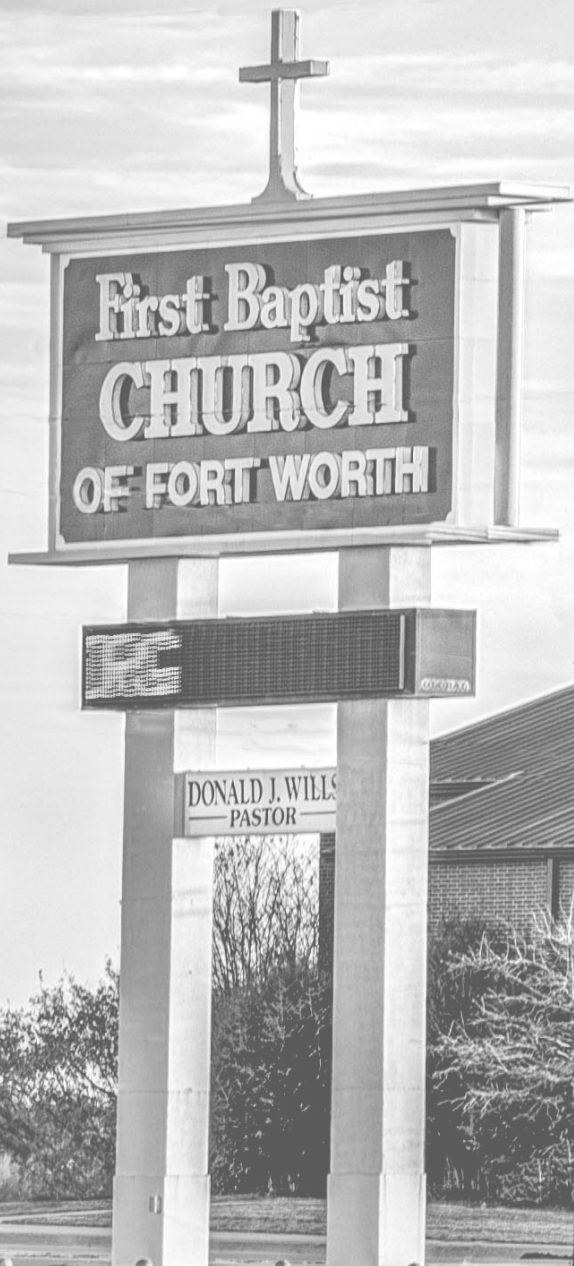
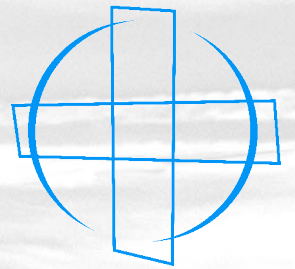


OCTOBER
2024

Donald J. Wills
Senior Pastor

WORSHIP



The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

Letter Coming Soon!



Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively

Introduce

Day 1: Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Instruct

Day 2: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

Day 3: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

Inspire

Day 4: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned into your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Incorporate

Day 5: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

Day 6: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

Day 7: Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30 am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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Worship through Giving

[Deuteronomy 26:1-11](#)

October 6, 2024



Worship God Only

Deuteronomy 4:15-24

Focal Verse:

“For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.”

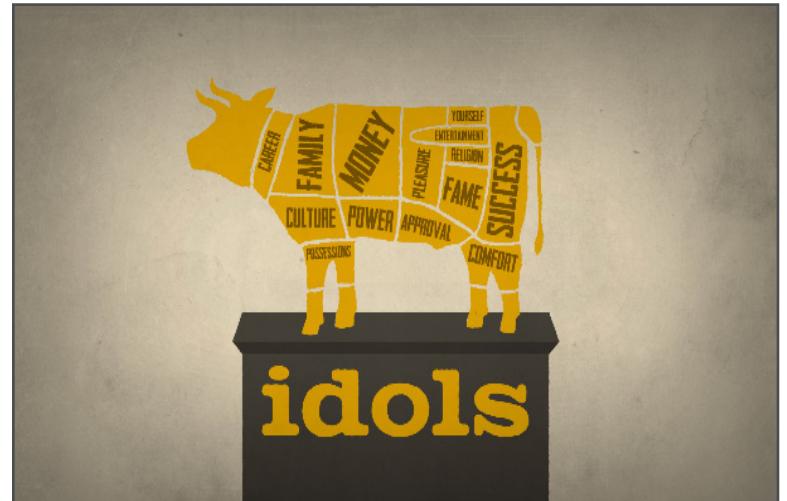
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Deuteronomy 4:24

Introduce

We live in a culture dominated by idolatry. We may see ourselves as more sophisticated and enlightened than the ancient people who bowed in homage to literal statues of stone carved in the likenesses of animals and people or those who worshiped the celestial bodies of our solar system or those who even deified their leaders as gods and goddesses. Yet, our culture is no better than these because some still worship the creation over the Creator. They just seem to do it in a more culturally “acceptable” way. Although some people still revere religious relics as objects of worship, bow with adoration before venerable leaders and teachers of a particular religion, or worship nature itself, countless more idolize celebrities, athletes, and public figures. Just as Paul penned in the book of Romans many centuries ago, people today have “exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever” ([Rom 1:25](#)).

Blinded by culture ([2 Cor 4:36](#)), most would reject the notion of “worshipping” such influential people because it doesn’t fit the “traditional” understanding of idolatry in which one bows down to, prays to, and serves a “divine” being. Because our society doesn’t literally regard these people as “divine,” it has dangerously



softened the meaning of what it means to “idolize.” The word “idolize” has become synonymous with adoration, admiration, or appreciation; thus, culture tends to regard it more as a compliment than a sin! It doesn’t sound nearly so bad if we say that we “idolize” people because we “admire” them or “appreciate” their achievements. But, from a biblical perspective, anytime we give the attention, devotion, and glory that rightly belong to the Lord alone to someone or something else we have committed idolatry. And this has serious consequences!

Although nearly everyone would deny “worshipping” such influential individuals in modernity, their actions tell a different story. Let’s briefly identify three areas which demonstrate how our society shows devotion toward influential people instead of the Lord. First, people have a tremendous hunger to “feel” like they have a personal relationship with celebrities. They want to know everything about them. They read as

Introduce

much as they can. They search endlessly on the internet for any news or gossip. They watch videos about them; they listen to interviews with them because they want to hear their viewpoints. Such devotion, however, should belong to our God alone. We should want to know Him intimately, for He sent His Son so that we could have a personal relationship with Him ([Rom 8:12-17](#)). Therefore, we should desire to hear Him speak by reading His Word and praying ([Psalm 85:8](#)).

Second, the world tries desperately to imitate the ones they idolize. They want to act like them, talk like them, dress like them, and even think like them. For example, athletes may try to imitate the way their idol plays the sport—how they run, throw, shoot, kick, or stand. In addition, people often repeat the phrases their idols say. Furthermore, their idols may even have sway over how they think about certain issues. Again, only God should hold this place in our lives! God wants us to imitate Him ([Eph 5:1](#)). He wants us to act like Him by conducting ourselves in holiness ([Lev 19:2](#)). He wants us to think like Him ([Phil 2:5](#)). Only He should have complete control over the decisions we make.

Finally, people who share enthusiasm and passion for an idol meet in groups to recognize their devotion. They may join fan clubs. They may frequent the same blogs or chatrooms. They may even get groups together to attend concerts, movies, sporting events, or events hosted by these figures. Yet, God wants us to assemble ourselves together in the church to honor Him ([Acts 2:42](#); [Heb 10:25](#)). He wants us to lift our voices together to sing praise. He wants us to rejoice collectively with thanksgiving over what He has done for us.

When relating the Ten Commandments to Moses, God expressly prohibited the people from placing anything or anyone at the center of their lives other than Him. They should not serve any other gods nor create any carved images to which they bow in worship ([Exod 20:3-6](#)). God alone deserves our complete devotion and attention. Here, in Deuteronomy 4, Moses reminds the people of the importance of keeping their commitments to the Lord as well as the consequences for breaking them. From Moses' appeal, we too in the twenty-first century must learn to worship God alone; we must resist the temptation to allow anything or anyone to displace Him as our number one priority in life.

Key
Question

What thing(s) in life tempt you the most to make it (them) a priority above the Lord?

Deuteronomy 4:15-18

WORSHIP NOT THE CREATURE:

As Israel's time in the wilderness drew to a close and the nation stood poised to enter the Promised Land, Moses reminded them about the importance of obeying the Lord; they should faithfully follow the commands that He had given them at Mount Sinai ([Deut 4:1-4](#)). In fact, Moses had faithfully taught these commandments to the people just as he had received them from God ([Deut 4:5](#)), so that they might be an example to the nations by dedicating themselves to the service of the Lord and displaying His holy character ([Deut 4:6-8](#)). Not only should they keep these commandments themselves so that they might live a blessed life which honors the Lord, but they should also teach them to future generations as well ([Deut 4:9-10](#)). Therefore, verse 15 begins with a stark call for Israel to **take careful heed** to themselves. In fact, three times in this chapter Moses compels them to **take heed** (vv. 9, 15, and 23). He wants them to be alert—to pay careful attention to how they walk so they don't become distracted by all the good things and benefits that the Promised Land has to offer, causing them to take their focus off the Lord.

As trains arrive at stations in the London Underground, passengers waiting to exit or board the cars hear the familiar announcement "mind the gap." If they were to glance down at the edge of the platform, they would also find this same phrase scrawled there in large block letters alerting them to



a potential hazard: the tiny gap between the edge of the platform and the floor of the subway car. Although seemingly harmless to warrant such constant messaging, passengers could find themselves in peril if they fail to pay attention. They could wedge the heel of their shoe into that tiny crevasse or stub their toe on the lip of the platform causing them to fall and possibly injure themselves. Therefore, the announcement constantly pleads with passengers to pay attention lest they stumble and fall!

In the same way, Moses urged the people to pay attention—**take careful heed**—so that they might not become distracted by the idolatrous worship of the secular

Instruct

nations around them and stumble in their allegiance to the Lord. Like Israel, we must also pay attention to the smallest, most subtle detail in our daily walk even if the action or thought may seem like it poses no real danger of causing us to compromise our devotion to the Lord. Just like a tiny gap can cause us to stumble and fall physically if we don't exercise caution, even a slight deviation in the object of our devotion can throw us drastically off course with dire consequences. What may seem like a harmless deed, thought, or word, even if not inherently sinful itself, has the potential to captivate our attention and draw our focus away from the Lord, thereby entangling us in sin. Anything, even something good, can become sinful when it consumes our focus and supplants our devotion which rightfully belong only to the Lord. Therefore, we must ask ourselves, "How carefully do I pay attention?"

Question # 1 What are some things in life which may have seemed "insignificant" or "inconsequential" at the time, but then later turned out to cause a major problem in Your relationship with the Lord?

Although we need a constant reminder to pay attention, we tend to tune it out after a while because it becomes so familiar. Consequently, we can sometimes grow complacent and ignore the danger to our own peril. In North Texas, we have dozens of tornado warnings every Spring. Fortunately, for many of them, the rotation never reaches the ground, giving some people a false sense of security. Because we have so many warnings, people sometimes begin not taking them seriously. Rather than immediately running to a storm shelter, for example, some may run to the window or even go outside, some may try to record the storm



Photograph provided by Philip Holt.

on their phone, and others may simply go about their business as usual. Most will only react to the tornado warning if they can confirm it's coming down their street and they are directly in its path, but at that point it may already be too late to get to safety. As believers, we cannot afford to take this approach to the warning that Moses issued to the people here in Deuteronomy; we must pay careful attention at all times to whom or what we give our devotion. If we don't give our full devotion to the Lord—even if it may seem like something minor—we have sinned and will incur God's discipline; therefore, let us pay careful attention!

Question
2

How easily can you spot potential warning signs of becoming distracted in your devotion to the Lord? Why is it so difficult in some cases?

To this point in chapter 4, Moses has spoken in broad, general terms about the necessity of the people to obey *all* the commands that God had given them. Now, however, in verse 15 he focuses their attention on the single-most important command which truly governs all the others: we must worship and serve the Lord God only. We must give Him first place in our lives above everything else! The first two commandments God decreed on Mount Sinai speak to the unique devotion that we ought to give Him: we should have “no other gods before” Him nor should we worship any carved image or created thing ([Exod 20:3-6](#)). When Jesus summarized the teaching of the Old Testament, He identified this principle as the greatest command saying, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind; this is the first and greatest commandment” ([Matt 22:37-38](#)). Whether the Ten Commandments, Moses' instruction to Israel here in Deuteronomy 4, or Jesus' summary of the law in the New Testament, they all promote the same principle: we must devote ourselves wholly to the Lord!

To explain why they must remain vigilant, Moses recalls the specific events that occurred at Sinai. When God summoned Moses to the mountain that day, He descended upon it in the form of a fiery cloud billowing thick smoke that produced lightning and thunder which shook the ground ([Exod 19:16, 18](#)). By way of illustration, picture a volcano spewing forth fiery lava with its red-hot glow reflecting on the thick pyroclastic cloud of smoke emanating flashes of lightning and peels of thunder whilst

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the ground violently shook. The display of God’s awesome presence could have looked something similar to this as the people stood at the base of the mountain and watched. Even though they all witnessed this awesome spectacle with their own eyes, Moses reminds them that they **saw no form** or likeness of God **when He spoke to them at Horeb in the midst of the fire** (v. 15). Indeed, Moses has already pointed out how the people had “heard a voice,” but “saw no form” to emphasize the folly of worshiping an image of a “god” that we concoct ([Deut 4:11](#)).

In Reference



Moses uses **Horeb** synonymously with Sinai to identify the mountain on which he received the Ten Commandments. Many scholars consider the mountain to have two prominent peaks—one called Sinai and the other called **Horeb**—which the ancients could have used interchangeably to refer to the mountain as a whole.

Despite not having any specific physical **form**, God still visibly manifested His presence in these dramatic ways on Mount Sinai! But more importantly, the language Moses employs here should have also jogged the people’s memory to think about how they responded at that time. Even though Moses does not mention it explicitly, it should have reminded the people how they had used some of the gold that God had allowed them to plunder from the Egyptians to construct a golden calf which they then worshiped as the “god” who delivered them from Egypt ([Exod 32:1-6](#))! Although they did not see God’s physical **form** in one sense, they could still see His mighty presence enveloping the mountain through this fiery cloud emanating smoke. If they would have actually stopped to contemplate it further, however, they would have



realized that God's mighty presence permeated every aspect of their lives through their deliverance from Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, the victory over the Amalekites, the provision of food and water in a desolate land, and His guidance through a pillar of fire and cloud of smoke. Evidence of God's presence existed all around them, but they still chose to worship creation over the Creator!

Therefore, Moses implores them to proceed cautiously lest they **act corruptly** and **make a carved image in the likeness of any figure** which God had strictly prohibited in the second commandment (v. 16). Through these events at Sinai, history demonstrates how easily we can become distracted in our devotion to the Lord. Giving the Lord complete access to and control over our lives often becomes easier said than done because we have numerous things that constantly compete for our devotion. If Israel who had seen God's miraculous deliverance first-hand continually found themselves waffling between worshiping the Lord and serving false gods, how easily can we fall into this same trap and become distracted by our modern comforts, conveniences, and advantages. Therefore, we must constantly guard ourselves against the temptation to elevate anything in our lives above the Lord. Cultivating our relationship with the Lord must always come first!

If we let our guard down for an instant, idolatry can quickly consume us. It can spring upon us like a predator pouncing on its prey and we will find ourselves inextricably caught in its grips! Usually, idolatry happens subtly, slowly, and methodically over time without us even realizing it luring us away. Like a predator stalking its prey, idolatry doesn't overtly announce its presence in our lives; on the contrary, it quietly stalks us waiting for the opportune moment to strike ([Gen 4:7](#)). This doesn't mean that we're not complicit or responsible for our choices and actions, but rather that we must pay careful attention so that we maintain the right perspective and balance.

Question
3

In what way(s) is idolatry subtle? Why does this subtleness make it even more dangerous to us?

Even the good things with which God has blessed us or the good things God that has commanded us to do can become a detriment if they distract us in our devotion to Him! Things we may not usually consider idols can become idols when they distract us in any way from pursuing an intimate relationship with Christ: spouses, children/

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grandchildren, friendships/other relationships, education, careers, retirement, hobbies, sports, material possessions, finances, and the like. God has graciously given us these things to enrich our lives, but the moment they capture our attention and become the center of our focus, they become idols which have led us astray. Similarly, ministry and “religion” can also become idols if “doing” supersedes cultivating our relationship with Christ. Martha learned this when Jesus settled a dispute between her and her sister Mary ([Luke 10:38-42](#)). Certainly, God demands obedience, but that obedience stems from our loving devotion which spurs us to know Him more intimately every day.

Question
4

How can “ministry” or “religion” become an idol in our lives?

Moses spells out exactly what idolatry entailed for Israel. They should not make physical representations of God in any form or fashion to look like any element of creation: men, women (v. 16), animals, birds (v. 17), insects or reptiles—literally anything that **creeps upon the ground**—or **fish** (v. 18). Although God is intimately involved with His creation, He is also wholly distinct from it in the form of His person and character, particularly His holiness, sovereignty, and glory. While we can see evidence of God’s presence through His work all around us ([Rom 1:20-21](#)), nothing in the created realm can sufficiently depict God’s character to us apart from having a personal relationship with Him through Jesus ([Rom 1:22-23](#)). Yet, we can know God from what He has consistently revealed of His character and purpose through His Word and from the indwelling of the Spirit whom He sent to guide us when we began our relationship with His Son.

Many people, however, may find this command irrelevant today because we typically no longer carve God into physical images from stone, wood, or other materials. Yet,

the principle behind the prohibition remains just as much a danger for us today as for the ancients. God wisely prohibited us from carving physical likenesses—even if they

"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,"

Romans 1:20

supposedly represented Him—because we would tend to make them according to our preferences and specifications as opposed to seeing who God really is through Scripture! Even if we no longer make physical images of “God,” our culture still tries to redefine who God is to them rather than determining who God actually is—and proves to be—through the Bible. Just as the ancients should not construct statues of what they envision God to look like physically, we should also not try to reshape or redefine who God is according to our expectations or preferences—for this is a form of idolatry too!

We must remember that God created us in His image to have a relationship with Him and not vice versa as culture may espouse ([Gen 1:26-27](#)). Through “religion” and philosophy, however, people have attempted to “create” God to fit their own expectations and standards rather than conforming to His as Scripture demands ([Rom 12:1-2](#)). Rather than depicting God in the way that we want Him to be according to our own desires or the way we may perceive Him based on our experiences, we need to “see” Him as He truly is according to the holy character He displays in His Word. Whenever we misrepresent God’s character, whether intentionally or unintentionally, or we attempt to “create” a god that is consistent with our personal preferences and beliefs, we have committed idolatry—for no such “god” exists unless His person and character are wholly consistent with Scripture!

Consider this example from our culture today. Although we can rightly characterize God as “love” based upon Scripture ([1 John 4:16](#)), our culture “sees” God as tolerant, accepting, and permissive because they have misconstrued what it actually means to love. According to many, therefore, a loving God will not discipline nor will He sentence those who refuse to repent to Hell. In His love, they believe, God will welcome everyone into Heaven. Such a “god,” however, does not exist. It’s merely an idol of mankind—a philosophical “god” concocted by them to justify their sin and make them feel better. Such a “god” stands in contrast to the God of Scripture who loves us and has provided a way for us to have eternal life through His Son. But this same God who loves us will also discipline and judge those who refuse to repent by sentencing them to eternal separation in Hell which will become explicit in Moses’ description of the Lord at the end of this lesson.

Question
5

How does the world try to “recreate” God in their image?

Deuteronomy 4:19

WORSHIP NOT THE CREATION:

Moving from the worship of idols carved in the likeness of created creatures, Moses now warns the people to avoid worshipping the inanimate objects of creation itself—**the sun, moon, and stars**—like many of the ancient secular cultures did (v. 19). Although creation displays God's glory and points to Him as the Creator ([Psalm 19:1](#)), nature itself should not become the object of our worship. On the contrary, God has shown us His majesty and glory through nature so that it might inspire us to praise Him ([Psalm 8](#))! Moreover, God has given us everything within nature to use responsibly for our benefit (i.e., **heritage**) as His ambassadors.

"The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament shows His
handiwork."

Psalm 19:1

Therefore, we should certainly represent God by being good stewards or caretakers of the environment as He has specifically given us charge ([Gen 2:15](#)). But we should not worship it nor should we allow it to become a distraction in our worship where we show more concern for the environment than devotion to our Lord. Instead, we should thank Him for His benevolence and care because He provided everything we need to sustain us in the world that He created. Therefore, we may devote our adoration and worship only to Him!

Question
6

How should nature inspire us to worship God? What does it look like when nature detracts from the worship of God and turns to idolatry?

Deuteronomy 4:20-22

WORSHIP ONLY THE CREATOR:

For a brief moment, Moses transitions temporarily from his discussion on idolatry to remind the people of God's gracious provision: God had delivered them from the tough, deplorable conditions of Egypt and given them freedom in the land that He had long ago promised their ancestors (v. 20). Despite seemingly having no relation to the prohibition against idolatry, Moses uses this historical example to underscore a very important point—and a very personal point for him—about obedience. Moses had learned the cost of disobedience by experience and he wanted to impress upon the people the importance of obeying God's command not to engage in idolatry lest they suffer the consequences.

For this reason, Moses recounts how God became **angry with** him on their account and vowed that he **would not cross the Jordan** to enter the Promised Land which he was **giving** them **as an inheritance** (v. 21). Instead, Moses must now **die in** that **land** because of his disobedience and **not possess that good land** (v. 22). This all stemmed from Moses' disobedience in Numbers 20:1-13 where God commanded him to speak to the rock to bring forth water to provide for the people. Frustrated with the people's complaints, in anger Moses struck the rock with Aaron's staff. Although water burst forth providing life-sustaining sustenance for the people, Moses quickly learned his fate when God swiftly enacted discipline. By recounting this personal failure in his life, Moses hoped that the people would learn from his mistake and that they would be careful to obey what the Lord had said instead of suffering the penalty of disobedience and forfeiting their blessings.

Question
7

Even though we don't lose our salvation, what are perhaps some blessings in life that we may have missed because of our disobedience to the Lord?

Instruct

Deuteronomy 4:23-24

REMEMBER HIS COVENANT:

For the third time in this passage, Moses warns the people to **take heed**—pay attention—so that they don't **forget the covenant** which the Lord **made with** them and begin worshiping the false gods which they themselves have created (v. 23). Like Israel, we too must make a conscious effort to remember and keep our relationship with the Lord at the forefront of our lives—for no other relationship is as important as this! At times, even our relationships with other people suffer because we become so “busy” that we neglect to spend quality time cultivating them. For instance, significant events like anniversaries sometimes slip up on us and we **forget** because we have allowed ourselves to become consumed with life. It's not malicious or intentional. We just become busy and lose track. We become distracted by other things—not infidelity or inherently sinful activities per se—but by things that capture our attention and consume our time. We simply make other things a priority and put this day of celebration on the back burner so to speak.

Yet, marriage isn't just based upon what we do one day a year to celebrate, but the daily pursuit of that relationship—making it the priority *every day*. Sometimes, we can become “secure” or “confident” in our “relationship” so that we begin to take it for granted instead of pursuing it like we once did. Again, we may not participate in outrightly sinful actions like lust or other forms of immorality, but we allow other things to take priority over the relationship. For example, people can sometimes get caught up investing more in their children and their activities over the pursuit of their relationship as husband and wife. Similarly, people can get caught up investing more in their personal interests and hobbies, their personal goals and their bucket lists, their friendships outside of marriage, their work, and the like. None of this starts as intentional, but over time it creates a strain on the marriage because



we have placed emphasis on these areas which can lead to contention, strife, and dysfunction in the relationship.

Likewise, the same can occur in our relationship with the Lord if we don't pay careful attention. A relationship with Him isn't something that we can cultivate only once a week on a Sunday morning for a few hours or a few times a year on special occasions; we must pursue it every day. It must become the top priority in our lives. Yet, sometimes we allow other things to come between us. We don't set out to do this intentionally or maliciously. Over time, however, the responsibility that we have to cultivate this primary relationship in our lives begins to fade. We shift our focus to the circumstances that may seem to have more immediate relevance or significance. To prevent this from happening, Jesus encourages us in the Sermon on the Mount to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" ([Matt 6:34](#)). When we have the right perspective, God will take care of all these other things in life that consume our time and capture our attention. We must simply trust Him, submit to His authority, and seek His kingdom first.

Question
8

In what ways do you cultivate your relationship with other people (marriage, friendship, etc.)? How well do you cultivate your relationship with the Lord?

Finally, Moses plainly spells out the consequence of forgetting the covenant and disobeying the Lord based on God's self-declaration in the second commandment that He **is a jealous God** who will punish the wicked and show mercy to the obedient (v. 24; see [Exod 20:5-6](#)). In verse 24, this divine punishment is described as **a consuming fire** whereas in Exodus 20:5 it is described it as "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me." God is *not* saying that He will punish future generations because of the sins of their fathers. On the contrary, God will punish future generations because they have chosen to participate in and continue the sins of their fathers; future generations are responsible for their own decisions! We need to make this very important distinction. As **a consuming fire** or judge, God justly holds each one of us responsible for our own choices. If we obey, He will reward us with compassion and mercy. But if we disobey and refuse to repent, He will respond with wrath against our sin.

Instruct

Why must God punish sin? Because He **is a jealous God**. In this context, Scripture uses the term **jealous** in a much different way than we tend to use it today. It does not convey the human emotion of “envy” as we often think of it, for who would God envy since He has no equal? Technically, no other gods exist, so He alone stands in a unique position to receive our worship. **Jealous**, in this sense, means that God is protective of what belongs exclusively to Him— particularly His holiness. Therefore, the term **jealous** refers to God’s uniqueness as holy and faithful in keeping His Word, for no other being on earth can claim to be perfect in this way. Consequently, He alone commands our worship and devotion.

Moreover, God’s holy character demands that He act justly which means that He must punish disobedience and unrighteousness. Because God cannot act contrary to His character—for He cannot lie ([Heb 6:18](#)), He cannot act

unfaithfully ([2 Tim 2:13](#)), and He cannot tempt us to do evil ([Jas 1:13-15](#))—He must punish sin according to His holiness. In this sense, God fiercely protects (i.e., is jealously guarding) His holiness by justly exercising His wrath against sin! In Romans 1:18, Paul writes, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.” Recall from the first paragraph of the introduction that we have already established the context of Paul’s statement here: the people had “exchanged the truth for a lie” and worshiped the creation rather than the Creator ([Rom 1:25](#)). Thus, God’s description as **jealous** means that if we remain in our sin we will incur the wrath of God—be consumed by His fiery judgment. God doesn’t judge out of rage or spite, but rather His perfectly holy justice—something which He “jealously” protects.

The description of God as **jealous**, therefore, indicates the severity of our disobedience and sin. In His holiness, God doesn’t take our sin lightly, especially when we give our attention and devotion to anyone or anything but Him. This shouldn’t come as a surprise because God has definitively stated the consequences for our

But Joshua said to the people, “You cannot serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.”

Joshua 24:19

actions from the beginning! As a loving and gracious God, He has sent His Son to provide a way to overcome if we confess our sin and repent so that we can be reconciled with Him in His holiness. The question we must ask is: Have we trusted in Christ and devoted ourselves completely to Him or have we devoted ourselves to the “created” things of this world which lead to destruction?

Toward the end of his life after leading the people into the Promised Land, Joshua asks the people to make a choice whom they will serve ([Josh 24:15](#)). Immediately after posing this question, he highlights the seriousness of their choice with these words: “You cannot serve the Lord, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do harm and consume you, after He has done good” ([Josh 24:19](#)). Joshua and Moses make the same point. God alone deserves our complete devotion and worship. He will punish any disobedience—not out of vindictiveness or spite, but out of His holiness and justice. The moment we elevate anything in our lives above God—even the good things with which He has blessed us—we invite His discipline on our lives because we have sinned. If we truly love God and have a relationship with His Son ([John 14:15](#)), this ought to spur us to evaluate our lives honestly. Do we pursue Christ with the same passion we once did and serve Him with complete devotion or have we unintentionally allowed other things to come between us and distract us from fully devoting ourselves to Him?

Question
9

How would you personally evaluate the passion and devotion with which you currently serve the Lord?

Idolatry is just as prevalent in our culture today as it was millennia ago when Moses recorded Deuteronomy. We may not worship stone carvings as gods, but we have elevated “created” things into the position which only God should hold. Anything or anyone we make a priority above the Lord becomes an idol. Anytime we try to “create” God according to our preferences and expectations in the name of “religion” it becomes an idol. God wants a personal, intimate relationship with us based upon His righteousness and holiness which He made possible through Jesus. Because of our love for Him, we should pursue that relationship daily—for it is the only relationship which affords us with an abundant life. As the God who provides this abundant life through the costly sacrificial death of His Son, He alone deserves our complete devotion and worship. Let us not be like the church in Ephesus ([Rev 2:1-7](#)) and forsake our first love, but let us devote ourselves completely to Him making Him the number one priority in our lives.

Incorporate

Based on Scripture, how would you define idolatry? In our modern world, what does idolatry entail or look like?

In what ways can the “creature” or “creation” become the center of our attention and distract from our relationship with the Lord?

How can our relationships or “pursuit” of a relationship become idols? For those who have children or grandchildren, how can this blessing from the Lord become an idol? For married individuals, how can your spouse become an idol? For single individuals, how can the pursuit of a spouse or friendships become idols?

October 13, 2024



*Worship through
Godliness
Deuteronomy 8:6-20*

Focal Verse:

“Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him.”

Deuteronomy 8:6

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Introduce

While the technological advancements of the twenty-first century in which we live offer us convenience and reliability, they have also spurred our forgetfulness. Or, if the truth be told, they have resulted in our lack of learning altogether. Consider all the amenities and advantages a cell phone provides. We have everything at our fingertips. With the single press of a button or even by simply speaking a name using the AI software, we can access, call, or text anyone in our contact list. If we don't have



a number, with a few clicks we can find it online and press a link to call without ever inputting the numbers in the keypad! In former days, however, we had to make much more of an effort to call someone. Unless we had a number memorized, we had to thumb through a rolodex or, even worse, search for it in a massive phone book with everyone's number listed in alphabetical order by last name—a concept foreign to the youth today. Then, we had to physically dial the number!

In the past, it served us well to have the numbers we called most frequently memorized. At an early age, parents would teach their children their home phone number, their work numbers, and their home address in case of an emergency. Today, however, relatively few children and teenagers know their parents' phone numbers without accessing them on their phones and some can't even recite their full home address! Yet, we cannot point to this lack of knowledge in children and youth alone. Many adults find themselves in the same situation regarding the phone numbers of their closest family members. Although we know our own numbers, some may not know the number of their spouse or children. When reciting their spouse's number, even if they do remember it, some will turn to them and ask for confirmation that they got it right! Others, when asked, will immediately pull the contact information from their phone or defer to their spouse or children standing next to them.

Why has this happened? We haven't suddenly become less intelligent or somehow no longer have the capacity to memorize ten digits. It has resulted as a

Introduce

matter of convenience. We input the number into our phone and then forget about it. We really have no incentive to memorize numbers today even for close relations. The number's there when we need it. We can look it up whenever we want to give it to someone or need to recall it for legal documentation such as providing an emergency contact. But overall, it doesn't play a vital role in our everyday life if we don't have it memorized so we put it out of mind until we need it again.

We must be careful not to treat the Lord in this same way as a matter of convenience whom we “forget” until we perceive we “need” Him. In Deuteronomy 8, Moses warns of severe consequences if we treat God in such a cavalier way, forgetting that the abundant and blessed life we have comes from Him—for He alone is the source of everything good in our lives. As a result, God should stand at the center of everything we do. We must walk with Him daily through obedient service. We must remember the ways He has delivered us and provided for us; we must serve Him alone without allowing ourselves to become distracted by the circumstances of life—whether in our failures or successes. Above all, we must cultivate our relationship with Him, depending upon Him daily to sustain us, guide us, and supply all our needs.

Key
Question

How often do you reflect upon the blessings of the Lord and show Him gratitude through your complete obedience?

Deuteronomy 8:6-10

FEAR THE LORD IN OBEDIENCE:

Moses begins this chapter by prompting the people to remember how God had graciously provided for them as they wandered in the wilderness for the past forty years. He now implores them to recall specifically how God had supplied food for them in this barren land in the form of the manna which He sent from heaven ([Deut 8:3](#); [Exod 16:14](#)). And how He had prolonged their material possessions by causing their “garments not to wear out” and how He had sustained their physical health by preventing their feet from swelling ([Deut 8:4](#)). In fact, God had provided them with everything they needed—not just physically, but also spiritually. He metaphorically fed them through His Word, offering guidance on how to live successfully by establishing specific boundaries to follow in the law. Because of His faithful love for the people, God also corrected them when they strayed off course just like earthly parents who discipline their children ([Deut 8:5](#); [Prov 3:11-12](#); [Heb 12:5](#)).

God’s provision should inspire us to reciprocate His love through our obedience to His commands. Moses, **therefore**, encourages the people to **keep the Lord’s commandments, walk in His ways, and fear Him** (v. 6). Right now, you may be thinking, “Didn’t we study this topic last week?” We did. And we will study it next week too when God instructs Israel to “keep every commandment which I command you today” ([Deut 11:8](#)). Why do we need to study a similar lesson three times? Because this topic is so important to the Lord that He addresses it multiple times in His Word and it often proves a challenge for us to practice so we need a constant reminder to obey! In fact, obedience is one of the main themes of Deuteronomy. Using various phrases in reference to obedience, Moses tells Israel to **keep the commandments** ([4:2](#); [6:17](#); [7:11](#); [10:13](#); [13:18](#); [19:19](#)), obey them or the voice of the Lord ([11:13](#), [27](#); [12:28](#); [13:4](#); [15:5](#)), observe them ([5:31](#); [6:25](#); [26:7](#), [10](#); [28:1](#), [2](#)), practice or do them ([11:22](#); [30:20](#)), what God

"And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,"

Deuteronomy 10:12

Instruct

requires of us ([10:12](#)), and the consequences of our disobedience ([28:15](#), [45](#), [62](#); [30:10](#)).

But you may argue that these **commandments** in the Old Testament only apply to Israel because God is more concerned about a relationship with Christ than rules and regulations. Indeed, through His death and resurrection, Jesus is the only way for us to have a relationship with God ([John 14:6](#)). When we have an authentic relationship with Christ, however, we will naturally want to express it through our obedience. Jesus Himself, therefore, asserts, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” ([John 14:15](#)). Moreover, Jesus didn’t come to do away with the Old Testament, but to fulfill it ([Matt 5:17](#)). While the manner in which we practice some aspects of the Old Testament has changed, like sacrifice through Christ instead of animals, the timeless principles remain unchanged and applicable even today. God still wants our complete obedience.

When we have the right perspective about God’s commandments, it will give us even more motivation to obey Him. God didn’t set boundaries merely because He wants to withhold something good from us. On the contrary, God set boundaries for our benefit because He loves us and wants to protect us from danger. He wants us to have an abundant life free from worry where we can enjoy His presence with us! For a moment, consider why the National Park Service installed railings and fences at the viewpoints overlooking the Grand Canyon. They didn’t do it arbitrarily to inhibit our view or keep us from getting the best pictures. They did it to ensure our safety and enhance our experience so we don’t have to worry about rocks giving way, tumbling over loose debris, or losing our footing. Most understand the danger that lurks beyond the railing and abide by the boundaries. Some, however, will tempt their fate and ignore it—and some unfortunately have lost their lives. In the same way, God uses the boundaries He established to protect us from self-destruction!

Question
1

What examples can you give concerning how obedience to God’s commands protects us and gives us joy rather than robbing it from us?

Certainly, we ought to obey God and **walk in His ways**, but we should also **fear Him**. What does Moses mean when he instructs the people to **fear** God? In some modern circles, people tend to over-spiritualize and over-simplify what it means to **fear** God by using it solely as a synonym for reverence or respect. Godly **fear** does indeed

include this aspect. In Scripture, however, godly **fear** actually has two components to it. We should show reverence or respect *to God* by obeying His **commandments** and walking **in His ways**, but we should also **fear** the consequences *from God* if we disobey ([Prov 3:7](#); [Isa 50:10](#); [Mal 3:5](#); [Matt 10:28](#); [2 Cor 7:1](#); [Heb 11:7](#))! Thus, godly **fear** should make us pause and think about the consequences of our actions. If we honor God with our obedience and respect His holy boundaries, however, we need not **fear** the consequences of our choices. Proverbs 19:23 declares, "The fear of the Lord leads to life, and he who has it will abide in satisfaction; he will not be visited with evil."



Although not a perfect illustration of godly **fear**, consider how police officers evoke these same two components of **fear** in us. We respect police officers because they put their lives on the line to protect us and assist us when we are most vulnerable, but at the same time we should **fear** the consequences of our actions if we break the law because they have the authority to enforce it. When we need help, for instance, we most often call the police first. If we have a flat tire or mechanical problem on the road, police sometimes arrive on the scene first. At accidents, they can give direction and render life-saving aid. When threatened by criminals who intend to rob, harm, or kill us, the police respond regardless of the risk to them. Therefore, we should respect police officers for who they are, what they do, and the authority they have. At the same time, we ought to **fear** the consequences of our behavior if we choose to break the law because they also have the authority to enforce it.

If we see a patrol car while driving down the freeway, for example, we immediately hit our brakes and glance down at the speedometer almost without hesitation as a natural reflex. If we're obeying the law, then we have nothing to **fear**! When the cherries and berries come on and the squad car pulls behind us, our stomach sinks because we realize that we have broken the law and have the very real possibility of receiving a ticket save for the grace of the officer. As the officer approaches our car, we show him the utmost respect in the way we speak and by complying with his

requests. Even if we want to maintain our innocence and intend to protest, we respond to any question with a sir or ma'am. We listen and comply with any instructions by keeping our hands on the steering wheel, giving them our documentation, getting out of the vehicle only when asked, and so forth. After all, it's not the officer's fault we find ourselves in this position; it's our own because we have broken the law. The officer is merely doing his sworn duty to enforce the law and keep the roadways safe.

Similarly, we ought to show our reverence and respect to the Lord for who He is and what He has done. As we learned last week, God is unique in His holiness (i.e., jealous). Because of His sovereignty, righteousness, holiness, and perfect love, God commands our worship and reverence like nothing else in His creation. Even if God did nothing else for us, His holy character alone demands our reverence. Yet God, as we will see in the next few verses, has done so much good for us. He has blessed us abundantly beyond what we could ever imagine and always helps us in times of need ([Psalm 46:1](#); [Eph 3:20-21](#)). For this reason, we also owe Him our worship and respect. At the same time, in His holiness, God must punish sin so we also ought to **fear** the consequences of our choices when we break the law that He established for our benefit. After all, Moses has already reminded them that "as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you" ([Deut 8:5](#)); He disciplines us—not out of anger, but out of love.

Question
2

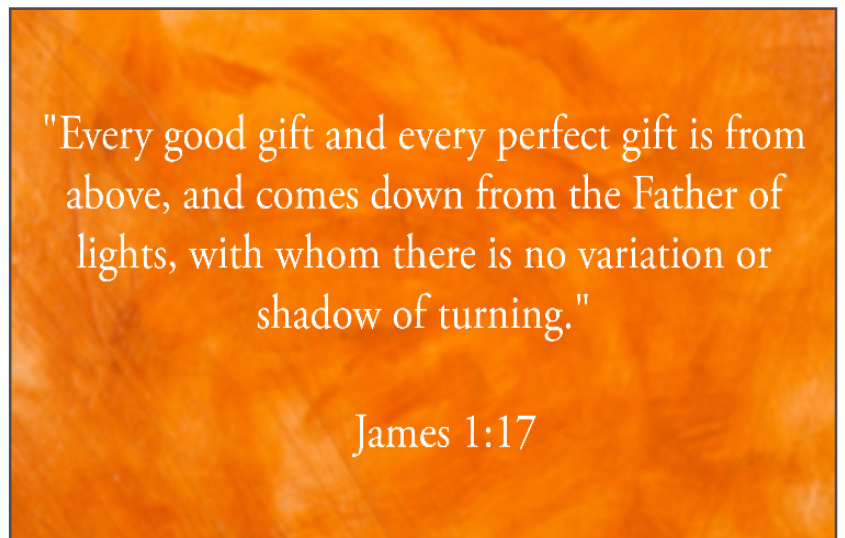
How consistently do you show reverence and respect for the Lord in any circumstance you may face in life?

As much as Moses wants the people to remember God's faithful provision in the wilderness, he wants them even more to anticipate the blessings they will receive when they inherit **the land** God long ago promised their ancestors—an abundant "land flowing with milk and honey" ([Exod 3:8, 17](#); [13:5](#); [Deut 6:3](#); [11:9](#); [26:9](#)). Moses paints a vivid picture of this Promised Land especially in contrast with the barren land from which they had just come. **The good land** which God stands ready to give them has an abundant supply of water flowing from **springs** and **brooks** meandering through the countryside (v. 7). Along with this **water**, the rich, fertile soil would yield an abundance of crops from **wheat, barley, figs, pomegranates, olives, and honey** (v. 8). Therefore, the people would have plenty of food to **eat and lack nothing** (v. 9). In addition to these natural resources, the **land** would also provide ample **iron** and **copper** which

could be used in tools, weapons, and other household items. God had truly blessed Israel with an exceptional **land** full of beneficial natural resources!

When we study the Old Testament, we must take care to understand the original context and not replace Israel with the church or even the United States. God made some promises specific to Israel that He must keep! For example, He promised Abraham that He would give him this specific **land**. God also promised to take that land

from the people if they sinned and refused to repent, sending them into exile under a foreign nation. Yet, God always restored a remnant through whom He eventually sent the Messiah to save the world of its sins! At the same time, the overarching themes and principles regarding how God related to Israel can also show how God relates to us today. Although God did not promise to give us a specific **land** or one with a wealth of natural resources, He has nonetheless blessed us immeasurably in our own right. Even though Scripture doesn't mention our country specifically, we know that God has blessed us because it tells us that "every good and perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" ([Jas 1:17](#)).



Question
3

Why must we be careful to distinguish God's specific promises to Israel and avoid relating them directly to us?

Imagine standing atop Pike's Peak in Colorado which inspired Katherine Bates to compose a poem celebrating the grandeur of our country which later became the basis for the song "America the Beautiful." As you look out over our country, what blessings do you see? Despite the periods of hardship and uncertainty we may have faced at times as a nation or individuals over the past 248 years, we should see a prosperous country abundantly blessed by the Lord. We live in a country with incomparable natural beauty from snow-capped mountains to deep canyons, glacier-carved valleys, pristine lakes, powerful rivers, stunning beaches, coastal reefs teeming with life, and unique

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geothermal features found few other places in the world. We live in a country with plentiful natural resources from the fertile land of the Great Plains that enables the cultivation of almost any kind of crop to the tropical fruit fields of Florida and Hawaii, the dense forests of the Pacific Northwest that provide material for lumber, the gas and oil fields of West Texas, the coal fields of Appalachia, and the gold mines of Alaska.

Moreover, we live in a country with tremendous human resources and extraordinary potential. Our forefathers blessed with wisdom from the Lord had the foresight to draft a Constitution and Bill of Rights that guarantee us specific liberties like free speech, the right to assembly, the freedom to worship, the right to a fair and expeditious trial by jury, and so forth enabling us to live relatively peaceably for these many years as a democratic republic. Moreover, we live in a country where we have ample access to education and healthcare. We live in a country where technological innovation has substantially improved our lives from inventors like Thomas Edison to Henry Ford, Eli Whitney, Nikola Tesla, and the Wright brothers. We live in a country with every conceivable kind of modern convenience and technological advancement. Our cities have numerous parks, recreational facilities, entertainment



venues, restaurants, and stores that offer us anything that we could ever need, God has truly blessed our nation far exceeding what we could ever have expected.

Question
4

As you look around our nation, what do you see? What comes to mind first?

As we look at our nation and see the tremendous blessings which God has bestowed on us, we should stop to give Him the praise and thanks He so rightfully deserves. Once the people enter and settle in that **land**, Moses encourages them to **bless the Lord for the good land He has given them when they have eaten and are full** (v. 10). This sounds very much like the purpose for which we celebrated our first Thanksgiving in this country—and which we will celebrate again in just a few weeks.

God deserves our praise and worship for all the good things in life He has given us. However, the temptation to become complacent, apathetic, entitled, and forgetful of the source of our blessings always looms in the background—a subject to which Moses will now turn.

Question
5

For what are you most thankful in life?
How does that inspire your worship of the Lord?

Deuteronomy 8:11-17

FORGET NOT GOD'S PROVISION:

In verse 11, Moses issues a stern warning lest the people focus on all the blessings this good land has to offer and **forget the Lord**. Using the same word from our lesson last week translated “take heed to yourself” ([Deut 4:15](#)), Moses warns the people to **beware**. He doesn't want anything to distract them so that they **forget God** and fail to keep **His commandments**. In this context, the verb **forget** doesn't signify the mere inability to recall facts and figures, such as forgetting a person's name. Nor does it refer to absentmindedness, such as walking into a room and forgetting why we came, missing an appointment, or forgetting to pick up something at the grocery store. On the contrary, to **forget** has a much more sinister and ominous meaning. When people become secure in their circumstances because they have acquired more possessions and resources than they will ever truly need, they sometimes push God completely out of their lives; they discard Him as if He has no use or relevance because they see themselves as independent and self-sufficient.

Therefore, Moses urges the people to **beware lest they forget** the Source of **all** their blessings is the Lord. When people become comfortable in how they live and have **all** their basic needs met, they tend to take things for granted. They simply don't think about the Source from which **all** these things come. They put God out of mind and go about their daily routine oblivious to His presence. In human



BEWARE!

Instruct

terms, children sometimes take the things that their parents provide for granted. If not taught properly, they can then approach life with a sense of expectation and entitlement—demanding certain things they see as rights rather than privileges. Consequently, Moses implores the people **not to forget God** and what He has done for them when they have filled their stomachs with the bounty of the land, when they live in their **beautiful houses**, when their **flocks** and **herds** multiply, when their wealth increases, and when **all that they have is multiplied** (vv. 12-13). Instead, they should remember the Source from which **all** these blessings came—for they would have nothing if it were not for the Lord.

Question
6

What are some blessings, benefits, or privileges that people sometimes take for granted?

Hence, they must make a conscious effort to remember how the Lord Himself delivered them **from bondage in Egypt** and sustained them in a **wilderness** fraught with deadly peril around every corner (vv. 14-15). They must recall how God protected them from venomous **serpents** and **scorpions**, provided **water** from rocks, and sent **manna** from heaven to eat (vv. 15-16). Just as God had redeemed them from **Egypt** forty years ago, He would now be the source of their **wealth** and **power** as they entered this Promised Land. Thus, the phrase **forget God** ultimately involves self-deception. The people haven't merely stopped thinking about God or failed to remember that their provision came from Him; rather, they have overtly deceived themselves into thinking that they accrued all this **wealth** on their own (v. 17). In a sense, this becomes another form of idolatry where they pridefully put themselves in the place of God, assuming control over their own destiny and taking credit for all their successes.

Question
7

In what ways has God blessed you? How do you keep God at the forefront, remembering that these blessings come solely from Him?

We may wonder how someone can **forget** the benevolence of the Lord and become so deceived that they attribute their successes to their own capability and ingenuity. We may boldly claim that we would never let something like this happen

to us; we adamantly declare that we would serve God faithfully regardless of the circumstance. We may even defiantly claim, "I'd never **forget** what God has done for me!" But we must **beware** or this could happen to us too! Human nature often gives us false confidence and lulls us into complacency. It gives us a false sense of security where we distance ourselves from God when we have become comfortable with our circumstances and begin to venture on our own without seeking His guidance. Therefore, we must never let our guard down as Moses warned the Israelites centuries ago.

Picture a child learning to ride a bike for the first time without training wheels.

Once he feels secure, he almost always tends to brush his parents off—even chastising them for running alongside or holding onto the bike. He will emphatically yell, "I've got this. Leave me alone."

The child has become overconfident, thinking that he can navigate the world on his own; he doesn't need the help



of his parents. Although the child may ride without incident for a while, something will inevitably happen. He will start wobbling and crash. Then, he will immediately begin calling for His parents—the ones whom he had just pushed away! If we're not careful, we can treat God in this same way. We can become confident, comfortable, and complacent in our circumstances and push God away, thinking we've got everything covered. But at the first sign of trouble, we call out to Him for help.

Israel took this same approach with the Lord even though Moses had repeatedly warned them of the danger throughout the book of Deuteronomy. At first, they relied upon God because they found themselves in a circumstance which they could not overcome on their own. Once they settled in their land and became comfortable, however, they forgot. They pushed God completely out of their lives! And we see evidence of this in almost every book in Scripture. Rather than trust God as their sovereign King, they demanded an earthly king and "every man did what was right in his own eyes" during the period of the Judges ([Judg 17:6](#)). In the eighth century, Isaiah

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lambastes the people for not knowing the Lord. He compares them to an ox which knows its master and the place where it can get food, but Israel does not know God—the Source of their blessings ([Isa 1:3](#)). In Amos, the people worshiped the false gods of the nations around them and greedily exploited the poor. In Malachi, the people robbed God of His tithes and offerings, bringing blemished and defective sacrifices to offer in His temple ([Mal 3:8-18](#)).

Even in the New Testament, the people forgot the source of their life and blessings. For example, after feeding the 5000, the crowd selfishly came to Jesus for more food. When He exposed their devious motives and began talking about His greater purpose in offering eternal life, the people demanded a sign to prove He was indeed the Messiah. At this point, they wrongly attribute the manna their ancestors received in the wilderness to Moses ([John 6:30-31](#)). But Jesus corrects them saying, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven” ([John 6:31](#)). Just as God the Father provided manna in the wilderness to that generation, so also through Jesus will He now provide the life-giving sacrifice that offers salvation to all. Yet, most of the religious leaders of Jesus’ day still misunderstood the purpose of the law and saw it as a way that they could earn righteousness on their own to attain life. This led them to reject Jesus through whom God graciously made it possible to have eternal life.

God even taught Nebuchadnezzar a powerful, yet humbling, lesson about taking credit

for all his achievements and successes. Daniel warned the Babylonian king to repent and do what the Lord had commanded, but he refused. As the king stood proudly in his palace surveying his kingdom, he reveled and boasted of all that he himself had achieved. Suddenly, God struck Nebuchadnezzar with mental illness to humble him and teach him that he owes everything to Him alone ([Dan 4:34-36](#)). Above all, God created us for dependence, not independence; we should always rely exclusively upon Him. But sin compels us to seek independence and freedom from the One who loves

And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”

John 6:35

us more than anyone and wants the absolute best for us. May we never **forget the Lord** our **God** and continue to rely upon Him daily, remembering He is the sole Source of **all** the blessings we have in our lives.

Question
8

At what times in life have you forgotten the Lord and relegated Him to a secondary position because you had become comfortable?

Deuteronomy 8:18-20

FOLLOW GOD ALONE:

In verse 18, the command shifts from a negative prohibition—**do not forget the Lord**—to a positive admonition to **remember the Lord** because He alone has given them **the power to get wealth**. God wants to **establish His covenant** with them which He had promised to their forefathers by giving them this prosperous land. The **covenant**, therefore, is based upon God’s grace, but the people demonstrate their participation in it through their undivided loyalty to Him. In other words, they must devote themselves to the Lord and serve Him alone. This means that they must give Him priority in their lives above everything—the very definition of idolatry which we studied last week. No sooner had Moses instructed the people to **remember the Lord**, does he return to address the severe consequences **if they forget**. If they **forget** and **serve other gods**, Moses solemnly testifies that they will **perish** (v. 19). Like the **nations** which God will destroy and defeat on their behalf as they enter into Canaan, so also shall Israel be destroyed if they do not obey **the voice of the Lord** (v. 20). Neither Moses nor we can overstate the seriousness of pushing God out of our lives, thinking we can be independent and successful on our own. Such thinking is pure folly and leads to destruction, for without God we have nothing.

What does this **covenant** have to do with us in the twenty-first century? While we don’t have a

Remember now your Creator in the days of
your youth, Before the difficult days
come, And the years draw near when you
say, “I have no pleasure in them”:

Ecclesiastes 12:1

covenant with God concerning the inheritance of a specific physical land, we do have a **covenant** with Christ for the far superior inheritance of eternal life. Both covenants require a relationship with the Lord where we express our gratitude through our faithful obedience. God, after all, initiated the covenants by grace predicated upon the fact that we would devote our lives wholly and solely to Him. Therefore, we need to **remember** that God is the Source of everything we have. The very moment we **forget** and take our relationship with the Lord for granted is the very moment we invite discipline on our lives.

As a nation, we have become comfortable and complacent in our circumstances just like Israel did after settling in this good land that God was about to give them. Like Israel, God has also given us a land with abundant resources and seemingly endless opportunities. Recall those blessings which God brought to your mind earlier as I challenged you to think about what the Lord has done for our country while standing atop Pike's Peak looking out over our nation. We must never **forget** from whom our blessings come which should spur us to obey everything He has commanded us. But today, unfortunately, we stand in the minority. Very few in our country give God the credit and thanks He deserves for so richly blessing our nation—more than most others throughout history.

By their actions, it appears that some who call themselves Christians have forgotten too. They sit idly not doing the work to which the Lord has called us. They don't obey the commands which the Lord has clearly given us in His Word. God has become a novelty who is there when we need Him; their so-called "relationship" with the Lord has become nothing more than a series of routine rituals—something they "do" a couple of hours a week to make themselves feel good or to appear to others as a "good" person. With this mindset, God has little impact or influence upon their daily life because as a whole people have consumed themselves with leisure and pleasure instead of pursuing an intimate relationship with the Lord.

Overall, our country has moved further and further from the Lord because we have forgotten that our blessings come from Him. While people may use the phrase "God bless America" or call for prayer during times of national tragedy or uncertainty, most people have very little to do with the Lord on a daily basis. They have pushed Him out of their lives. As a nation, we rely on our own strength. We boast in our own wisdom and wealth. We pursue our own freedom and independence. And this has come at the

expense of pushing God out of our country or, at the very least, relegating Him to an honorary position in which He has little control.

Question
9

In what specific ways have you personally seen our nation push God away?

Our memories typically don't fail all at once. It happens gradually over time. We begin to forget bits and pieces until we can no longer **remember** many details about a specific event. Think about a picture that you have taken whether on a vacation, mission trip, or at a special occasion. For a while, you **remember** almost every detail about it. You **remember** the date, the names of the people, the name of the location, and the circumstances surrounding the taking of the picture. But as time advances, your memory begins to fade. You struggle to **remember** the names of the people. Then, you **forget** the name of the location. And finally, you can no longer **remember** most of the circumstances around the picture. Although this event may have once played a significant part in your life, it no longer holds that much importance to where you recall it daily, so your memory fades.

Unfortunately, we can treat God in the same way if we don't exercise caution. We slowly push Him out of our lives. We gradually drift away over time because we become comfortable in our daily routines and secure in our circumstances. We simply don't dwell on the presence of God in our lives because we don't perceive that we need Him as much. No longer do we allow Him to play a vital part in our life every day, but instead we fill our schedules with other things that seem to have more immediate value and importance. Even though we may attend church on Sunday, a couple of hours a week is not sufficient to cultivate a relationship with Him. We must worship and serve Him devotedly, every hour of the day by living holy lives that reflect Him.

Moses warns Israel about this danger of forgetting the Lord. And, as Scripture proves, Israel experienced the discipline of the Lord because they failed to **remember** Him and **keep His commandments**. Let us not become overconfident, but let us give serious consideration to the evaluation of our lives so that we might cultivate a relationship with the Lord expressed through our obedience to His call and command on our lives. This requires a conscious effort each day! Let's keep Him at the forefront of our minds lest we too might become enticed by the pleasure and comfort of our

culture and slowly drift away.

Question
10

What does it look like in our lives when we have become comfortable and complacent in relation to the work of God?

Inspire

We have many modern conveniences which allow us to put forth minimal effort to remembering things. We have information at our fingertips with the push of a button or at the very most a few clicks on the keyboard. Overall, we don't have to make very much of an effort to remember things that in bygone years were of great importance to us. We simply put them out of mind until we need them. But we should not behave this way with the Lord. He's not just a matter of convenience—there when we need Him—but He should be the very center of our existence. We cannot become so comfortable and complacent that we forget Him, thinking we have all the bases covered. We must pursue that relationship with Him daily and worship Him through our godly obedience because we owe everything to Him—especially the life that we have. Therefore, let us keep the commandments of the Lord and worship Him in godliness, remembering what He has done for us and what He has called us to for Him.

Incorporate

How would you personally evaluate your obedience to the Lord? In what areas have you been faithful and obedient? What areas might you need to change?

What are some of the signs that we have become comfortable and complacent in life to the point where we have begun to push God out? Why are these signs often so difficult to detect?

What does being comfortable and complacent look like in the church? How can we combat it?

October 20, 2024



Worship in Genuineness

Deuteronomy 11:8 -17

Focal Verse:

“Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them.”

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Deuteronomy 11:16

Introduce

Have you ever had an accident where you thought you had escaped a major injury only to find out later how badly injured you actually were? Sometimes the severity of an injury doesn't become immediately apparent. Outwardly, we may appear fine and have no visible sign of trauma. Yet, in a few hours or days, we become keenly aware that something indeed had happened as aches, pains, and other problems begin to surface. But in the initial moments after the event, we often deceive ourselves into thinking that we're alright—whether from pride because we don't want to let others know the true extent of our injuries, from the adrenaline coursing through our veins which masked the symptoms, or simply because we don't see any visible wounds to alert us to potential problems.

Automobile accidents can sometimes have this effect on people. In the moments following a wreck, the occupants of the vehicles may not immediately feel the results of the impact upon their bodies. At that time, they may not have any severe aches or pains. They may not have any cuts or lacerations. And no bruises may even yet be visible, so they adamantly declare they're alright and refuse to go to the hospital to allow trained medical professionals to examine them. However, as the adrenaline begins to wear off, signs of a more ominous problem can sometimes begin to manifest. Although they may look healthy on the outside, they can have severe, life-threatening internal injuries hidden to the naked eye. Yet, based on their own limited understanding and assessment, they have deceived themselves into thinking that all is well!

We can respond to such incidents as these in one of three ways. On one hand, we could take preventative measures and seek the advice of a medical expert regardless of how we feel, knowing the possibility that we could have sustained an injury that we might not be able to detect ourselves. On the other hand, we could wait until we begin noticing the symptoms and only then seek help. Or we could ignore the symptoms altogether and continue thinking that we'll be alright. These latter two ways, however,



Introduce

prove dangerous because the injury will continue causing damage without proper treatment. And, perhaps, it may even turn deadly if left untreated altogether. Yet, many people still fool themselves into believing some physical problems will eventually resolve themselves on their own. So, they do nothing.

In Deuteronomy 11:16, Moses reminds the people to pay attention lest their “heart be deceived” leading them astray in their devotion to the Lord. Sin may offer momentary euphoria and pleasure. Everything may seem to go well in the moment. It may seem to have no downside because the consequences may not always be immediate, but in reality sin destroys us internally. If left untreated, it will continue to rob us of life. It will consume us. It destroys us from the inside out. We cannot ignore it and hope that it will go away on its own. If we don’t deal with it, sin will continue a course of destruction and eventual death. But the way in which we deal with it also matters. Just like we would not go to anyone without proper medical training to have surgery, we have only one Source who can help us overcome our sin: Christ.

As we study this text, let us ask Christ to perform a preventative check-up on us to ensure everything meets His holy standards; we need an Expert to examine us because we’re not always capable of spotting problems in our lives on our own! We need Him to examine us from head to toe in order to see if we may need to change course because sometimes we can even deceive ourselves into thinking all is well when, in fact, we have an underlying problem. So, we need an Expert who can see to the very core of our being to give us a proper diagnosis. Without the guidance of Christ, it becomes impossible for us to assess our attitudes, motives, thoughts, and actions accurately. To worship in genuineness, therefore, we need Christ to examine us so that we might live a holy life in compliance to the way He in which has called us.

Key
Question

Have you ever suffered an injury that you thought was minor only to find out later that it was severe? How did that turn out in the end?

Deuteronomy 11:8-9

OBEDIENCE LEADS TO LONGEVITY:

Our study this week is really a continuation of the question Moses poses and answers in Deuteronomy 10:12-13: “What does the Lord your God require of you?” In his answer, he outlines three fundamental tenets of the law along with their intent. God expects His people to show their love for Him by walking according to His holy character, by serving Him faithfully with complete devotion, and by obeying His commandments which He had given them for their benefit (literally, “good”). In Deuteronomy 11:8, Moses then develops this last principle in detail where he once again exhorts the people to **keep every commandment** which he had related to them on behalf of the Lord.

Obedience to these commandments also comes with a two-fold promise from God. If Israel would abide by them, God would strengthen them to expel the current inhabitants from **the land** and take possession of it after crossing the Jordan River ([Deut 7:1-6](#)). Furthermore, if they would remain faithful to Him, He would **prolong** their **days in the land** which He had promised to the forefathers centuries ago (v. 9). Yet, Israel’s obedience—as well as our own—should never be conditionally based on what we receive; it should always flow from our love and desire to please Him. Love for God, not a reward, should always remain the motive for our obedience ([Deut 6:5](#); [10:12](#); [11:1](#), [13](#)).

“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”

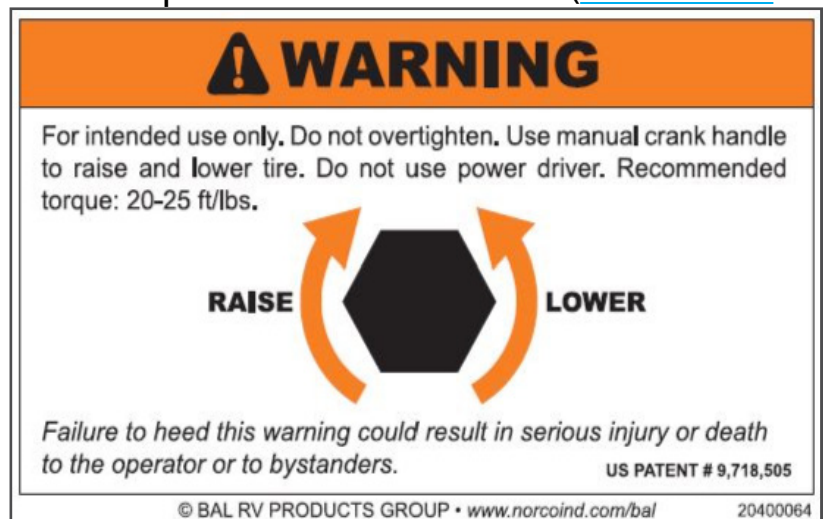
Deuteronomy 6:5

Moreover, the second promise to **prolong** their **days in the land** sounds like another **commandment** where God makes a similar promise. In the fifth **commandment** which implores us to “honor [our] father and mother,” God also specifies that their “days may be long upon the land which [He] is giving” them ([Exod 20:12](#)). In Ephesians 6:2-3, Paul refers to this as “the first commandment with a promise” and applies it broadly to us by saying, “That it may be well with you and you may live

long on the earth.” As our heavenly Father, we ought to “honor” God just as we would our earthly parents. Our relationship with the Lord, like our parents, is not established because we honor and obey Him, but rather our honor and obedience demonstrate that we have a relationship with Him ([Eph 2:8-10](#)). Because of our love and respect for Him, we ought to abide by the boundaries He has set for us.

While our obedience to these boundaries indicates our love for the Lord, it also equally shows His love and care for us by protecting us and allowing us to live a productive and successful life—not necessarily according to the world’s definition, but His. His love and care will become even more explicit in the next section ([Deut 11:10-](#)

[12](#)). As a result, when we honor God through our faithful obedience it generally allows us to live a long, fruitful life in accordance with His divine plan and will. Because we live in a fallen world as Job experienced first-hand, sometimes bad things happen to righteous people. Nonetheless, in His infinite love, wisdom, and mercy, God still has a plan for each one of us if we would abide by the boundaries He established for us.



Think of it this way. Under which of the following two conditions would an item generally last longer: if we read the manual, follow the instructions, and use the item for its intended purpose or if we don’t read the manual, ignore the instructions, and use the item for whatever purpose we see fit? Generally, following the instructions and abiding by the limitations specified for the product would allow it to last longer—though it’s not always a guarantee. In life, if we read Scripture, follow God’s boundaries, and use our lives for their intended purpose to glorify God, we will generally have a long, productive, and successful life as He wills and enables.

Question
1

How would you describe the ways in which you honor Christ with your life? In what ways do you perhaps sometimes dishonor Him?

Deuteronomy 11:10-12

OBEDIENCE TRUSTS IN THE LORD:

To highlight the blessings which lie in store for those who obey the Lord, Moses contrasts **the land** of Canaan which they now stand to inherit with the land of **Egypt from which** they had just **come** (v. 10). While enslaved in **Egypt**, the people toiled in the fields where they **sowed** their **seed** and **watered** their crops **by foot**. Although the Nile offered life-giving water to those just along its banks, the people still struggled to build the necessary irrigation to supply the water that would enlarge the fields in that arid environment to provide enough food for the citizens of the region. To accomplish this, they would dig trenches by hand and then use a “paddlewheel-like device” operated by a pedal to pump water from the river into these channels to irrigate their crops.* The Nile certainly enabled life in the desert, but it came at the expense of difficult labor provided by the children of Israel.

In Reference



*For a discussion on irrigation techniques in Egypt, see Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), p. 208.

Whereas the people had to work hard in **Egypt**, God Himself would now provide this life-giving water naturally through the **rain** which He would send upon **the land** that they would **cross over** the Jordan **to possess** (v. 11). In Deuteronomy 8:7, Moses had already described this **land** as one blessed by God with abundant springs and rivers flowing from underground aquifers that would support bountiful harvests. In this way, God would demonstrate His care for the people by continually caring for **the land**. He would constantly watch over **the land** throughout the year, providing everything needed to sustain life there (v. 12). Even though God certainly provided the resources to sustain life in **Egypt**, here in Canaan He would make them even more abundant and accessible. Still, the people would need to work diligently as God had commanded them, but in turn He would provide their source of sustenance if they would only trust Him! As we shall see, all these promises ultimately depended upon their faithful obedience to serve Him alone.

Question
2

How does God specifically show His care for you?

In part, Moses makes this comparison between **Egypt** and Canaan explicit because some in this generation lacked faith to the point that they arrogantly and disobediently questioned God's motives for bringing them into the wilderness. Korah, along with two other men named Dathan and Abiram from the tribe of Reuben, once organized a coup against Moses and Aaron ([Num 16:1-2](#), see also [Deut 11:6](#)). As God's appointed leadership, however, any revolt against Moses and Aaron's authority ultimately meant that these men had rebelled against the Lord Himself. Inciting a group of 250 men, this trio claimed that Moses had deceived them. According to them, he had promised to bring them to a more prosperous land, but instead he had actually taken them from "a land flowing with milk and honey" in **Egypt** and brought them into a barren wasteland to die ([Num 16:13-14](#)).



They derisively asserted that Moses couldn't continue to fool the people unless he physically blinded them; everyone could see the evidence with their own eyes ([Num 16:14](#)).

In a direct confrontation with Moses and Aaron, these men then boldly declared, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord" ([Num 16:3](#))? To put it in more modern terms, they said, "You view yourselves too highly. You're no different than any of us. We have the same qualifications as you. God speaks to us as just as much as He does you. What gives you the right to put yourself in charge?" Moses then has a novel idea: let God Himself choose who is holy and capable of leading His people ([Num 16:6-7](#)). In the end, God confirmed His choice of Moses and Aaron and put to death those who had disobeyed by swallowing them in a sinkhole ([Num 16:30-33](#); [Deut 11:6](#)).

The reason Moses makes this comparison becomes clear in the first seven verses of this chapter. The people had first-hand knowledge of God's deliverance as well as of His discipline. With their own eyes, they had witnessed the plagues in **Egypt** (v. 3),

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the parting of the Red Sea (v. 4), and God's gracious provision in the wilderness (v. 5). Just as they had experienced God's deliverance first-hand, they had also observed His discipline and judgment against Dathan and Abiram (v. 6). Therefore, Moses emphasizes that he is addressing the older generation—not their children—because they had seen these things with their own eyes (vv. 2, 7). So, they now have a clear choice: Do they trust God and obediently follow His commands or do they challenge His authority and disobeyingly venture on their own? Based on the evidence they have personally experienced, they ought to have known immediately what to do. They really have no excuse because they have seen the results of both God's provision and His discipline! What path would they now choose?

Question # 3

Even though people have seen the results of both bad and good decisions, what still makes it difficult for them to choose the right path?

God has given us the Bible so we can know assuredly what He has promised to do, what He has required of us, and the consequences for our actions. In addition, He has also provided tangible evidence of both His blessing and His discipline which we can see with our own eyes through life experiences. In other words, we can know cognitively how God will act from His Word and, when we have a relationship with Him, we will see Him act consistently according to what He has promised therein—whether to provide for our needs or punish our sins. Therefore, we have all the information we need to make wise decisions with respect to God's expectations if we would only stop and thoroughly evaluate our circumstances from God's perspective rather than our own. Above all, we can't merely look at the external, superficial nature of the issue or action, but instead we must peel away the layers and allow God to examine the heart of the matter in order to make a proper evaluation!

"Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me, and know my anxieties;
And see if there is any wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting."

Psalm 139:23-24

To differentiate between a trial/test and discipline, therefore, it requires an honest

evaluation performed by a perfectly holy Judge because we can deceive ourselves into thinking we are holy and in right standing like Dathan and Abiram did. We need God's help! For this very reason, David begs the Lord, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" ([Psalm 139:23-24](#)). Consequently, only God and you can know for sure whether something is a trial or discipline. Therefore, seek God through prayer and reading Scripture; allow Him to guide you. If you are enduring a trial, continue trusting God and following His commands, for He will bless you according to His plan at the right time. If you are experiencing discipline, repent, devote yourself to Him, and start following His commands. Commit to Him completely!

Question
4

Why is it so difficult for us to distinguish between a trial/test and God's discipline at times?

God doesn't promise us a trouble-free life. But He does promise to take care of our needs when we submit to His plan and honor Him fully with our lives ([Matt 6:25-34](#)). Sometimes God's provision may not be what we envision, expect, or even want from our finite human perspective, but it's always exactly what we need. Sometimes it may not occur precisely at the time that we think it should, but it always occurs exactly when we need it most. For example, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram failed to understand the purpose of Israel's time in the wilderness because it didn't meet their expectations nor did it coincide with the timetable in which they thought God should have acted. So, they grew restless and impatient! Instead of trusting God, seeking Him, and patiently waiting, they tried to take matters into their own hands, thinking they could do better for themselves. Yet, their defiance, disobedience, and rebellion led directly to their judgment instead.

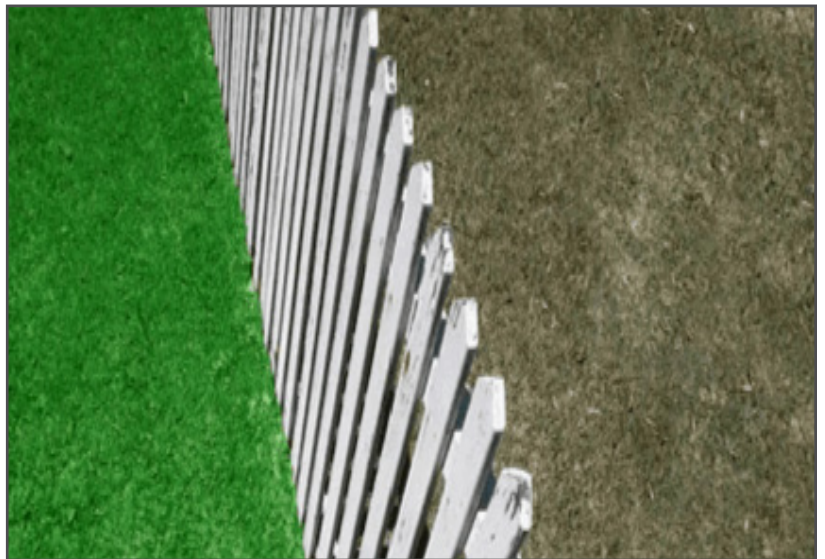
When we disobey, discipline and judgment will inevitably come at the time God chooses to administer them according to His divine plan. Sometimes it will come immediately such as here with this trio. While at other times, it may seem to delay from our human perspective, giving the impression that the guilty party has gotten away with his dastardly deeds. Often, in our world, evil appears to triumph and go unpunished because of this "delay." In all this, we must remember that God dispenses judgment according to His own divine prerogative—not in an arbitrary way, but in a

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way based upon His grace.

In His omniscience, God can see our heart and know our motives; therefore, at times, He enacts judgment swiftly to protect His community from further harm in being led astray, so He deals with the sin immediately ([Num 16:41-50](#); [Acts 5:1-11](#)). Because we don't have His insight and certainly don't stand in His position as righteous Judge, we must trust Him to act with impartiality at all times ([Rom 2:1-16](#)). We can't second guess Him! On the other hand, a delay in judgment stems from God's grace in giving people time to repent and be restored into right relationship with Him ([2 Pet 3:9](#)). Aren't you glad that He has given us that time to repent? Nonetheless, this discussion serves as a valuable reminder for us to ask God to evaluate our lives to determine how we measure against His standards. If He reveals that anything in our lives displeases Him, we must immediately take action to repent or risk facing His discipline for our sin.

No matter how the circumstances may appear from our perspective, we must learn to trust God, rely upon Him, and wait patiently. We need to look beyond our circumstances and see God! Things may look more appealing and advantageous when we view them only on the surface—like Dathan and



Abiram did. To them, their life looked much better in Egypt because it “appeared” they had more resources at their disposal even though they were enslaved as a nation. Yet, God wanted to do a greater work through them, freeing them from slavery and giving them their own land which would produce even more abundant harvests. To receive these promises, God only required that the people devote themselves completely to Him as evidenced through their obedience to His **commandments**.

Truly, the old idiom “the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence” describes the outlook of most people, and even many Christians, in our culture today. To them, it may seem advantageous to go along with the culture because it appears to have more to offer. Those who take this path may appear more “successful,” seem to

have more “wealth,” and appear more “popular.” In addition, it may appear that these people who throw inhibition to the wind and seek instant gratification for all their desires have more “fun.” It may even seem that those who seek the status quo rather than speaking the truth in love and standing firm without compromise on the truth of God’s word have less confrontation and conflict in their lives. Those who follow the world may seem to have it all, but this in fact is only a mirage. Proverbs 4:12 informs us, “There is a way that *seems* right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” Therefore, we must look beyond the immediate outcome of an action to see the eternal ramifications. We must think about the even greater joy that God will bring when we do things His way according to His plan. Above all, we need to see things from God’s perspective and trust Him through our faithful adherence to His Word.

Question
5

In what ways does the world seek immediate gratification of their pleasure? How has this cultural mindset somewhat influenced the church?

Deuteronomy 11:13-15

OBEDIENCE STEMS FROM LOVE:

Although we briefly mentioned the correlation between **love** and obedience in the first section of this lesson, here Moses makes it explicit. If the people would wholly devote themselves to the Lord and **obey His commandments**, He would bless them richly as they entered the Promised Land (v. 13). Here, Moses singles out **love** as the motivation for obeying all the other commands the Lord had given them. They should **love** and serve God from the depths of their being—**with all their heart and all their soul**. When they devote themselves entirely to the Lord, He will bless their land with **rain** so that they may have abundant harvests (v. 14).



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Moreover, the **rain** would also provide ample **grass** for their **livestock** (v. 15). If the people would only trust God and obey what He says, He will meet their needs!

Even though God promises to bless us according to His plan for our lives, His blessings should never become the sole motivating factor for our obedience. After all, nowhere does Scripture say, “If you want a blessing, keep My commandments”; rather Jesus says, “If you love Me” ([John 14:15](#)). God blesses us out of His **love** and grace because He cares deeply for us; His blessings flow from the depths of His being because “God is love” ([1 John 4:8, 16](#)). Therefore, we should never view His blessings as entitlements which He owes us, but rather as an indication of His unconditional **love** for us. We should reciprocate that same unconditional **love** for Him through our faithful obedience regardless of the blessings we may receive.

The Bible frequently uses marriage to characterize our relationship with the Lord and it still remains the best way to illustrate it today. Marriage requires total commitment; both spouses must give themselves entirely to the other which Scripture describes as the two becoming one flesh ([Gen 2:24](#); [Matt 19:4-6](#); [Eph 5:31](#)). A successful marriage will never be self-seeking, focusing on what one individual can get from the other. On the contrary, it should always focus on what both individuals can give. There is no question about how much God has given us. He gave us everything by sending His Son to die for our sins so that we could have a relationship with Him. Consequently, the question we must ask is how much of ourselves have we given Him in return. God wants our full devotion and commitment; we should **love** Him with **all** our **heart** and **all** our **soul**. He wants us to give ourselves entirely to Him ([Rom 12:1-2](#); [2 Cor 8:5](#)).

Question
6

How would you evaluate your love for the Lord? Have you given yourself fully to Him?

Although some in our culture may view marriage vows as antiquated and old-fashioned, they serve as a poignant reminder of the total commitment required. Traditionally, a ceremony will include some variation of the phrase “for better or worse, for richer or poorer, and in sickness and in health” as an expression of everlasting commitment. Our **love** and commitment should never fluctuate based upon the circumstances. God’s **love** for us certainly doesn’t! True **love**, therefore, would never abandon someone if things got tough just as it would never leave someone if they

experienced a chronic health problem. Quite the opposite, true **love** would compel them to remain at their spouse's side, caring for them unconditionally despite the circumstance.

The same principle applies to our relationship with the Lord. We should **love** Him and devote ourselves completely to Him whether in good times or in difficult ones, whether we have much or little in terms of earthly possessions and resources, or whether we have good health or suffer from chronic illness. The circumstances don't matter! In all these areas, God remains faithfully by our side, sustaining us in every conceivable way whether we lack anything or have an

"I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

Philippians 4:12

abundance—just like He did the Apostle Paul ([Phil 4:12](#)). Therefore, our **love**, devotion, and obedience should never waver; we must remain faithful, learning to trust Him regardless of what triumphs and trials life may hold.

In most traditional marriage ceremonies, the bride and groom also declare that they will "forsake all others." No other relationship—with parents, relatives, friends, or even future children—should ever be elevated above this one. In fact, no other relationship has this same type of bond. Yet, many modern couples omit this important phrase or, if they include it, they don't actually practice it. Failing to "forsake" other relationships or even failing to lay aside one's personal desires, ambitions, and goals for the sake of the relationship leads to a whole host of problems in marriage. In a way, this type of "**love**" becomes self-centered. Although they may not express it overtly, people enter the relationship thinking, "What's in it for me? What do I get? How does it benefit me?" Such thinking always leads to dysfunction and perhaps even divorce.

Unfortunately, this type of self-centered perspective can sometimes manifest itself in our relationship with the Lord if we don't exercise caution. Many, however, don't "forsake" everything else in their lives and make God their priority and focus. They hold onto their personal ambitions, goals, and desires. They cherish other relationships in

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their lives more than their relationship with the Lord. They look at life selfishly in terms of how it satisfies or benefits them rather than how they can glorify God. Who would ever enter a marriage where one of the spouses commits themselves to the other only as long as the relationship doesn't interfere with "their life?" Yet, many people treat God in this way! They say that they **love** Him only so far as He doesn't interfere with the rest of their life. God desires and deserves complete devotion based upon our unconditional **love** as expressed through our faithful obedience to His **commandments**, for this is what Moses communicates to the people here!

Question
7

What does it look like to "forsake all else" in our relationship with the Lord? How can we determine whether we truly have forsaken all else?

Deuteronomy 11:16-17

DISOBEDIENCE SUFFERS LOSS:

Once again in these lessons we've studied this month, Moses warns the people to **take heed**—pay attention—**lest** their **heart be deceived** and they **turn aside to serve other gods** (v. 16). The moment they forsake their relationship with the Lord and follow **other gods** His **anger will be aroused against** them; He will cause a drought so that **the land** will not **produce** a harvest and the **people will quickly perish** (v. 17). Here, God challenges one false god in particular: the Canaanite god Baal. The Canaanites believed that Baal, the god of storms, controlled the weather, including sending **rain** which enabled farming. But the true and living God here emphatically declares that He alone has this capability! Israel should not become deceived by the culture and start practicing its deviant ways.



From Moses' dire warning, we can learn two valuable principles. Open-

mindedness, tolerance, and acceptance eventually will lead to compromise. And compromise will eventually lead to participation no matter how strong one may think his willpower and faith are. We cannot continually subject ourselves to the sin of culture, thinking that it has no influence on our minds or our behavior. If we do, we have **deceived** ourselves! Eventually, the thinking and behavior of the culture will rub off on us too! Israel offers living proof of this because they started worshiping Baal ([Num 25](#); [1 Kings 18:20-40](#)). Tolerance and acceptance of unbiblical practices never show **love** as the culture presupposes, but instead they will always lead the people of God astray over time. They desensitize us to the truth. We don't have to look far in our culture to see how tolerance and acceptance have influenced the church!

