God leads to loving God with all our heart, soul, and might. That leads to obedience to Him, which leads to blessing, and the cycle repeats and intensifies. "The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows!"
- This week, let's make sure that every day is a "season of love" for the ONE TRUE GOD. Let's ask Him to give us more grace to love Him more!

ⁱ Public Domain: <https://poets.org/poem/how-do-i-love-thee-sonnet-43>

ⁱⁱ Tozer, A. W. (1961). *The knowledge of the holy: The attributes of God: their meaning in the Christian life*. Harrisburg, Pa: Harper Collins

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/loving-jesus-more-than-life>

^{iv} Bill Gaither / Gaither Music / ASCAP

^v CSB Spurgeon Study Bible © 2017 Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN