

FEBRUARY
2022

FOLLOW



ADULT CONNECT
CLASS CURRICULUM

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.

A Note From Our Pastor

Dear FBC family and friends,

What motivates you? Often, motivation stems from a feeling about something or someone that compels us to action. It may be a desire to please somebody, attain a specific goal or simply stem from a heart of gratitude. February is considered the “Love” month and love is a great motivator. We are reminded throughout Scripture that love is also a priority. We are to love the Lord with all our hearts and He calls us to love others as well. Paul tells us that it is the love of Christ that compels him. Our motivation to follow Christ is His love for us. John informs us that is not that we first loved Him, but that He first loved us. We love because He loved; we serve because He loved; we follow because He loved. The awesome awareness of His love is what motivates.

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own methods for preparing the lessons and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes them most effective in presenting God’s Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

Remember that Christ loves you and always wants what is best for you. Although sometimes it may not feel that way, we must remember feelings can be deceitful. Our confidence is not in how we feel, but in what we know according to God’s Word and that is “He first loved us!”

-Blessings

Pastor Don



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 in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

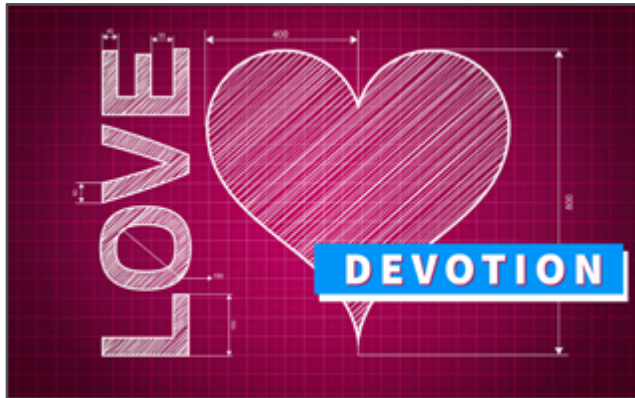
Incorporate

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 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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February 6, 2022

Follow God's Plan for Love:
The Devotion Required

[Deuteronomy 6:1-15, Part 1](#)

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February 13, 2022

Follow God's Plan for Love:
The Declaration Repeated

[Deuteronomy 6:1-15, Part 2](#)

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February 20, 2022

Follow God's Plan for Love:
The Deeds Rendered

[Deuteronomy 6:1-15, Part 3](#)

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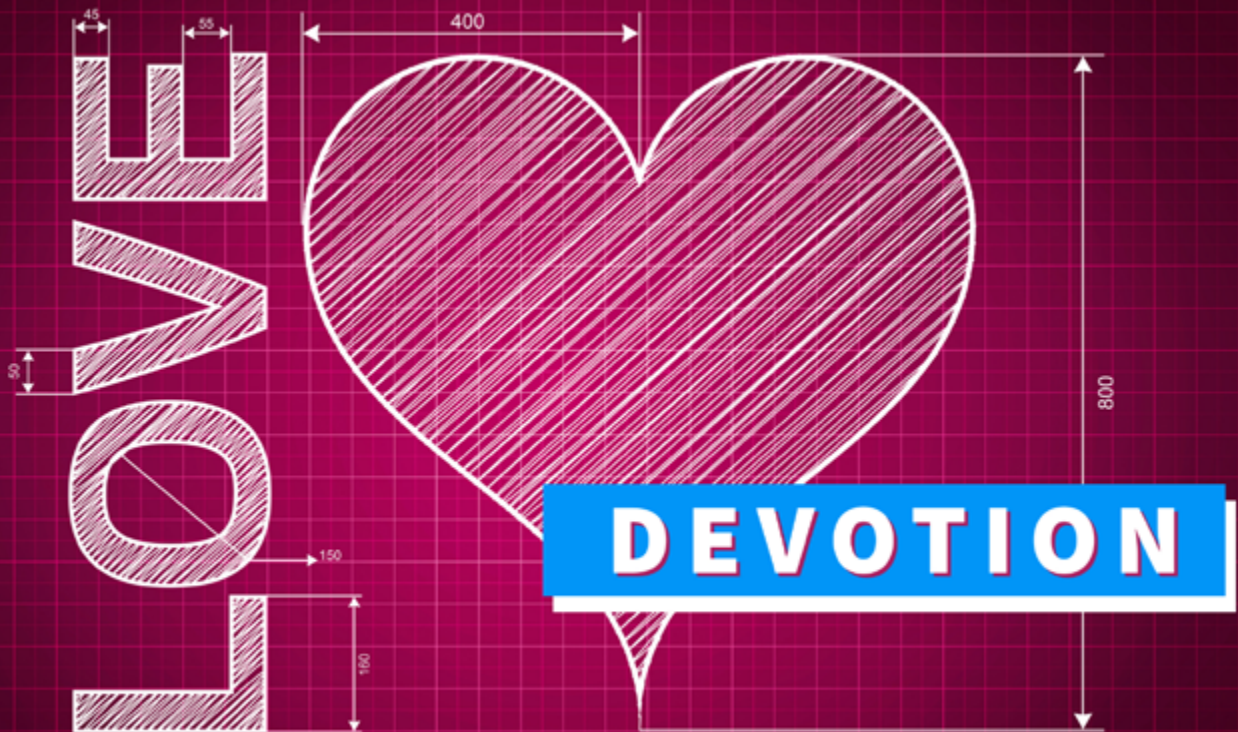


February 27, 2022

Follow God's Plan for Love:
The Disposition Revealed

[1 Thessalonians 5:14-15](#)

February 6, 2022



Follow God's Plan for Love:
The Devotion Required
Deuteronomy 6:1-15, Part 1

Focal Verse:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."

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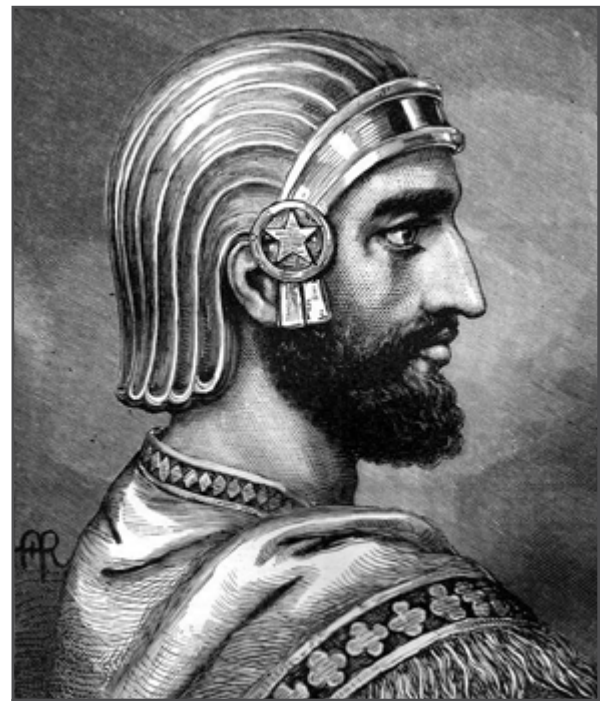
Deuteronomy 6:5

Introduce

A legend has surfaced in recent years about Cyrus the Great (600-530 BC), the skilled military king who led the Persians to expand their empire vastly in the Middle East centering around the modern countries of Iran and Iraq. Whether true or not, this unsubstantiated tale eloquently pictures what it means to be devoted. Because of his respect for the cultures and traditions of the people whom he had conquered, Cyrus the Great became well-known and widely revered for his benevolence. On one such occasion, a story has begun to circulate about his benevolence toward a prince and his family whom he had captured during an invasion.

Summoning the prince and his family to appear before him, Cyrus proceeded to inquire what price this royal would be willing to pay to secure his release from captivity. Taking a little time to contemplate his response, the prince thoughtfully answered, "I'd give you half of all my possessions." Seizing the opportunity to see how far the captive would go, Cyrus yet again asked, "How much would you give if I were to release your children?" This time he quickly interjected, "Everything I own." Interrogating him further, Cyrus inquired one last time, "What would you give me if I were to release your wife?" Without hesitation, the prince boldly replied, "I'd give myself—my very life!" Upon hearing the prince's dedication and devotion, Cyrus responded compassionately, freeing them all to return home.

While on their journey home, the prince began discussing with his wife all that had transpired. After lauding Cyrus for his famed benevolence and generosity, he matter-of-factly quipped, "The king surely was a striking figure and handsome in appearance just as we have always heard." Glancing at her husband with the sincerest affection penetrating her eyes, she exclaimed, "I hadn't noticed. I had my eyes fixed only on you—the one who would have given himself for me!" Although we seldom see such devotion in a world dominated by self-centeredness and sin, this story certainly presents a beautiful description of the love and devotion we ought to have for the One who did give Himself to secure our freedom!



Rendering of Cyrus the Great

Introduce

We ought never to take our eyes off Him who loved us first and gave Himself for us. We should love Him with our whole being, surrendering ourselves completely to His service ([Deut 6:5](#)). Therefore, may we demonstrate our love for Him in two primary ways: to submit ourselves to follow His commands obediently and to worship Him singularly or alone. Nothing should ever receive more importance in our lives than our relationship with the Lord through the Son—Jesus. As we focus on the godly characteristic of love this month, let us examine all our relationships beginning with that of our heavenly Father and then with our fellow human beings. Do our relationships demonstrate love as outlined in Scripture?

Key
Question

How do you show your love and devotion to the Lord?

Deuteronomy 6:1-3

LOVE DEMONSTRATED THROUGH SUBMISSION:

Based on the description in the New Testament, God designed the church to function like a nuclear family, particularly likening the relationship between Christ and His people to a relationship between a husband and wife. Even in the Old Testament, God describes His relationship to Israel as one of a Husband to His wife: “For your Maker is your Husband; the Lord of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel: He is called the God of the whole earth” ([Isa 54:5](#)).

Paul carries this same theme into the New Testament when he demonstrates how God has unified both Jew and Gentile into one body—the church ([Eph 5:22-33](#)). There he also commands wives to submit to their own husbands as to the Lord, explaining that

the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the Head of the church. So, we as His bride should be subject to Him in all things. Similarly, husbands are commanded to love their wives as Christ has loved the church and gave Himself for her. Although we often focus on the earthly relationships in this passage from Ephesians, Paul predominately

focuses on the relationship between Christ and the church to demonstrate what our love for Him ought to entail!

In both the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation, Jesus likewise functions as a bridegroom who will one day return to collect His bride and take her home to dwell forever in His Father’s house. In the Gospel, Jesus instills hope within the disciples that if He goes to prepare a place for them (and us), then He will return suddenly just like a bridegroom to whisk His bride away at the appointed time ([John 14:1-3](#))! In Revelation, we see that grand celebration fully realized when He has gathered the entire church—both the living and the dead—to be united with Him forever in heaven ([Rev 19:1-10](#)). By using human relationships such as the family and marriage, God has



Instruct

provided us with concrete examples which we can visualize and understand love even though dysfunction routinely occurs in these institutions here on earth because of sin. Nevertheless, we can know what true love should look like!

The greatest characteristic of any relationship is perhaps unwavering devotion whereby we love another unconditionally. God has demonstrated such unconditional love for us by sending His Son as a sacrifice to redeem us and restore us into a right relationship with Him. Christ's love does not depend upon what we have done or what we will do, but it comes directly from His character—it emanates from the very essence of His being, for Scripture declares, "God is love" ([1 John 4:8](#)). Consequently, God's love for us remains constant and unconditional despite what we have done. Just as God never changes in His holy words and deeds, His love for us never wanes or fades! For this reason, Paul can exclaim, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself" ([2 Tim 2:13](#)). The Lord devoted Himself to us since before He formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed life into his nostrils!

How have you seen God's love and devotion manifested through your life? How do you show that love which originates with Him to others?

Question
1

Although God never changes and remains lovingly devoted to us, we as humans have the tendency to become fickle and change upon a whim. Sometimes we take love and devotion for granted so that it becomes a routine about which we think very little. We simply go through the motions, but "love" should be a life-long pursuit of a relationship.



In Revelation, Jesus charges the church in Ephesus with leaving their first love ([Rev 2:4](#))! In terms of human relationships, we can often observe the difference between those who are dating or newly married as compared to those who have been married a while.

For a moment, picture a couple who is either dating or recently married. The demonstration of

their love for one another usually becomes evident to all! They may sit on the same side in a booth at a restaurant. They will listen intently, hanging upon each other's every word. They may display their affection by holding hands. A gentleman's concern and care for his wife or girlfriend becomes obvious when he opens the car door or gives her his jacket when he attentively notices she is chilled.

As time advances, these demonstrations of love and devotion may become less obvious in many relationships. Deep down they may securely know that their spouse loves them and is devoted to them, but they no longer demonstrate that love in an emphatic and visible way. Not only do they no longer sit on the same side of a booth at a restaurant, they can sit on the same couch watching two different programs or absorbed in two completely different activities. Consequently, talking and listening become less of an importance with one asking, "Did you hear what I said?" Sometimes one becomes so absorbed in what he or she is doing that they no longer pay attention to the needs of the other. A gentleman becomes too lazy to walk around to open the door or doesn't take the initiative to relinquish his jacket because he doesn't notice she has become chilled.

With Christ, we can't let our love and devotion grow cold. Instead, we must pursue a relationship with Him and cultivate it daily. In addition, we must demonstrate it in how we live! Others should have no doubt whom we love and who is the priority in our lives. It should be visible and evident to everyone through our devotion to Him alone! With this, chapter 6 opens by declaring how we demonstrate our devotion to the Lord. We follow His **commandment** (v. 1). We **observe** or practice the **statutes and judgments** which He has established in His Word. This becomes the outward sign of our love and devotion.

How obvious is your devotion to the Lord?
What do other people see? How has it changed
since you first became a follower of Christ?

Question
2

In the first few chapters of the book of Deuteronomy, Moses reminds the people about the principles by which they should live which God had expressly delivered to them on Mount Sinai as they journeyed from Egypt to the Promised Land. God didn't give these commands as a way of killing the people's fun or robbing their joy nor did He give them simply because He wanted to make their lives difficult by imposing a number of arcane rules upon them. On the contrary, God established these boundaries based on His grace so that the people would know exactly what it means to be holy and how to have

Instruct

an abundant life. Consequently, these commands truly demonstrate God's love and concern for His people.

How has following God's commands proved fruitful in your life? How has it helped you to make decisions from which you have benefitted from His wisdom?

Question
3

When Moses restates the Ten Commandments in chapter 5, the reason we ought to keep these **statutes** becomes clear: "You shall not bow down to them [other gods] nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments" ([Deut 5:9-10](#)). The very last line of these verses demonstrates why we should follow



these commands—because we love Him! In other words, we don't keep them based upon what the Lord will give us or do for us; we keep them because we love Him.

God will certainly bless and reward those who follow His commands just as He has promised, but we keep them because we love Him. Our motivation to obey, therefore, should stem from our love for Him—and not from what we receive! Jesus repeats this very same idea to His disciples during His instruction in the upper room the night before His crucifixion. He states, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" ([John 14:15](#)). Jesus

doesn't qualify this promise saying, "If you wish to receive a blessing or reward, obey My commandments." Rather, He simply states that if we love Him, we will obey!

Thus, our love for God is demonstrated through our submission or obedience to His Word. In verse 2, Moses reminds the people that they should **fear the Lord and keep all His statutes and commandments**, passing them along to future generations.

Fear has a two-fold sense in this context. It primarily signifies the reverence or respect we show the Lord by keeping His **commandments**; we honor Him with our

obedience. But we should also **fear** the consequences for our disobedience. We need not **fear** the loss of our salvation, but rather the loving chastisement that accompanies transgressing God's boundaries. We should **fear** that punishment as well as lament the dishonor that it brings the Lord so that we don't repeatedly engage in the same things!

Why does God chasten us when we err? What have you learned from the times that God has chastened you?

Question
4

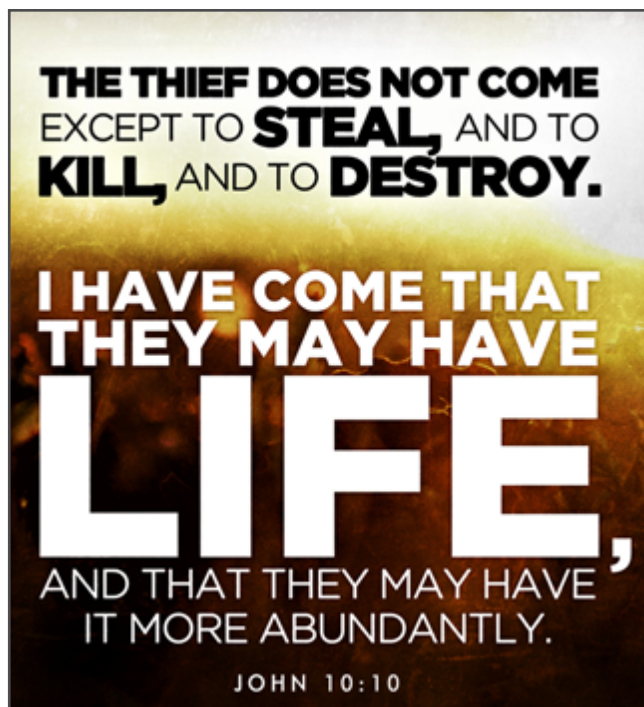
Like the fifth commandment which exhorts us to "honor our father and mother," we should honor and respect our heavenly Father who desires the best for us ([Exod 20:12](#)). Hence, we show our respect by submitting to His will and allowing Him to shape our lives so that we will reflect His character. God will indeed reward our obedience. Only the fifth commandment bidding us to honor our parents carries with it a promise: "That your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you." In the same way, when we **fear** our heavenly Father by honoring Him with our obedience, He re-affirms that same blessing and promise to us: "**That your days may be long!**" Obedience according to the principles outlined in God's Word will always lead to a fruitful life as the Lord wills.

Although it's normal for children to test boundaries, they will eventually learn to trust that their parents have set these limitations because they want to protect them and want the best for them. When they see how their parents love them even through discipline, they will usually return that love in the way they honor and respect them by how they conduct themselves. We live in a society, however, which does a disservice to children and young adults because it wrongly teaches them that love means permission to do whatever they want. This mindset completely disregards God's wise plan for living abundantly! Life is not a free-for-all in which we seek how much we can get away with, but a set of principles which helps us to mature into productive people according to God's plan.

How has abiding by the Lord's boundaries protected you? How has His boundaries shown His love and concern for you in a tangible way?

Question
5

Unfortunately, this permissive attitude today has led to a culture of chaos in which people, even adults, throw temper tantrums until they get what they want, creating an atmosphere of disrespect and rebellion. Many people do not generally care about



the consequences of their actions nor do they accept responsibility for them. They live immaturely, looking through selfish lenses seeing what they desire rather than what they actually need. We need not look far to see the evidence of this in our world! Conversely, permissiveness does not show love at all! In Scripture, God has clearly defined what works and how we should conduct ourselves in love: we ought to be a people who completely submit to Him, obeying His commands because He has given them to protect us and to enable us to have a successful life based upon His

standards!

Because of God's character and faithfulness, we can trust Him, knowing He desires the best for us. Therefore, Moses reminds the people of God's faithfulness: He will **multiply** them **greatly** as a people just as He had **promised** their forefathers (v. 3). God will always show His love beyond that which we can even fathom! He didn't just give them a **land**, for example, but He gave them a great, productive **land**—one **flowing with milk and honey**. We shouldn't obey God for what we can get, but because we genuinely love Him with all our being. He will indeed bless us according to His will in ways that we would have never imagined. Each one of us undoubtedly has story after story about how God has blessed us beyond our wildest imagination when we have obeyed with the right motives of demonstrating our love to Him. Let us continue to show our devotion to Him through our obedience, knowing He wants the best for us.

How have you seen God's blessings through your obedience?

Question
6

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

LOVE DEMONSTRATED SINGULARLY:

Verse 4 encapsulates the heart of Israel's theology: **Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!** In this context, it is a call for Israel to worship the Lord alone. This isn't

a statement about the Trinity—God existing in three distinct persons as a single being. Scripture elsewhere makes this unique aspect of God’s existence clear—just not in these verses. This phrase, therefore, demonstrates God’s uniqueness: there is no one in the universe like Him. He alone is the one true and living God. At this time, Israel had just left Egypt where they worshiped many different gods (polytheism)—including the Pharaoh whom they revered as a god himself.

As a result of their interaction and integration with other cultures, Israel often failed to worship God alone and found themselves serving the false gods of the nations around them. As attested throughout the Old Testament, inconsistency characterized the worship and service of the nation as a whole! Aaron, for example, led the people in fashioning a golden calf from the spoils God had given them from Egypt while Moses ascended Mount Sinai to receive these very commands ([Exod 32](#))! During the period of the Judges, the people abandoned the worship of the Lord for that of Baal and in Jeremiah’s day they worshiped Molech—even participating in the grotesque and abominable practice of child sacrifice.

How consistent is your worship and service of the Lord? Do you always give Him priority in your life?

Question
7

The people often rejected the Lord altogether or worshiped Him along with the gods of the nations around them. But God had clearly instructed them that He alone is worthy of worship! He even expressly states this concept in the first two commandments. They were not to bow down to other gods nor create images with which to worship. Yet, over time, Israel did both of these things. As a consequence, they often abandoned the worship of the only one God who could truly respond—the only One who could hear their prayers, the only God who could give them sound advice, the only God who could provide for them, and the only God who could give them life. Instead, they turned to things which could not satisfy, could not grant wisdom, and could not instill life within them. From these

JEREMIAH 10:10

*But the Lord is the true God;
He is the living God
and the everlasting King.
At His wrath the earth will
tremble, And the nations will
not be able to endure His
indignation.*

mistakes, we must learn to worship the Lord singularly—that is alone. We shouldn't live our lives independently of Him and approach Him only when we need something, but we must depend upon Him for everything. We can't lean on our own wisdom and our own strength sometime and then cry to God for help at others! Nothing else can satisfy and give abundant life when we live inconsistently in our worship. We should love Him from the depths of our whole being by submitting to His plan for our lives because of the care and concern He shows for us through the boundaries He has set.

Moses describes the depth of **love** we should have for the Lord: **You should love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength** (v. 5). With every fiber of our being, we are to **love** and worship the Lord. This type of **love** means that we must grant Jesus access to our whole being. We will surrender control of our lives in every area according to His divine will if we truly love Him. In Revelation 3:20, Jesus states, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me." We must understand Jesus is addressing His followers who have a relationship with Him in this statement—not those who don't. He wishes to correct the course of the Laodicean church and restore them into right relationship with Him. Although Jesus loves us intimately, we at times treat Him as an outsider; we shut Him out of our lives—just like those in Laodicea.

The illustration Jesus uses of Himself standing at the door and knocking serves us well even today. We have many ways of determining who is at the door. We may look through the peephole or access an electronic device on our phones where we can both see and talk to the other person! But we never open the door or invite them inside—even if we know them—because we don't have our house in order or it's an inconvenient time. Sometimes we may acknowledge their presence and politely turn them away while at other times we may completely ignore them. With Jesus, we may recognize Him and hear His voice, but we may never open the door because we don't want to surrender to Him and give Him complete access to every area of our lives. We want to have a "relationship" with Christ so that we have assurance of life, but we want to keep Him on the outside so that we can remain in control! We don't want to invite Him to enter so that He might truly transform the way we live.

If we truly **love** the Lord with all our being, we will submit to Him completely. He won't just be a priority among many things in our lives; He will be the priority above

everything else in our lives. To borrow the marriage theme, wedding ceremonies once upon a time would have a phrase similar to “forsaking all others” as part of the vows. In human terms, this means that no other person should be the recipient of our **love** the way our spouse should receive it—including our children, other family members, and friends. Right behind our **love** for the Lord, the **love** for our



spouse should rank second. We shouldn't entertain lustful thoughts; we should be faithful some of the time. Our spouse is the sole recipient of our **love**! In the same way, the Lord should be the sole recipient of our **love** above all else. We should forsake all other idols in our lives. We are to place Him first above everything else.

How can you tangibly prove that the Lord is the sole recipient of your love above all else?

Question
8

God has called us to be unwavering in our **love** and devotion to Him. We shouldn't be moved by emotions and distracted by circumstances; we should have our eyes and hearts fixed upon Him. Although we don't live in a day in which many bow down to literal idols of stone, we have numerous idols that constantly vie for our attention. Consequently, we should love God above everything else in our lives—including all our other human relationships, our own physical life, our finances, our possessions, and our hobbies and the things with which we generally fill our schedules and our minds. We are to be a people who forsake all else for the **love** of God, submitting ourselves to His will, so that the secular world might see the difference in us!

The story of the prince who stood before Cyrus willing to give his life for his wife's release and his wife who had her eyes fixed solely upon her husband the whole time should signify our relationship with the Lord. We should love Him alone with the depth of our entire being! Yet, our culture promotes the idea that we can look elsewhere for fulfillment—no longer just looking, but experimenting to find what truly satisfies. Unfortunately, this bad advice leads to a life of endless pursuit, discontentment, and depression because it can never satisfy our deepest longings. A life of experimentation and indulgence in self-seeking desires only produces heartache and disappointment devoid of any true love. If we follow the plan in Scripture to submit ourselves to the Lord and worship Him with the sincerest love of our whole being, we will find joy and contentment no matter what we may face in life. Therefore, let us love God above all else, obeying what He has commanded us so that we might have a successful life according to His will.

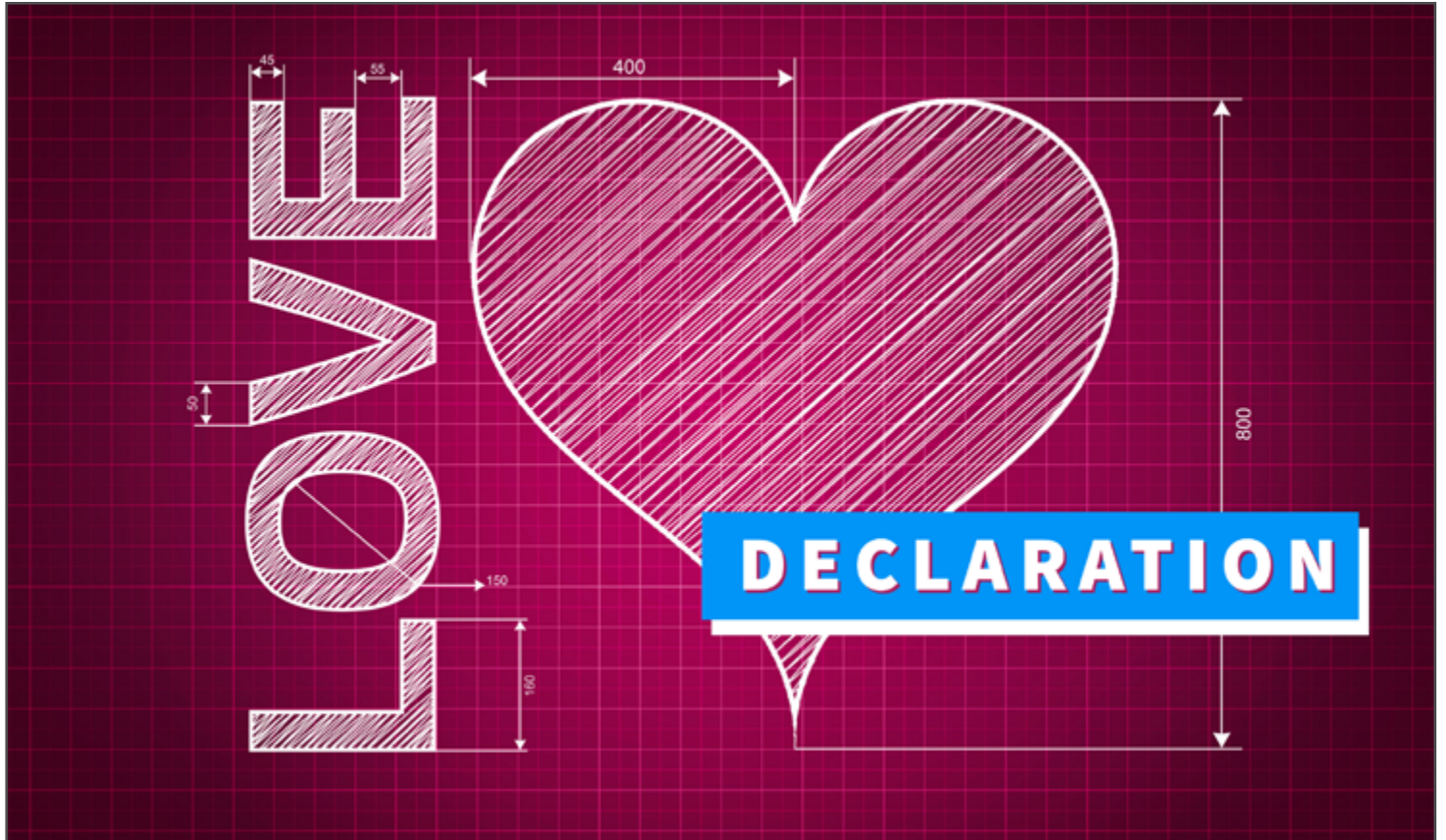
Incorporate

What boundaries and character traits have you learned from your parents that have helped you in life? How did these boundaries and principles demonstrate their love? How have you seen God as your heavenly Father do these same things when He has set boundaries in your life?

What evidence is there in your life that you have forsaken all others to follow the Lord? What happens when you lose focus or become sidetracked? How does the Lord bring you back on course?

How does the love of Christ shine through you to others? How do you use those opportunities to point others to Him?

February 13, 2022



Follow God's Plan for Love:
The Declaration Repeated
Deuteronomy 6:1-15, Part 2

Focal Verse:

"You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes."

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Deuteronomy 6:8

Introduce

In our society, love has become confused with mere enjoyment. People often employ the terms love and like interchangeably without ever thinking about the significant difference between them. Consequently, we hear expressions such as I love pizza, baseball, marching band, knitting, traveling, and so forth. Technically, we enjoy, or like, activities, hobbies, possessions, and other material things, but we should love people! To use the word love synonymously with like or enjoy weakens its meaning, especially when we apply it to inanimate objects or activities instead of to the Lord and the people created in His image. Scripture prompts us to direct our love toward God first and then other people second—whether our family, neighbors, fellow believers, or even our enemies ([Matt 26:36-40](#)).

When Scripture refers to love, it generally reserves the term only for God and other people—not material things or activities! Whenever people direct their love toward an object, however, it almost always carries a negative connotation.

Paul, for example, describes “the love of money” as “the root of all kinds of evil” ([1 Tim 6:10](#)).

Moreover, Scripture also condemns people who “love” participating in sinful practices ([John 3:19](#)) or those who “love” praise and seek attention for themselves ([John 12:43](#)) to name a few instances. In



contrast, the Bible repeatedly reminds us to love the Lord and one another!

When we confuse “love” for activities or inanimate objects with true, unconditional love for the Lord and other people, nothing good ever results! God certainly has created things, instituted activities, or even allowed inventions for our enjoyment and pleasure when utilized within the bounds that He has set for them—just as in the beginning in the Garden of Eden when He gave man the freedom to eat of any tree except one. But the enemy has corrupted them by shifting our focus from the Lord and putting the spotlight on the aspect of pleasure in the activities themselves which eclipses the relationship we should have with Him alone. The things of this world promise excitement, elation, and enjoyment, but they ultimately fail to deliver. Instead, they

Introduce

lead to destruction. The Apostle John even warns us, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever” ([1 John 2:15-17](#)).

Our society also misconstrues love by deeming it an emotion which changes based upon feeling. Scripture, however, identifies it as a state of being or a character trait that remains constant. Society will speak of falling in and out of love. But the Bible describes it as living in a state of love. Thus, love is who we are in Christ which in turn influences what we do. Conversely, what we have done to us or what happens to us doesn't affect how we love; hence, we can love our enemies ([Matt 5:44](#)). The world can never have or experience such love apart from Christ because they will always base their response upon what happens to them or what they receive out of the relationship. But in Christ, we can know what true love is because He first demonstrated it to us ([Rom 5:8](#))! Here, the text of Deuteronomy encourages us to demonstrate our love for God by living consistently with His Word wherever we are or we may go, teaching it to future generations as we journey through life.

Key
Question

What activities, possessions, and things has God given you to enjoy in life? How does the enemy constantly seek to use those things to distract you from the Lord?

Deuteronomy 6:6-9

LOVE DEMONSTRATED AS A SIGN:

After having urged the people to love Him “with all [their] heart, with all [their] soul, and with all [their] strength,” God directs them to put **these words** which He has commanded them **today in their heart** (v. 6). In other words, they, and we also, should memorize them, meditate upon them, and apply them. Not only must they know them, but they must also abide by and practice them! As a result of their obedience, their love for the Lord should be visibly displayed in what they do. The New Testament, as we learned briefly last week, compels us to do the same as Israel: to demonstrate our love through our obedience to His **command** as a sign of our devotion to Him.

When someone loves another, we can usually tell by their physical or physiological actions. Thus, their love is displayed visibly in how they look, what they do, and what they say. Visibly, for instance, we can see their love and affection demonstrated through intimate gestures like holding hands, walking arm-in-arm, or putting an arm around the other. They will sit

closely to each other, relaxed and content. Even if they don't do these things, one can still frequently tell by their body language that they may have romantic interest in another person. They may seem nervous, stutter and fumble through phrases, sweat, or even turn red.

Moreover, they will also try to impress the other person by putting their best foot forward—hopefully authentically rather than deceptively—by saying or doing generous, gracious, and sweet gestures which show outwardly they have spent time thinking of the other person and are not self-absorbed.

In addition to these tangible or physical ways of declaring our love for others, we can also identify three other ways that we demonstrate our love. First, we spend meaningful time together. We don't sit impatiently, looking at our watches waiting



Instruct

for time to pass! We don't rush through a conversation, but we listen and share intently with them. We genuinely want to get to know them and their interests, so we spend time sharing stories, participating in similar activities, and walking through life together. Although some might, we shouldn't drone on about ourselves without hearing from the other person; we should listen as well! Above all, we will make spending time with them a priority. It won't be an afterthought at the end of a busy day when we suddenly realize that we haven't spent any time together. We won't continually make excuses, complaining how busy we are. We will make time to cultivate a relationship with the ones whom we value and find important!

How does the time you make for others in your life compare to the time that you spend in cultivating a relationship with the Lord?

Question
1

Second, we will invest in them. For those like our children whom we love, we will spend time mentoring them based upon the knowledge and experience that we have gained through life as we have followed the Lord and practiced His Word. In fact, the greatest way we can show love to others is by teaching them the right way to live. We teach, however, not merely through words or by barking commands just because we said so, but by modeling the right way to live. Our words must match our deeds—and our deeds must conform to Scripture. Teaching also means that we lovingly correct or discipline, when necessary, in order to instill the right principles and boundaries within them ([Heb 12:5](#); [Prov 13:24](#)). Both discipline and instruction show love!



Finally, we love unconditionally. Our love doesn't depend upon what others do for us, nor does it depend upon whether they even reciprocate our love. Scripture teaches that we should love without condition just as Christ has first loved us ([1 John 4:19](#)). Former President Ronald Reagan once told a story about his interaction with former Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker. While standing on the steps of the US Capitol during

President Reagan's first inauguration, Mr. Baker confidently asserts, "Mr. President, I'll be with you through thick." But President Reagan didn't miss a beat and asked, "What about thin?" To which, Mr. Baker frankly replied, "Welcome to Washington, Mr. President."

Our love should not be like that of a politician which reflects a what-have-you-done-for-me-lately attitude and depends primarily upon backroom deals based on *quid pro quo*. Many, however, adopt this worldly perspective which creates dysfunction because it often distorts the truth and focuses on the self! On the contrary, our love should reflect righteousness and integrity which compels us to do the right thing according to Scripture no matter what may happen to us and regardless of what we may receive! The Bible simply commands us to love others with the love of Christ. Our love for the Lord and other people, therefore, shouldn't waver or change depending upon the circumstances, how we may emotionally feel, or what we perceive of the situation at the time. It should remain constant, emanating from the very core of our transformed lives in Christ!

How has Christ demonstrated unconditional love to you? How should or could you use this as a pattern for how you love others?

Question
2

v. 7a

TEACH OUR CHILDREN:

Over the course of these next three verses, the text indicates three principal ways that our actions signify our love for the Lord. First, our love becomes evident when we **teach** our **children**. Moses instructs the people to **teach these** commands (i.e., **words**) **diligently to** their **children** (v. 7a). Certainly, this concept of discipleship includes other believers, but the focus in this context resides with instruction within the nuclear family! It's incumbent upon the family to **teach children**. And if they fail in this responsibility, **children** will learn from other sources which often do not reflect godly wisdom and instruction—whether from their peers, the media, or secular education! Because we love the Lord and have a relationship with Him, we should want our **children** to have the same.

Just as we order ourselves by His commands, we should also desire the same for our **children** so that they may also have a fruitful and blessed life in following His perfect plan. To see this desire come to fruition, therefore, it requires constantly instilling

Instruct

Scripture within them and modeling it for them; hence, prescribing that instruction



occurs all the time as they walk daily during life (i.e., **by the way**), when they **lie down** at night, and when they **rise up**. If God has given us **children**, He has blessed us ([Psalm 127:3](#)).

Although **children** may require much attention, may rebel and err at times, and may require

tremendous work, they are still a blessing and should never be taken for granted or seen as a burden. With this blessing, however, comes the responsibility to nurture them and raise them in the way of the Lord!

We must carefully note that it's primarily the parents or family's responsibility to **teach** their **children** according to Moses' directives. Although the text only has the second person plural pronoun "**you**" as the subject of the command **shall teach**, notice where the instruction occurs—in the home. The nuclear family has the primary responsibility of educating their children! Generally, many—not all—in the church have gotten this concept wrong today. We want the community to do what we as a family should be doing! We as a church should indeed **teach** the Word, model it, and reinforce its truth through discipleship. But we as the church supplement what is being taught at home! The church, therefore, should not be the primary source of instruction for **children**; the primary source should be in the home. The church reinforces and applies the instruction that the parents undertake in the home.

Not only does Moses tell us where to **teach** (home), he tells us how to **teach** (**diligently**). This word pictures an engraver chiseling or etching something into stone. In other words, it signifies that we are to be deliberate and intentional in teaching Scripture. To have a strong community and vibrant church, we must have strong homes where we deliberately teach the Word! Use this week to evaluate honestly how much quality and meaningful time you spend together as a family. Ask yourselves: How does that time reflect deliberate instruction in the ways of the Lord and cultivating your relationship with Him? Naturally, our minds immediately turn to thoughts of praying together or studying Scripture as a family. We live in a fast-paced,

hectic world in which we choose to fill our schedules with a variety of things in such a way that we often place family devotion time on the back burner because we rarely sit down together! However, God has called us to make a deliberate effort to spend time together with Him as a family; He wants us to make it a priority!

How does your time as a family reflect the principle of teaching and cultivating a relationship with the Lord as outlined here in [verse 7](#)?

Question
3

Praying and reading Scripture are certainly a starting point for our relationship with the Lord. And we must make time to engage in them as a family. Yet, how much do our everyday conversations reflect the principles found within Scripture rather than inconsequential discussions about activities, interests, movies, video games, world events, etcetera? We can engage in such conversations as they edify the Lord and connect us together with common interests. All too frequently, however, we don't have in-depth conversations about spiritual things that matter the most. Consequently, we must turn off the television, put away social media, and put down our computers, phones, and other devices in order to have an engaging conversation. God has certainly given us these things to use responsibly for His glory and our entertainment, but they too often become a distraction!



A good way to **teach children** is to take time to talk through decisions together as a family. Although parents bear the responsibility to make the right decision, as Scripture teaches, for the purpose of leading the family in the right direction toward the Lord, it benefits **children** to see the process. If appropriate, allow **children** to have input into the conversation, but guide them where needed and establish boundaries where necessary. Such an approach, however, requires significant investment as well as patience which many seem unwilling to give. It is easier to send a child off to play than to involve them in conversation. Don't discount what a child can learn from being involved in an appropriate conversation!

Along these same lines, take time to cultivate an atmosphere in which your **children**

feel comfortable in talking out their decisions—preferably before they make them. This means we must make ourselves available and listen to what the child says. We must clear our schedules and make time! This requires us to communicate effectively rather than rush through the conversation as if it bothers us and it is of little importance to us. When children make the wrong decision and we must discipline them, we should talk about their choices and help them understand the better way—God’s way. We don’t just punish them. Certainly, Scripture gives us responsibility as parents and **children** should honor us by heeding what we say. But rather than merely retorting “because I said so,” take time to explain as you discipline them. Help them to understand the consequences of their choices. On their level, we should teach them to reason and make wise decisions.

How do you or can you involve your children in conversations that teach them valuable biblical principles for living?

Question
4

Another facet of being diligent means that we must model consistency for them. Colloquially, we must practice what we preach! We must let them see us applying the Word in our lives consistently as we strive for righteousness in Christ. To live inconsistently with Scripture or to allow the church to do our duty as parents with little involvement at home presents the wrong picture. It demonstrates that we ourselves don’t find Scripture practical or valuable enough to apply! **Children** will more often imitate what they see rather than practice what they only *hear*. “Do as I say and not as I do,” never teaches properly. It always promotes bad behavior. Conversely, we must demonstrate authenticity in our love and devotion for Christ by living the way He has commanded us.

As we conclude this section, take a moment to think of the person who has had the greatest impact upon your life. Most likely, it is someone who walked with you hand-in-hand throughout life in both the good times and the bad. It is someone who took time to explain and mentor you one-on-one. It is someone who encouraged you when you did well and helped you navigate things when life fell to pieces. It is probably someone who cared enough to correct you when you erred, gave sound advice when you needed it, and listened when you had something to say.

Personally, I recall a Minister of Education and Administration where I attended church

as a high school student in Kentucky who took time to invest in me. Out of his busy schedule, he took time to explain the ministry of the church and equipped me to teach. He didn't send me unprepared, but walked with me on my journey. As a nineteen-year-old college student, he asked me to teach a leadership meeting for Bible study during summer vacation while home from school to people who had served decades longer than I had been alive and knew much more than I did! All this helped to prepare me for ministry today and greatly impacted my life! Let us ask ourselves: who has God called us to impact by teaching?



v. 7b

TALK ABOUT HIS WAYS:

Second, we are to **talk** about His ways all the time wherever we may be. For this reason, Moses commands the people to **talk when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up** (v. 7b). This means that we should **teach** our **children** everywhere and all the time. We should seize the teachable moments in life to educate them. To be most effective, instruction should be as immediate as possible. Many times, we may say, "wait until we get home," mostly as a threat for punishment, but also rarely as a promise of reward. Then, we forget. Instruction is most effective when we can take the time to stop and teach at the moment. It's fresh on the mind and the teaching will often reinforce a valuable lesson that will be imprinted on the child's mind.

From what "teachable" moments have you learned in life where someone took time to educate you during the middle of the circumstances you faced? What "teachable" moments have you used to teach others?

Question
5

The expressions **when you lie down** and **when you rise up** aren't just commands

Instruct

to begin and end the day with a prayer. We should pray at these times, for the Bible bids us to pray without ceasing ([1 Thess 5:17](#)). In this context, rather, it means that we must always **teach** and **talk** about the Lord and His Word to our **children**. Too many times, adults put off **children** and don't want to talk. They become annoyed, wanting time to rest and unwind. I've seen this first-hand where **children** are told to go play a videogame, watch television, or simply not to bother their parents. But what does this teach them? It teaches them that their questions are unimportant. It also teaches them to seek answers elsewhere—even when they have decisions with grave consequences which we would want them to ask! Parents should indeed **teach** their **children** manners about interrupting conversations as well as the appropriate way and time to ask questions. But they should always take time to communicate and **talk**—answering from the perspective of the Lord outlined in Scripture—regardless of how pedantic or irritating they may find incessant questions to be!

Furthermore, we should repeatedly **talk** about the Lord to our **children**. Admittedly, most of us usually don't learn something the first time we hear it. Although we may have good memories and learn quickly, to learn something so we don't forget requires reinforcement. We must repeat it! When memorizing Scripture, for example, most



of us repeat the verse over and over until we internalize it in our minds. **Children** require the same approach; we must patiently remind them about the Lord and His ways! Teaching someone diligently means that we gently, but continually, remind them. We continually point them to the Lord and what He has said in Scripture. This will take time and dedication, but if we love the

Lord and we love others, it will not be an overwhelming task, and one in which we will participate gladly wherever we are and in whatever circumstances we face.

In what instances does Scripture talk about the value of children to God? How do you cultivate an atmosphere of communication in your home?

Question
6

Finally, the last two verses instruct the people to take these commands wherever they go. Moses tells the people to **bind them as a sign on their hand** and as **frontlets between their eyes** (v. 8). They **shall write them on their doorposts** and their **gates** (v. 9). In other words, he wants the people to remember the things with which God has tasked them! They must take them with them wherever they go so they don't forget! Some Jews take this literally and bind a tiny copy of this scroll in a little box which they wear between their eyes secured by a headband (i.e., phylacteries).

Although Moses may have literally urged them to write these words in a visible place as a reminder, he more assuredly wanted the people to apply them! What good would it do to carry these words physically with us, but never live by them or apply them? It would be like carrying a prescription for eyeglasses in our pocket and never using it to get the lens and frames to aid our vision. Carrying the prescription physically wouldn't improve our lives in any way until we get it filled. If we never use it, we still wouldn't see clearly! The same principle applies with Scripture. Until we follow the principles God has specified in His Word, they won't improve our lives in any way. We will remain in our fleshly, fallen mindset rather than having the mind of Christ. We won't see the world any differently unless we abide by what God has said!

Not only should the people remember and apply these commands, but they should be a **sign** (v. 8). These commands don't serve as a **sign** for us in this case, but a **sign** to others that we have a relationship with the Lord. Therefore, to be a **sign** means that others can see Christ in us through the transformed way in which we live. Through the righteousness Christ has instilled within us and the integrity with which we remain faithful to His Word, others will know that we follow Christ. Even though our good works and obedience cannot save us, they function as a **sign** of our salvation to others! Wherever we go, whatever we do, and whoever we meet, may we demonstrate our love for Christ by obediently following His commands as a sign of the renewed relationship we have through Him.

When others look at you, who or what do they see? How does who or what they see compare with what Scripture says?

Question
7

Inspire

Our society has grossly misconstrued what love entails. Only in Christ do we have a perfect picture of what love ought to be since it flows from the very core of who He is. When we love God with all our being, it will manifest itself visibly as an outward sign evident to all in what we do—just as love is patently evident in human relationships in the physical ways we talk about earlier in the lesson. Others will see our love for the Lord through our obedience in following His commands. Not only do we follow His commands, but we teach others, particularly our children, to follow them. Our love, consequently, becomes visible in the way we teach, talk about Him, and take Him with us wherever we go.

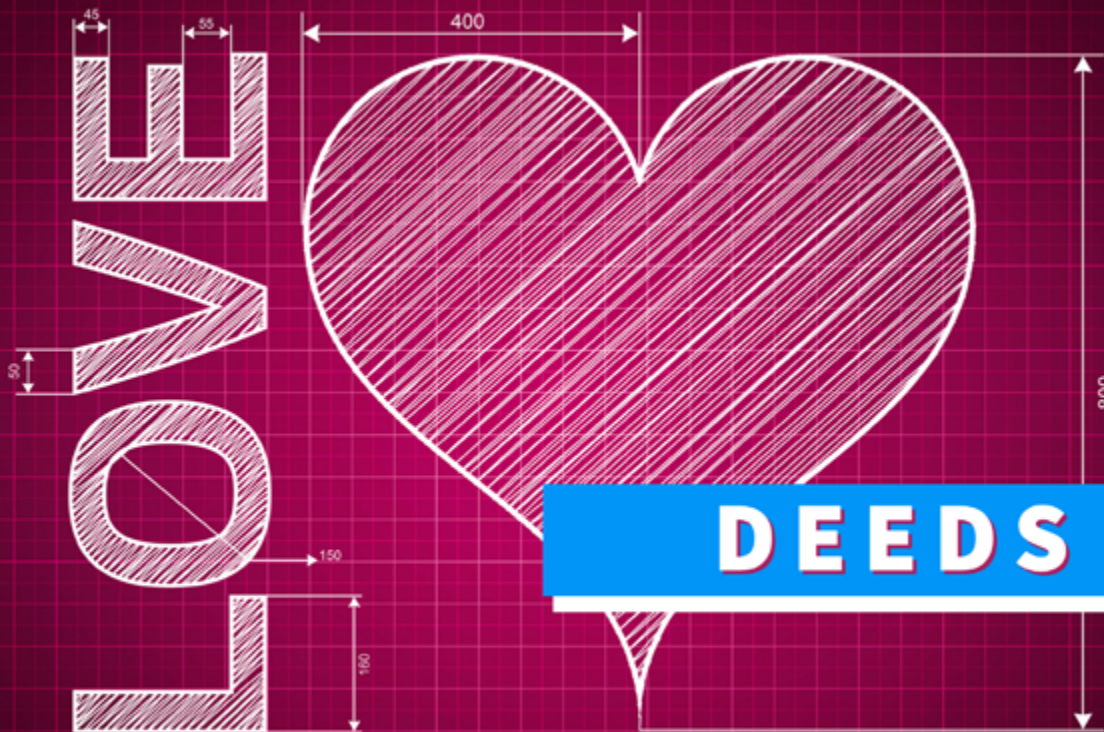
Incorporate

Who has taken time to teach and invest in you? What impact did this have on your life?
How do you take time to teach and invest in others?

In what ways do you talk about the Lord with your children, grandchildren, or other people? How do you incorporate the principles of the Lord either implicitly or explicitly into your everyday conversations?

As you go about your daily routine, how evident is your relationship to Christ?

February 20, 2022



Follow God's Plan for Love:
The Deeds Rendered
Deuteronomy 6:1-15, Part 3

Focal Verse:

"You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name."

Deuteronomy 6:13

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Introduce

One of the most valuable lessons which my parents taught me as a child was to show respect for other people's property whether during a visit to their home or if they graciously lent me something to use. If I ever borrowed anything from someone, my parents explained that I should treat it as if it were my own and return it in even better condition than I had originally found it. The same also applied to items I would rent such as venues and vehicles. Whether borrowing or renting, we are the entrusted caretaker! Although many people would say that they subscribe to this philosophy, few actually practice it!

Some never return the borrowed item, leaving it buried in their closets or garages for years. Still, others may use an item freely without ever maintaining it, returning it only when it no longer works or has no value! Having run it into the ground, they then expect the lender to fix it so they might continue using it. When people rent a venue or a car, many regard creating a mess or ruining the item as the problem of the owner. For this reason, most rental agencies require a security deposit for damage and will charge a hefty fee for excessive cleaning.

A few years ago, someone allowed a gentleman to borrow one of his spare cars—an old Chrysler mini-van. Although he expressed gratitude verbally for the kind act,

he showed anything but thankfulness! He completely ruined the vehicle, driving it until it no longer worked and expecting the one who had loaned it to him to fix it! Instead of regularly changing the oil, he never serviced it once, causing the engine to seize up. When he finally did



return the car barely able to be driven, the tires were completely bald with no tread and the brakes had no pads with the rotors grinding against the metal. The gentleman who borrowed the car abused it and he never took any responsibility for his actions.

Another valuable lesson my parents taught me was to be grateful for what I received. If someone ever graciously gave me something, I should appreciate it and treat it with respect whether I saw value in it or not. Simply because someone freely gave it to me

Introduce

didn't mean I could take it for granted or abuse it. Just because I didn't earn it or pay for it with my hard-earned money didn't mean someone else hadn't made significant sacrifices for it. Several years ago on a mission trip to East Africa, one of the people with whom I worked closely gave me a small, wooden elephant as a gift. Roughly hewn and made of inexpensive wood, this gift was a great sacrifice given their wages! Certainly, I could have bought a much nicer, more expensive souvenir, but the purchase of this elephant showed the depth of their love. For this reason alone, this elephant has tremendous value. Exercising good stewardship, however, doesn't depend upon the value of an item or how beneficial we may see it. Rather, it depends upon the worth with which we view the person who entrusted it to us!

No matter what we have been given, we ought to show our gratitude and love by valuing it and exercising the responsibility to care for it—whether we consider it big or small. We ought to practice good stewardship. Before thoughts of dread about January's curriculum where we spent an entire month examining financial stewardship dominate your mind, we must realize that it encompasses so much more than just our money. In Deuteronomy 6, God charged Israel with the stewardship of His Word, the land that He had given them, and their families. God would tremendously bless the people when He fulfilled His promise to their forefathers through them. If we find value in our relationship with the Lord—which should be our most treasured possession—being a good steward of these things and serving Him should not be a struggle, but a privilege and honor which brings joy. We owe everything to Him, so let us show our love in the way that we manage what He has entrusted us and let us serve Him alone.

Key
Question

What does your stewardship and service indicate about your relationship with the Lord?

Deuteronomy 6:10-12

LOVE DEMONSTRATED THROUGH STEWARDSHIP:

As we conclude our study on [Deuteronomy 6:1-15](#), we may often overlook an important principle illustrated through God's gift of the Promised Land to Israel: stewardship. We may read about this gift from a purely historical perspective without ever considering what it teaches us today. God's gift of the land to the descendants of Abraham is indeed unique to a specific people. But the principle of stewardship that it teaches applies to every one of us. Therefore, we demonstrate our love for God through the stewardship of all He has graciously given us.

Here, in verses 10 and 11, we learn that Israel received this land by grace alone. They

didn't buy it, **build** it, plow it, **plant** it, or reap it! Everything they received came from God who gave them **large and beautiful cities** which they **did not build** (v. 10). He gave them **houses full of good things** which they did not purchase or acquire on their own (v. 11). God blessed them with ready-made **wells** which they **did not dig** as well as **vineyards** and



groves of **olive trees** which they **did not plant** from which they ate and were **full!** The Lord provided everything they needed!

With all their prosperity and success, Moses cautions them not to **forget** the source of all their blessings (v. 12). They must remember that the Lord is the one who **brought** them **out of bondage in Egypt**. To help us maintain the right focus, let's examine two key principles from this brief introductory statement which leads Moses to challenge the people to **serve** the Lord alone. First, God will always faithfully fulfill His promises at the right time, so we can trust and follow Him even when we don't see the big picture and can't see the end of the event. God will never lead us astray and will always equip us with the necessary tools for the task to which He has called us. History bears this out during the period of conquest under the leadership of Joshua! God equipped

Instruct

the people with what they needed and gave them a specific plan. Even if it seems odd to us, He utilized the people marching around Jericho for seven days and a blast on their trumpets to bring down the walls and defeat the city without a weapon ever being drawn ([Josh 6](#)). When we trust in our own wisdom, strength, and plan, however, we will often experience failure and shrink back in fear. History also proves this when Israel arrogantly proceeded to attack the city of Ai according to their own plan and were routed—forced to retreat in fear ([Josh 7:1-9](#)).

When you can't see the big picture or the end of the circumstances, what do you do in life? What principles guide you? In times past, what has this taught you about the Lord?

Question
1

Second, stewardship requires patience to see fruit. We live in a world that wants instant results, but God works in His perfect timing to fulfill His will! It took over 400 years for Israel to see the fruit of God's promise to their ancestors. In verse 10, Moses reminds them that God had made this covenant with their forefathers some 430 years earlier when He first came to **Abraham**. None of the men listed here saw this promise come to fruition, but they still believed and faithfully followed the Lord! God was forthright with Abram, revealing that his descendants would be enslaved in a nation (Egypt) for 400 years ([Gen 15:13](#)). In all the intervening years, God never abandoned His promise to **Abraham** and His people. Along the way, those who trusted in the Lord and had a relationship with Him continued to see evidence of His work in their lives—whether **Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and now Moses**.

To be a good steward requires that we have patience to wait upon the Master, to listen to His Word, and follow His plan. To follow God's plan, however, requires diligent work. Many people, for example, don't have the patience to grow a vegetable garden. For the easiest and most immediate results, they go to the grocery store. They merely want to pick up the produce rather than taking the time to invest in growing it. To grow a garden demands patience and intentional effort. Not only must we till the ground and sow the seeds, but we must wait for them to germinate and even longer for them to bear fruit!

Yet, while we wait, we must still be active in caring for the crops. During the hot, dry summer months, we must water the plants as well as weed the beds regularly and ward off insects and predators that will destroy the harvest. Wouldn't it be nice if we could

simply plant it and forget it? To see any produce, it necessitates effort, persistence, and patience. We can't succumb to the impatient view of the world around us that wants instant gratification, but we must have patience and practice what the Lord specifies based on His timetable and according to His plan. After all, without Him to make things grow and give life, we would have nothing! Our very being depends upon Him, so let us trust Him and follow Him wherever He leads.



In what areas has God required patience to produce fruit in your life? What did you learn during these times and how has it helped you in other areas of your walk?

Question
2

Since God has graciously given Israel everything, He now holds them responsible for how they use it for His glory. In addition to the stewardship of our finances, Scripture teaches many other ways we function as God's stewards. How many of us realize that we are a steward of our families and other relationships? In the immediate context of Deuteronomy 6, we clearly see the stewardship of the family through the training of children. Since we dealt with this extensively last week, here we will only provide a summary. As God blesses many families with the gift of children, parents are responsible for training them in the way that they should go, teaching them to seek the Lord and walk according to His righteousness ([Prov 22:6](#); [Prov 3:5-6](#)).

Not only are we stewards of the children whom God has given us, but we are stewards of our other relationships in our nuclear and extended families as well as in our church family, workplace, and community. The Bible gives us clear direction on how we can have healthy relationships with one another—particularly when both individuals seek the Lord. Although entire books could be and many are devoted to these subjects, let us briefly look at stewardship in four crucial areas: the nuclear family and marriage, the extended family, the workplace, and the church. In marriage, we exercise stewardship by caring for, nurturing, and providing for the spouse whom the Lord has given us—

Instruct

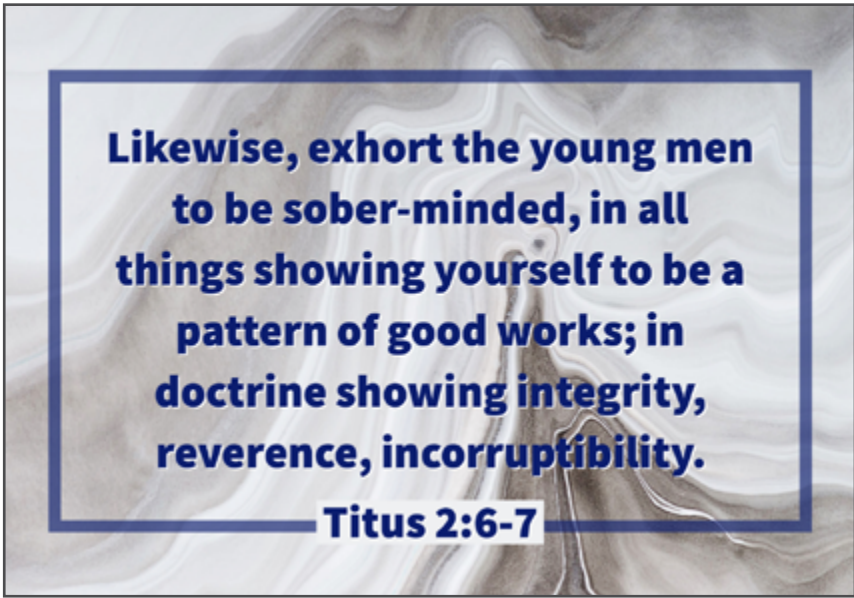
just as if we are caring for our own bodies ([Eph 5:22-33](#)). We also serve as helpmates, navigating life together as we seek the Lord ([Gen 2:18](#)). Lastly, and most importantly, we must guard our hearts, purify our thoughts, and keep our eyes from wandering so that we can remain pure and devoted ([Exod 20:17; Matt 5:27-30](#)).

God has also charged us with stewardship over our nuclear and extended families. For example, we should care for our aging parents ([Exod 20:12; 1 Tim 5:8](#)). As God gives us the means and opportunity, we should provide for widows and orphans in our families rather than abdicating the responsibility to the church or others ([1 Tim 5:3-16](#)). This, however, doesn't mean we can't or shouldn't consider long-term care when appropriate and it constitutes the best avenue of care for a loved one! God has placed us in families and given us the responsibility to care for one another as an act of stewardship!

In what specific ways has God tasked you with being a steward of your family?

Question
3

In the workplace, God expects us to be good stewards of our duties, working diligently for our earthly bosses as a means to honor Him ([Eph 6:5-8](#)). We aren't just to look busy,



Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility.

Titus 2:6-7

but we are to be truly productive in the position with which God has blessed us. We should manage our time efficiently, making sure that we're prepared and focused. Within the church, God has also called us to train younger men and women just as we should our own children. Certainly, we should disciple younger believers in the basic doctrines or tenets

of the faith, but we should also mentor them in the ways to walk righteously. In the New Testament, Paul served as a mentor to both Timothy and Titus whom he also encouraged to instruct those in the church who are older to disciple those who are younger ([Titus 2:1-10](#)).

In addition to the stewardship of our relationships, God also desires us to be stewards of the environment. From the beginning, God has called us as stewards of His creation.

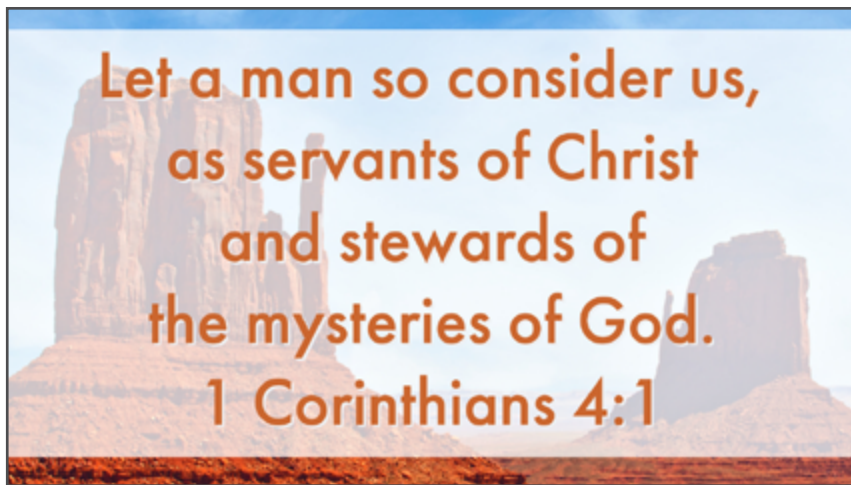
He put man in the garden to take care of it and keep it, giving him dominion over all the animals ([Gen 2:15](#)). In Deuteronomy, God has placed Israel in a land to take care of it and keep it, giving them abundant fields, vineyards, and orchards. As a result, we are to be good stewards of all the natural world that God has given us! This doesn't mean that we can't use the resources that God has given us like fossil fuels, animal products, and trees, but it does mean that we should use them responsibly. We can recycle when we have the opportunity. We can avoid waste by buying only what we will need or what we will use. We can use public transportation where available or park and go inside rather than wait in line at a drive-thru. Many practical ways can help us be good stewards of the beautiful world God has created for us to enjoy!

In what ways do you exercise good stewardship over the natural world in which God has placed us?

Question
4

Last week, we learned how God instructed Israel to put these words He has commanded them in their heart ([6:6](#)). To remember them and practice them requires dedication and good stewardship. Therefore, we must also be good stewards of the Word or doctrine which the Lord has disseminated to us as well as the ministry to which He has called. Although we'll address the concept of stewardship in ministry more fully in the last section which deals with our service, we must understand first that it is a gift of God's grace. As a result, we must utilize the spiritual gifts which He has endowed us to communicate the gospel and edify the church. Peter makes this clear when he states, "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good *stewards* of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen" ([1 Peter 4:10-11](#)).

Since any ministry should be based upon Scripture and conducted with the gospel in mind, we also ought to be good stewards of the message. Paul aptly writes, "But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts" (1 Thess 2:4). Therefore, we must remain faithful to the gospel, correctly interpreting it and applying it! We should hear what the Lord says and abide by His principles. It matters not what man says, but what the Word of the Lord says. And we must faithfully adhere to it. Consequently, we should maintain the purity of doctrine, not influenced by men's opinions, gossip, or desires. In



a world which obscures facts and considers truth as relative given one's position and penchants, we must defend the veracity and integrity of Scripture, continuing to communicate the truth of the gospel with everyone without deviating from what the Lord has emphatically stated.

Although we have focused primarily on other aspects of stewardship, we must dutifully expound on the text to include our possessions. The focus in this passage lies with the resources that God will give His people when they cross over the Jordan River and take possession of the Promised Land. The emphasis, in this instance however, lies not with tithing, but in remembering. They must remember the source of their blessings! They had earned none of these things nor did they deserve them—especially with all the complaining they had done after leaving Egypt—but God gave it all to them graciously even beyond what they could have imagined or expected! God gave them a bountiful land flowing with milk and honey where the grapes were so large that two men had to carry them on a pole between them.

God blessed Israel every step of the way since they had left Egypt! He had enriched them with much money and resources as Pharaoh begged them to leave after the death of every firstborn male. Scripture records, "Now the children of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, and they had asked from the Egyptians articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing." And the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they granted them what they requested. Thus they plundered the Egyptians" ([Exod 12:35-36](#)). But God's provision didn't stop there. He supplied manna and water to them in the midst of the barren, desolate region in which they traversed. He protected them from the Amalekites by making the sun stand still as they battled. When they crossed over into Canaan, God gave them well-fortified, **beautiful cities** in which to settle—not dilapidated slums!

What are the things in your house, in your life, and in your possession that remind you of God's provision and promises?

Question
5

This is a call for us to remember. As a part of stewardship, we must remember from whom our resources come. Israel had the propensity to **forget**—something which Moses knew well. Israel had a short-term memory. No sooner had they crossed the Jordan and begun to take possession of the land than the people started to become complacent. They failed to fully drive the inhabitants from the land of Canaan as the Lord had expressly commanded. This complacency eventually led to the people turning their hearts away from God. They forgot what He had done for them and they served the idols and gods of the nations that remained in the land. By the time we turn the pages from Joshua to Judges, we see all-out corruption and chaos as they had forsaken the Lord and each man had begun to do what was right in his own eyes ([Judg 17:6](#)).

When things go well, as humans we have the tendency to **forget** the source of our success and victory: God. We become comfortable and complacent and we **forget** who we represent. Just look at all the opportunities and riches with which we have been blessed as a nation and how people as a whole have turned from the Lord! May we as believers never become complacent. May we never **forget**. Let us represent the Lord and be a good steward of all with which He has blessed us.



Deuteronomy 6:13-15

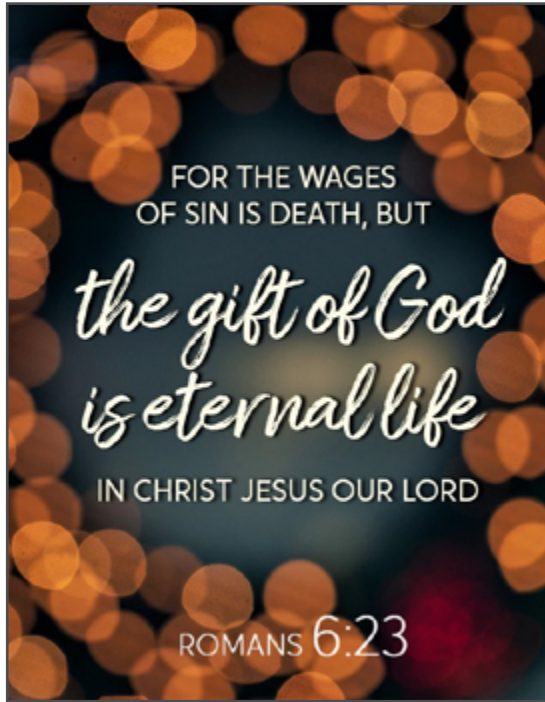
LOVE DEMONSTRATED THROUGH SERVICE:

Finally, we see that we demonstrate our love for the Lord through our service. Reminding the people by way of restating the first two commandments he had received on Mount Sinai, Moses directs them to **fear God** and **serve** Him alone (v. 13). As we have already seen in verse 5, at the heart of Israel's theology stands the call to serve God alone—the only one true and living God. Moses follows this command with another which expresses how they will **take oaths** in God's **name**. The third commandment clearly prohibits the misuse of God's name whether as a curse word or by swearing falsely ([Exod 20:7](#)). Taking an oath in this context, therefore, means declaring one's allegiance to God alone. The people aren't to swear general oaths

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in God's name which Jesus strictly condemns in the New Testament ([Matt 5:34-37](#)). Instead, here in Deuteronomy, they are swearing to serve the Lord alone—not any other god.

Because of the gravity of this command, the penalty for ignoring and transgressing it is stiff! If the people disobey and turn away from God, they will face the consequences—



namely, His wrath against their sin. Consequently, Moses warns them that God's **anger will be aroused against them and destroy them from the face of the earth** (v. 15). The penalty for rejecting a relationship with the Lord is death! Unfortunately, the people did experience the wrath of God in the coming days. He gave them over to a debased mind when they began to serve others gods, allowing them to bring ruination upon themselves because they no longer sought Him or abided by His ways. We need only examine the period of the Judges to observe Israel's folly and the destruction that it brought upon them—both from within and from without.

Although we should take this warning seriously, let's focus on the positive aspect of this passage—showing our love for the Lord through our worship and service. In this context, the verb **serve** is synonymous with worship. Our service constitutes an act of worship which we incorporate into every area of our lives at all times! Our service and worship reflect a lifestyle whereby we constantly include the Lord into all our decisions, our thoughts, our words, our actions, our relationships, and our different roles—as employers, employees, parents, children, spouses, friends, neighbors, citizens, etcetera. Worship isn't just coming once or twice a week to sit in a "service" at church—which the Bible does command us to participate in corporate worship ([Heb 10:25](#)). On the contrary, worship and service should define who we are whether doing chores around the house, working in the office, shopping for groceries, driving on the freeway, spending time with friends, or participating in hobbies.

How do you incorporate Christ into your everyday conversations and activities wherever you may be?

Question
6

Serving entails that we become an active part of the community, not compartmentalizing our lives or sitting as spectators, but giving ourselves as living sacrifices to fulfill the will of the Lord ([Rom 12:1-2](#)). God wants every one of His children to **serve** together in the trenches as His ambassadors, making His name known to the world. Certainly, we need people to serve on Sundays and Wednesdays as we gather as a community. We need people to serve in the media ministry, worship ministry, and Bible study ministry as teachers and facilitators. We need people to serve in the transportation ministry to bring people to church, to **serve** as administrators, to **serve** as deacons to help the staff focus on equipping the congregation to minister, to serve by planning and coordinating times of fellowship, to **serve** as greeters, to **serve** as watchmen, and the list continues infinitely.

However, we cannot focus only inwardly as serving within the physical walls of the church building without understanding the larger call to take Christ with us wherever we go so we can impact the world! In fact, we learned this principle last week where Moses told the people to write these commands on their hands, between their eyes, and in their homes. Let us take Christ with us wherever we are so that others may see Him in us ([Deut 6:8-9](#))! Every one of us has the responsibility to share the gospel, participate in missions, and invite people to church! With everything we do, we should seek to introduce people into a relationship with Christ and disciple others to do the same. Everything we do and say should have an evangelistic and missional component as we should reflect the righteousness of Christ in our lives! Visibly living for Christ and verbally sharing His plan communicated through Scripture within the church and in the secular community is an act of worship; it is our service to the Lord!

In what way do you use your roles and activities within the secular community to share Christ with others?

Question
7

When people do not have a close relationship with others, or perceive the world from a self-centered perspective, they tend not to value the things they receive. They often take them for granted and, in some cases, even abuse what they received. For those who have experience with rental properties or who have rented property at some point in life, we know well the legal documentation needed to protect the lender against both intentional and negligent damages of the lessee. Some people will selfishly take advantage of others because they don't care or value the relationship.

We can't afford to have this same approach with the Lord! God has graciously entrusted us with everything we see here on this earth. We owe it all to Him. As a result, we need to demonstrate our love for Him through the way we care for it and the way we use it to serve Him with all our being. As we conclude this series of lessons on Deuteronomy 6, I pray that you've learned as much as I have writing and preparing them. May we as a church take these principles to heart, never forgetting from whence our provision comes. Let us value our relationship with the Lord paid through the blood of His only begotten Son so that we may serve Him alone wherever we may go, whatever we may do, and whomever we may meet.

Incorporate

Who in the church has the Lord called you to mentor or disciple? How do you or have you walked together with them through life, teaching them the principles of the Lord?