Question
8

In what specific ways will tolerance and acceptance eventually lead people astray?

Moreover, self-deception is the worst type of deception because it's the most difficult to detect. We often don't even realize that we have deceived ourselves because we compare ourselves to the imperfect world around us rather than the perfect standard of God in His Word. As Americans, on average, we have a high-level of obesity in our country because we consume a vast amount of processed and fast-foods; most don't pay particular attention to their diets. As a whole, we make terrible choices in eating foods high in salt, fat, carbohydrates, and sugar. We look around at our society and almost everyone is making similar choices, so we don't feel so bad. We may even laugh about how much sugar or unhealthy things we've ingested. Outwardly, we may seem fine; we have no, or at least very few, health problems. But inwardly, over time, these choices can lead to a variety of health problems: high blood pressure, diabetes, and even heart disease. For a moment of indulging in pleasure, we have deceived ourselves into thinking that these choices have no effect on our lives. So, we continue the actions indefinitely.

Our culture can negatively influence our relationship with Christ in this same way unless we pay careful attention. We may look around and think we're not *that* bad. We may not even see how we have slowly drifted away from the Lord because we don't see any overt signs in our lives because we have been blinded by the culture. Yet, the things of culture have slowly diverted our attention and we no longer serve the Lord with complete devotion as we once did. We've become complacent, tolerant,

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and accepting. The church in Ephesus suffered from this problem when they left their first love ([Rev 2:1-7](#)). As we conclude our study this week, may we make an honest evaluation of our lives. Let us pray and ask God to reveal any area in which we may have deceived ourselves and compromised our relationship with Him by putting someone or something else first. May we forsake everything else and make Him the priority of our lives.

Inspire

Sometimes injuries don't reveal their presence immediately after an accident. We can even deceive ourselves into thinking we're well when we're really not. As soon as an injury becomes apparent, however, we must seek help lest it continue doing damage. In our relationship with the Lord, sometimes we also deceive ourselves into thinking all is well even when things are not. The moment we realize that we have strayed from the truth and strained our relationship with God we must act. We must repent and turn to Him, asking for forgiveness—for He is righteous and just and will forgive us our sins ([1 John 1:9](#)). Our relationship with the Lord requires constant vigilance and maintenance. We must worship Him in genuineness; we must worship Him with all our heart and soul! We must worship Him from the depths of our being!

Incorporate

In what ways have you had to trust the Lord when things didn't seem to go according to "plan?" What did this teach you about God?

Just as a marriage should grow stronger, in what tangible ways have you seen your relationship with the Lord grow or mature over the years you have known Him?

Pray and ask God to help you make a self-diagnosis of your life: What are you doing well? What needs some improvement? What needs to change completely?

Journal: Document God's Work

October 27, 2024



Worship through Giving

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Focal Verse:

“And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land which you, O Lord, have given me. Then you shall set it before the Lord your God, and worship before the Lord your God.”

Deuteronomy 26:10

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Despite the generosity of our society, sometimes people fail to discern the spirit in which they actually give. When contributing to a food drive, for example, people sometimes use it as an excuse to clean out their pantries of all their unwanted or out-of-date items. Covered in a thick layer of dust from sitting on their shelves for years, the asparagus or lima beans have become nothing more than botulism in a can! When collecting hygiene products for missions, sometimes people donate those half-used little bottles of shampoo and conditioner from hotels that they brought home with them from vacation intending to use. Or, even worse, they donate those products that they've tried and don't like whether deodorant, toothpaste, make-up, or perfume. In addition, people will frequently give old, tattered items with stains, peeling paint or leather, and perhaps even missing pieces to the church so they can make room in their house for the brand-new item they've just purchased. Such donors then justify their actions saying, "It's better than what they have. They should just be grateful."

We may chuckle because we have known someone who has done

something like this. Even though most of us would never consider making donations like these to a charity, why do some "Christians" give God only the leftovers in their lives? Only after they've taken "their" portion do they consider giving the Lord "their" offerings if they even give Him anything at all. Only once they pay their bills, buy their groceries, save for retirement, fund their hobbies, purchase their entertainment do they then consider giving to the Lord out of what remains. They give God from what they have leftover, if anything, at the end of the month! But this doesn't *just* apply to finances. Some people also do this with their time. They fill their schedules with the things they desire to do most and give God the time that remains. Or they do it with their talents. They use their gifts and skills for their own benefit and enjoyment, but refuse to glorify the Lord through their service. Although unspoken, they have an attitude which declares, "God ought to be grateful for what I have given Him."

Please do not misunderstand this analogy. It's not the monetary value or even



Introduce

the quantity of the items or gifts that matter most, but the condition of the heart—the spirit in which one gives. In the New Testament, Jesus points to the example of a widow who gave two mites—just a couple of pennies—in contrast to the pompous and pitiful offering that the wealthy gave in the temple. Although her offering didn't amount to much monetarily, she gave sacrificially; she literally gave all she had. She gave her very best! God doesn't deserve our leftovers; He deserves our very best. After all, God didn't give us leftovers. He gave us His very best! In fact, He sent His best—His one and only Son—to redeem us and restore us. Consequently, God wants us to give ourselves wholly and unconditionally unto Him; He wants us to dedicate our lives completely to His service ([Rom 12:1-2](#); [2 Cor 8:5](#)).

God also wants us to return unto Him a portion of the money, resources, time, and talents with which He has graciously blessed us. As the people of Israel settled in the Promised Land, for instance, God required them to dedicate a portion of their harvest to Him as an offering—the firstfruits of their crops ([Deut 26:2](#)). He wanted their best! After all, He had given them the best land in the region—one “flowing with milk and honey.” Like Israel, we must remember that every blessing we have comes from the Lord. Everything on earth belongs to Him ([Deut 10:14](#)), yet He has graciously allowed us to be stewards or caretakers of His creation. Therefore, may we give ourselves completely to Him in worship—not giving Him the leftovers of our lives, but giving Him the best! This week may we take an honest evaluation of our lives as we contemplate worship through giving: Do you just give God from what you have leftover or do you give Him your very best? Which of these two attitudes best describe you?

Key
Question

In what ways do we give God our “leftovers” rather than our best?

Deuteronomy 26:1-4

RENDER YOUR TITHE TO THE LORD:

As the book of Deuteronomy draws to a close, Moses reminds the people what God expects of them as they take possession of the Promised Land. Once they settle **in the land** that **the Lord** has given them **as an inheritance**, they should set aside **some of the first produce** from their harvest as an offering to Him (vv. 1-2). Specifically, they **should put it in a basket** and take it to the tabernacle—literally **the place where the Lord chooses to make His name abide** (see [Deut 12:5-14](#)). At the tabernacle, they should present their offering to the **priest** at that time and **declare to the Lord** that they have entered into the land He **swore** to their **fathers to give** them (v. 3). This declaration, therefore, reminds the people of God’s faithfulness to His promises as well as His expectation that they serve Him faithfully in return. The **priest** will then **take the basket** from them and present their offering to **the Lord** by placing it in front of **the altar** (v. 4).

From these verses, we can learn four principles that should guide our worship through giving. First, we must realize that everything we have belongs to the Lord. We technically own nothing. God has graciously given us these things for His glory to use for our benefit to provide for our needs. Three times Moses emphasizes that the land was a gift from **“the Lord your God.”** In this context, we tend to view the words **giving** and **possess** as indicating a transfer of ownership from one party to another. Once we receive it, the gift becomes “ours” and we can do with it what we please. However, God doesn’t view it this way. He still retains ownership! His ownership becomes clear when He instructs Israel about the selling of land to pay debts. He decrees, “The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me”



([Lev 25:23](#)). Like Adam in the Garden of Eden in one sense, God gave Israel this land to take care of it, but also to enjoy its fruitfulness while having close fellowship with Him as expressed through their obedience to His commands.

God doesn't own *just the land* in which He allows Israel to reside. Everything on the earth belongs to Him as the Creator ([1 Chron 29:11](#); [Psalm 24:1-2](#))! In fact, He tells Job, "Who has preceded Me, that I should pay him? Everything under heaven is Mine" ([Job 29:11](#)). God blesses us by allowing us to use His creation for our well-being, but He has also tasked us with taking care of it as well ([Gen 1:28-30](#)). Therefore, the benefits we reap from His creation, whether in the form of food ([Deut 14:22](#)) or money ([Hag 2:8](#)), wholly belong to Him. We must realize that we are only stewards or managers of God's creation so we ought to do what He expects of us. Since God owns everything, we acknowledge His Lordship through our tithes and offerings by returning a portion to Him from which He has blessed us and allowed us to utilize to meet the needs of our families. Thus, Leviticus 27:30 makes this clear: "All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's. It is holy to the Lord."

Question
1

In what ways has the Lord called us to be good stewards over His creation?

Even though God owns everything and allows us to use it freely, some people become selfish and stingy in return. They amass wealth and possessions unto themselves, but refuse to give God what rightfully belongs to Him. In addition, they accumulate tremendous blessings and successes, but refuse to render praise and faithful service unto the Lord. In Malachi 3:8-12, God plainly condemns such behavior—specifically the bringing of defective animals for sacrificial offerings—as robbing Him. When we give God only the leftovers when He has given us the best, we rob Him of what rightfully belongs to Him. When we hoard our money, possessions, blessings, and successes which come from Him and do not give cheerfully through our tithes, offerings, and faithful service, we rob Him as well!

To help us understand this concept of ownership in relation to our human tendency for selfishness, we must think back to our infancy where our earthly parents graciously provided everything we needed. We came into this world with absolutely nothing ([Job 1:21](#))! Everything we had, such as diapers, clothes, furniture, food, and toys, all came from someone else—primarily our parents. They gave us these things for

Instruct

our provision, protection, and pleasure out of their love for us. Yet, very early in life we become disillusioned. We forget the source of our blessings. We become possessive of the things we've graciously received, thinking they belong exclusively to us. Two-year-olds, for instance, quickly learn to exclaim, "Mine!" Prior to that, babies express the same concept by crying when someone takes something away from them. Unfortunately, some treat God in this same way.

When He asks for our tithe, time, service, and faithful obedience, some exclaim, "Mine!" They deprive God of what rightfully belongs to Him and then must suffer the consequences for their disobedience.

As the people entered into this Promised Land, therefore, God reminds them of the source of their blessings. If it were not for Him, they would have nothing. They would have remained enslaved in Egypt. While it may have looked like they were more prosperous in Egypt to some, they technically owned nothing; they depended upon the Egyptians for everything. Even as they left Egypt, they would have had little more than the clothes on their back figuratively speaking had God not allowed them to plunder the Egyptians of their gold and silver ([Exod 12:35-36](#)). Like Israel, we must remember that we owe everything to the Lord; we would have nothing apart from His grace. Let us generously and cheerfully return our blessings unto Him through our tithes and offerings since they rightly belong to Him alone.



Question
2

Why should we tithe? In what ways has the Lord blessed you by providing for your needs? Have you been faithful in returning the portion that belongs to Him?

Second, we should give God the firstfruits of our labor. Firstfruits, in one sense, refers to the first part of the harvest before we take anything for ourselves. In another sense, it indicates the best portion of the harvest. Thus, we should make giving to the

a priority and we ought always to give Him our best (see [Deut 12:11](#)). Abel established this precedent when he offered “the firstborn of his flock” and “of their fat” which indicated that he dedicated the choicest, plumpest animal to the Lord ([Gen 4:3](#)). In other words, Abel didn’t bring fatty, gristle to the Lord; he brought the choicest cut of USDA prime meat. Scripture repeatedly mentions giving our first and best unto the Lord, whether our firstborn animals ([Lev 27:26, 32](#)) or the firstfruits of our harvests ([Exod 34:26](#)). In fact, Proverbs 3:9 extols us to “honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase.”

As a primarily agrarian economy at that time, crops and livestock would have constituted the money of the day. While the ancients did have coins or currency, farmers, merchants, and citizens could have bartered with various kinds of goods and services too. Cattle and crops were as good as cash so to speak. So, how does the command to give **some of the first of all the produce** relate to us today? We should tithe on our gross earnings which we receive from any type of income—whether

our paychecks, investments, stock dividends, rental properties, and the like. According to IRS nomenclature, we should tithe on our adjusted gross income. Before spending any money from these sources on anything, we should set apart the portion which the Lord has commanded and which rightfully belongs to Him. To give the Lord the first portion of our income not only shows our love but also that we trust Him implicitly to meet all our needs!

The image shows a section of a 2019 U.S. Individual Income Tax Return (Form 1040). The header includes '1040 Department of the Treasury—Internal Revenue Service (99) 2019 U.S. Individual Income Tax Return'. Below the header, there are checkboxes for 'Filing Status' (Single, Married filing jointly, Married filing separately (MFS), Head of household) and a note: 'If you checked the MFS box, enter the name of spouse. If you checked the HOH or a child but not your dependent.' The main body of the form lists several lines: 7a Other income from Schedule 1, line 9; 7b Add lines 1, 2b, 3b, 4b, 4d, 5b, 6, and 7a. This is your total income; 8a Adjustments to income from Schedule 1, line 22; and 8b Subtract line 8a from line 7b. This is your adjusted gross income. Lines 8a and 8b are highlighted with a red rectangular box.

Many Christians, however, pay their bills and spend money on the things they need or even merely want before they ever consider giving a portion to the Lord. We certainly need to make wise decisions which don’t put us into debt, but at the same time we also need to trust God! We need to trust Him to provide for us and sustain us on the portion He has allotted us while we give to Him what He has asked. When planning a budget, for example, set aside at least 10% for tithe and more for any additional offerings God may lead you to give before allocating the rest of your income

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for housing, food, utilities, retirement, and the like. We must learn to live within the means with which God has blessed us instead of indulging in the excesses at the expense of our giving to the Lord. This may mean that we need to take cost-cutting measures to eliminate frivolous expenditures or to be thriftier in our habits, but nonetheless God will still give us exactly what we need to live if we would only trust Him! This does not mean that we can't have nice things or spend money on the things we enjoy in life. On the contrary, it means we must have the proper perspective about our wealth and make God the priority over it ([Matt 6:24](#); [1 Tim 6:10](#)).

Question
3

What are some expenditures that the world says are “must-haves,” but we could do without in a pinch and still give our tithes and offerings?

Think of our tithes and offerings like a gift to the Lord. Who among us would be pleased if someone wrapped random, ordinary items which they never used and had little value from around their house and presented them to us as gifts? Most of us would be irate if we received someone's leftover junk. We might even hand the gift back to them in disgust! In our society, most people even frown upon “re-gifting.” Why? Such gifts take little effort and require no thought! To some degree, they demonstrate the value a person gives to a relationship.

Contrast this with a gift given to someone to whom we want to express our deep and profound love. We can spend hours agonizing over the gift. We want to get the perfect gift that pleases them and brings them joy. We want something that they would enjoy and fits their personality. We want to give them our best! We ought to have this same attitude with the Lord. We should want to express our deep love for Him and honor Him so we give our very best. Therefore, we should make giving a priority and give Him the firstfruits from which He has so generously blessed us.

Question
4

How does tithing on our firstfruits (adjusted gross income) show our trust in the Lord?

Third, the Lord has asked us to give from what we have—not from what we don't have. In fact, the obvious conclusion we must draw is that we can't give God something we don't have! In verse 2, therefore, God instructs the people to **take some of the first**

of all the produce—in other words the crops they have actually harvested—and dedicate them to Him as an offering. God has asked them to give from the crops **the ground** yielded that year—not what they anticipate they should have reaped, but what they actually reaped and had on hand! Still, many people make excuses as to why they cannot give based upon what they don't have! For example, some say things like, "I can't afford to give. I don't make enough. I can barely pay my bills." Others will try to barter with the Lord saying, "I'll give when I make this certain amount of money and can feel financially stable." Such statements as these indicate that people base their offerings upon what they *don't have* rather than what they *do*.



In recent years, some have proposed an unrealized capital gains tax which they say would primarily target the "wealthy" but, in reality, would affect us all. Currently, we pay taxes on the capital gains or the profits on certain assets which we sell—like properties, businesses, and stocks. In other words, we are taxed on the income we made from the sale and the actual cash we have on hand. Hopefully, all these things appreciate in value over time, but until we actually sell these items we are not liable to pay taxes on the appreciated value. A tax on unrealized capital gains, however, holds people liable for the yearly appreciation of their assets which exists theoretically only on paper rather than actual cash in hand. Such a tax would lead to economic disaster because people would not always have the liquidity to pay it!

For those of us who have a 401K for retirement, we put a portion of our income on which we have already paid taxes into an investment fund. Each year that investment fund will hopefully increase in value; yet, we don't actually have access to the money accrued apart from withdrawing it and suffering a penalty. Therefore, we pay taxes only when we take the money out of the fund and have it on hand once we retire. Unrealized capital gains taxes would make us pay out of pocket each year for the increase in the funds, overall hurting our savings and perhaps even forcing us to sell the stocks in the funds themselves to pay for the tax because we do not have actual

cash on hand! Technically, then, unrealized capital gains taxes us on what we don't have rather than what we do.

Fortunately, God doesn't ask us to give based upon the appreciation of our possessions or theoretically what we have on paper. At times, He may ask us to give in faith, but in tithing He has asked us to return a portion of the things with which He has blessed us. For example, the churches giving toward famine relief in Jerusalem gave out of their "great trial of affliction" and "their deep poverty" ([2 Cor 8:2](#)). When we hear the word "poverty," we tend to assume that these churches had nothing to give. But they still gave and they gave generously even beyond what perhaps seemed humanly possible ([2 Cor 8:3](#))! How? Because they gave of what they had even though it may have amounted to very little in terms of the world's perspective. Therefore, may we not focus on what we don't have, but rather offer to God what we have and from what He has so generously blessed us no matter how much or how little it may seem according to the world's standards.

Question
5

In what ways do we make giving and even serving dependent upon what we "don't" have rather than what we "do?"

Fourth, some argue that the offering here reflects a one-time event to occur immediately after settling the Promised Land because it only requires that they only set aside "**some**" of their harvest unto the Lord. Moreover, the word "tithe" is not actually used in chapter 26 until verse 13 which refers to another offering given every third year in support of the Levites who did not receive an inheritance of land like the rest of the tribes so they could focus on ministering to God's people as His mediators ([Deut 26:12-15](#); see also [Num 18:21-26](#)). When we understand 26:2 in light of Deuteronomy as a whole, however, this seems to be the inaugural practice of offering God an annual tithe based upon their harvests. In Deuteronomy 14:22, for example, God states, "You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year." This command seems to anticipate the application here in 26:2 even though the text reads "**some**" rather than "tithe." Nonetheless, even if God intended this offering to be a one-time gift, other Scripture clearly indicates that God expected His people to return a tenth of their harvest to Him annually.

Whether the text says "**some**" or explicitly to render a tithe—which means 10%—

we ought to return to the Lord what belongs to Him and what He asks of us. We should regard the tithe—10% of our gross income—as only a starting point for our giving unto the Lord. God has blessed us tremendously in every way. We ought to show our gratitude to Him through our obedience in every area of life, including in our giving. We must learn to trust God to supply all our needs according to His divine plan, giving cheerfully and generously as He leads ([Phil 4:19](#)). After all, we would have absolutely nothing if it weren't for Him. As we contemplate our giving, it would serve us well to ask what businessman R. G. LeTourneau once profoundly asked of himself: "Not how much of my money [should] I give God, but how much of His money [should] I keep for myself?" Such a question puts our discussion thus far into perspective!

"You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year."

Deuteronomy 14:22

Question
6

Why is tithing not a “legalistic” practice as some people try to make it? In what ways can tithing become legalistic?

Yet, some people today may ask, “Why should we practice this Old Testament principle of tithing since we are no longer under the law, but under grace? Isn't this legalistic and old-fashioned?” On the contrary, this misunderstands Jesus' intentions which He plainly outlines in Matthew 5:17-19 asserting that He did not come to abolish the law or make it invalid; rather, He came to fulfill or complete it. As a result, Jesus through His righteousness demonstrated the proper way to interpret the law and practice it. He confirms that not even the smallest letter of the law will pass away and “whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven” ([Matt 5:19](#)). Clearly, Jesus affirms the validity and permanence of the Old Testament—not in a legalistic way, but rather as a display of God's transformative power.

Consequently, the principles behind the Old Testament law are still applicable through Christ ([2 Tim 3:16-17](#)). Thus, we should uphold the principles associated with

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the law—not in a legalistic sense to earn favor, but because we love the Lord and want to honor Him without our righteousness. Furthermore, we demonstrate this righteous by the transformed way in which we now live. Because of this, Paul points out “that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” ([Rom 8:4](#)). In Christ,

therefore, we don’t look at the least we can do to seek by; we seek to give our best. We become a living sacrifice who listens to the guidance of the Holy Spirit who helps us to know the mind of God and leads us to live by His righteous expectations ([Rom 8:27](#)).

Although the New Testament rarely uses the word tithe ([Matt 23:23](#); [Luke 11:42](#); [18:12](#); [Heb 7:5](#)), Jesus does not invalidate the practice. Instead, His words actually support it. When the Pharisees questioned Him about the legality of giving taxes to Rome, Jesus responds, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s” ([Matt 22:21](#)). Even though Jesus doesn’t specify whether this is a tithe or temple tax, the principle remains clear. We should give to God what belongs to Him! The 10% allotment for a tithe in the Old Testament provides the starting point for us to give cheerfully and generously as the Spirit leads ([2 Cor 9:6-7](#)).

Even before the law codified the practice, Abraham ([Gen 14:18-24](#)) and Jacob ([Gen 28:20-22](#)) responded voluntarily with gratitude for what the Lord had done in their lives by giving a tenth of all their possessions either to His servant or to Him directly. These acts further cement the continuation of the practice of tithing by following a precedent voluntarily established prior to the promulgation of the law. In other words, we should give a tithe of all we have because of our thankfulness for what God has done and will do for us. We don’t tithe only because God has demanded it! We give voluntarily from our sincerest gratitude like Abraham and Isaac did who lived before the law was given.

But this I say: "He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver."

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

Question
7

What should be our motivation for giving to the Lord?

Deuteronomy 26:5-9

REMEMBER WHAT GOD HAS DONE:

A few years ago, churches would have a responsive reading from time to time during a service where the pastor or leader would read a line and the audience would respond by reading another line of a short passage. And so, the reading would continue back and forth between the leader and congregation. By design, these readings would help us as God's people to recall significant events in the Bible impactful to us and remind us of our call to action in obedience to Him. In some ways, the interaction between the **priest** and the worshiper bringing the offering here in Deuteronomy models such a responsive reading or recitation in this case. The **priest** would likely pose a question or make a statement and the worshiper would then respond by repeating a specific phrase or passage. In addition, we also find the same two purposes in this responsive recitation just like we would in our responsive readings: the worshiper recalled what God had done (vv. 5-9) and they then remind themselves of their call to action to rejoice by bringing to Him their firstfruits as an offering (vv. 10-11).



The responsive recitation focuses on God's provision and deliverance. The people recalled how their **father**, Jacob, **was** an Aramean (or **Syrian**) **about to perish** (v. 5). Jacob was known as an Aramaean because his mother, Rebekah, hailed from that region ([Gen 24:10](#); [25:20](#), [26](#)) and he spent twenty years there working for his eventual father-in-law Laban for the privilege of marrying his daughter Rachel, but who tricked him into marrying Leah first ([Gen 30:25-43](#)). The reference to perishing, however, refers to a much later period in Jacob's life when in his old age a famine forced him and his family to flee to **Egypt**. Before Jacob died there in that foreign land, God reunited him with his son, Joseph, whom he long ago thought dead, but whom God had ultimately prepared through the adverse circumstances he faced to save his family from this famine! Although they entered **Egypt** with just **a few** people **in number**, God prospered them and made them **a great nation** just as He had promised Abraham

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years earlier.

Over time, the Egyptians forgot what God had done through Joseph and began mistreating the children of Israel (v. 6). They enslaved them, forced them to do hard labor, and abused them. In distress, the people **cried out to the Lord** who **heard** their **voice** and saw their **affliction** and **oppression** (v. 7). So, He acted. He **brought them out of Egypt** with His sovereign authority and powerful **hand** by sending plagues upon the Egyptians and delivering the children of Israel through miraculous feats (v. 8). Finally, God **brought** them into this prosperous **land** in which they now reside—one **flowing with milk and honey** (v. 9).

Although our journey may look starkly different than that of Jacob and his descendants, each one of us can nevertheless testify to the work of God in our lives. If we pay careful attention, we will see His mighty **hand** at work in the midst of our circumstances—especially during the most difficult periods. We will see His sovereign power orchestrating events according to His divine purpose. Time after time, we will be privy to His provision, protection, loving discipline, gentle guidance, and deliverance. If nothing else, we should be grateful for the deliverance He made possible through Christ who gave us life! As we worship through our giving, let us reflect on who God is and the things He has done for us. It will transform the spirit in which we give.

Question
8

When have you seen the hand of God most clearly in your life?

Deuteronomy 26:10-11

REJOICE IN THE BLESSING FROM GOD:

While placing the basket with the offering before the altar, the worshiper should acknowledge that he has **brought the firstfruits** from **the land which the Lord** had **given** him (v. 10). And so, he would **rejoice in every good thing** which **the Lord** has graciously provided for all who dwell in the land (v. 11). When we recall what God has done for us, it will give us joy as we worship through our giving. We won't give begrudgingly or legalistically out of routine simply because we feel obligated. Moreover, we won't give miserly or meagerly but generously out of a grateful heart because we deeply love the Lord who has done so much for us.

As we conclude, let us make an honest evaluation of our worship through giving. Which best identifies the spirit with which you give to the Lord? Do you give joyfully

and generously the tithes and offerings that rightfully belong to the Lord or do you give Him the leftovers after you've taken what you wanted for yourself? Do you tithe on the **firstfruits** of all your income He has allowed you to receive or do you just throw a couple of dollars into the offering plate as it passes simply because you feel obligated to put something so you don't look bad? Although the amount may vary depending upon the income with which God has blessed us as well as the way He guides us at times to give beyond our tithes, the spirit with which we give should not vary. Our worship through giving should always be a joyous time where we reflect on who God is first and foremost as our sovereign Creator, but also a time where we reflect upon what He has so graciously done for us and all the things He has provided—for apart from Him we would have absolutely nothing!

Question
9

How would you describe the spirit with which you worship the Lord through your giving?

Inspire

In the introduction, we saw how some people give their leftovers and even their junk to charity as an excuse to get rid of the things they don't want or no longer need. Unfortunately, sometimes this attitude can creep into our worship of the Lord through our giving. Some people give to the Lord only after they have taken "their" cut even if they give to Him at all. But we need to put all this into perspective. God has blessed us with everything we have. Without Him, we have nothing. We must learn to trust God with our finances and give Him what rightfully belongs to Him. We should always give Him our very best because He's given us His very best. When we reflect on what God has done and how He has blessed us, it ought to motivate us to give to Him joyfully with sincere gratitude.

Incorporate:

How would you evaluate your giving to the Lord?

What would it look like in the church if everyone gave with the right motivation and according to the way that God commanded in Scripture?

Even though God technically does not “need” our money, why should we still give to Him through the church?

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