In what ways do you use your roles in life (i.e, as a parent, relative, employee, participant in hobbies or extra-curricular activities) to serve Christ?

What is the danger of compartmentalizing our lives when it comes to our service? How are you always on mission for Christ? How is the importance of that mission reflected even in the mundane areas of your life, such as while doing errands?

February 27, 2022



Follow God's Plan for Love:
The Disposition Revealed
1 Thessalonians 5:14-15

Focal Verse:

"See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all."

1Thessalonians 5:15

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Introduce

Before any flight of the space shuttle, or any commercial or civilian aircraft for that matter, the astronauts along with NASA scientists and engineers cycle through a lengthy pre-flight checklist to detect any potential problems and certify everything is operational. To the uninitiated like me, and probably most of us reading this introduction save some of our aerospace engineers and pilots, it simply looks like the pressing of a bunch of buttons



and the toggling of numerous switches. But each of these actions has a specific purpose with a critical function—to ensure the vehicle is functioning properly as it was designed. Performing this routine checklist enables the astronauts the highest possible chance of having a successful flight!

Long before the countdown dwindles to the declaration decrying ignition, every inch of the aircraft has been inspected, every piece of mechanical equipment meticulously examined, every computer thoroughly tested, and every gauge closely monitored. If at any time something doesn't appear right, the launch is scrubbed and the maintenance crew called to isolate and fix the problem. Carelessness, inattention, and oversight can have catastrophic consequences. One minute malfunction, a hairline fracture, or a loose bolt can ruin the entire mission—and even worse lead to the destruction of the shuttle and the death of the astronauts.

After an accident or crash, teams of investigators and engineers always review the evidence to determine what went wrong. Sometimes they find design flaws in the aircraft that must be re-worked and corrected. At other times, they may find fatigue and stress coupled with the lack of routine maintenance may have contributed to the disaster. It could be something as seemingly insignificant as a missing heat-resistant tile that protects the shuttle during the superheating upon re-entry of the earth's atmosphere. On the other hand, it could be something internally wrong with part of the aircraft, like a frozen o-ring, which no one could see at the time. Such small problems as these could lead to major disaster necessitate all the more the importance

Introduce

of the mission checklist!

As believers, we must evaluate ourselves just as meticulously in preparation for the for the journey we face in life and the challenges the world continually hurls at us. Unlike human inventions, God designed us perfectly without any flaws. But we have chosen to corrupt His design and server our relationship with Him through sin. Fortunately, Christ is the perfect Master Mechanic who can restore our lives into a right relationship with the Father through His blood. Even though He has restored those of us who have accepted His sacrificial gift of salvation, our lives require constant monitoring while we still live physically here on earth. Before He calls us home and completely transforms us to His image, we must strive daily to imitate Him here on earth ([1 John 3:2](#)).

In [1 Thessalonians 5:14-15](#), Paul provides us with a checklist for evaluating our lives. Without specifically mentioning the word love, what Paul expounds upon in these two verses pictures three characteristics of what love truly entails. Accordingly, our love should seek restoration, edify or build others, and pursue righteousness. Therefore, let us evaluate ourselves both externally (what we do) and internally (our attitudes) so that Christ can remove any imperfections in our lives as we align ourselves with Him and conform to His image, particularly when it comes to our understanding of love.

Key
Question

What qualities or categories would appear on your checklist to determine if your love matches that of Christ?

1 Thessalonians 5:14a

A LOVE THAT RESTORES:

Even though the word love is not explicitly used in these verses, it stands sentinel behind every action that Paul describes. More importantly, Scripture elsewhere ties these concepts directly to love. First of all, we see these characteristics manifested in God Himself! In His love, God restores us through His Son ([1 John 3:16-17](#)), He also edifies us or produces maturity in us ([1 John 4:12, 17-18](#)), and He Himself is holy and righteous ([Psalm 11:4; 145:17; 1 Peter 1:16](#)). Second, we see in numerous places, including here in 1 Thessalonians, that God expects His people to practice these same principles which constitute acts of love. In fact, Paul outlines many of these same ideas in his catalog of love in [1 Corinthians 13](#)—albeit with slightly different wording. Therefore, based upon Scripture’s clarion call to love, we can say that true love restores, edifies, and produces righteousness—even though the word is not mentioned directly here.

Our love for God which we express through our obedience as well as our love for others should motive how we live, how we respond to life’s circumstances and challenges, and how we interact with those around us. Love, for example, compels us to **warn** the

unruly (v. 14a). Most modern translations interpret this Greek word as “idle” ([NIV](#), [ESV](#), [CSB](#)), “lazy” ([NLT](#)), or “undisciplined” ([NET](#)). The word, however, has a military background in which it refers to a person out of step with the company or unit with which he is marching. It can also refer to total disorder in the platoon when melee occurs in which everyone does his own



thing in battle. In this sense, the context of 1 Thessalonians speaks of a person who has lost sight of his calling in Christ and fails to understand the importance of his or her contribution to the community—that is the church.

Instruct

Therefore, the word can picture “unruliness” in terms of engaging in sinful activities or “idleness” and “laziness” in the sense of not participating in the God-given tasks to the church. In either case, Paul tells us to **warn** those out of step with God’s directives—whether they are practicing things they shouldn’t or not participating in the things that they should. We must use discernment and exercise great care to base any evaluation and subsequent warning upon Scripture rather than our opinions and preferences. God hasn’t created us to journey through life alone, but has placed us in a community for that reason—to help one another stay focused and spur one another to maturity in Christ.

When we see a brother or sister clearly out of step with Scripture, God has imbued us with the responsibility to correct them lovingly ([Matt 18:15-20](#)) and to seek to restore them ([Gal 6:1](#)). In a marching band, a drum major has the important task of keeping everyone in time and on the same tempo. A musician not focused on the drum major can easily become distracted and out of step which affects the entire band! If unfocused and out of step, it affects the quality of the music in which some parts lag behind the others and it affects the visual presentation of the marching formations, making them slightly off kilter. The same applies with us to Christ who orchestrates relationships and ministries within the church. We must keep our eyes focused on Him so He can direct us collectively and we can all remain in step according to His purpose.

How would you evaluate your synchrony within the church? Are you in step with Christ and His directives?

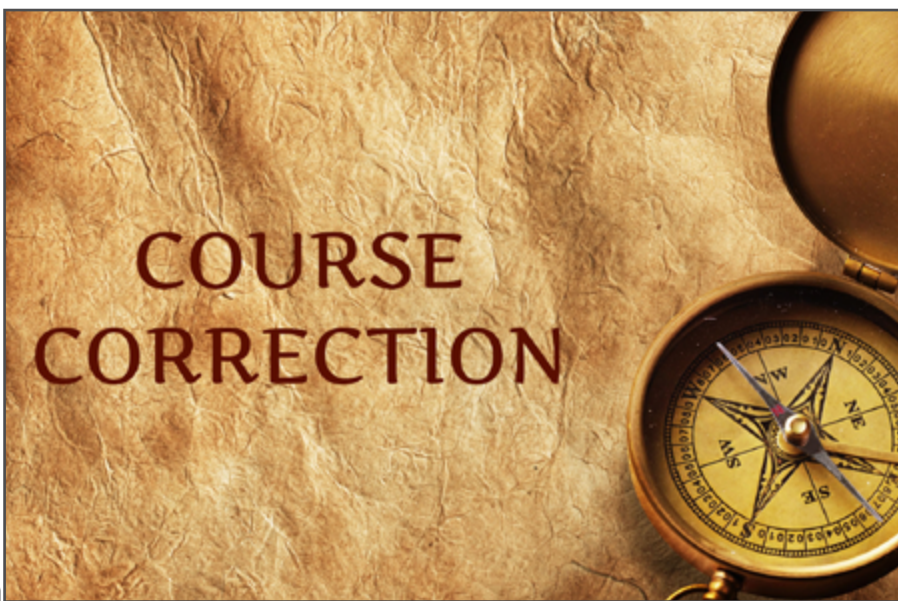
Question
1

Although the term **unruly** or idle is definitely used in a negative sense, it really remains neutral as to whether it addresses sins of commission (what we do) or omission (what we don’t do, but should). Both churches in the New Testament and individual believers, like Paul himself, struggled with both areas ([Rom 7:19](#))! Many times, God had to correct churches or individuals for practicing sin—just like He did Israel in the Old Testament. For instance, God condemned and offered directives for correction to churches for the practice of sexual immorality of all kinds, fomenting divisions, participating in unfruitful conversations (coarse joking and gossip), idolatry in forsaking their first love, and the dissemination of doctrinal errors to name a few areas. Any practice which does not adhere to Scripture and is out of step with God’s directives requires a course correction

which produces restoration that leads to changes.

In the same way, those who aren't doing what the Lord has prescribed require the same course correction as those participating in prohibited activities. Idleness and

laziness can promote inactivity in the church where people become spectators instead of participants as God has instituted. Having studied God's call to serve Him as an act of worship last week, let's begin there. For those who have become distracted to God's purpose for the church, serving may become optional only when



they feel they have time rather than the center of everything they do! Such individuals may serve only when it's "convenient" or it fits their schedule. Even worse, they may begin regarding serving as someone else's responsibility rather than our collective privilege performed together as God's people or they may even view their tithe as their only act of service.

Over the past two years, idleness has dramatically increased among believers in attending church and corporate Bible study. Scripture clearly urges us to meet regularly and not abandon gathering in person ([Heb 10:25](#)). Although we always want to exercise responsibility in safeguarding our health and that of others which may require that we stay home and join online from time to time when sick, we need to make gathering corporately as a community a priority. However, many now use current events as an excuse to re-arrange their lives to promote other things they deem more important. Finding it more convenient to roll out of bed and watch from home because we stayed up late, have plans later in the day, or didn't want to spend the time to get ready are not legitimate excuses. It's laziness.

Apart from taking vacations and needed time to recuperate periodically, using Sundays to travel or take day trips constantly can hinder growth and fellowship through the church. If we can eat in restaurants, shop in grocery stores, and attend public events in which we have investment or interest, we can attend church regularly. For those of us who know people who fall into this category, we must lovingly and persistently **warn** them, encouraging them to practice what Scripture says. For those of us who practice

Instruct

these things, may we continue to enjoy the benefits of the community in which God has placed us!

What is the danger of forsaking assembling together? How have you seen these effects on our society? How can you or have you encouraged others to remain faithful in meeting corporately?

Question
2

When we forsake meeting together corporately, we always fill our lives with something



else. None of us truly sits there idle! The same happens when we don't make prayer and Bible study a priority. Instead of filling our minds and hearts with the knowledge of Scripture, we fill them with other things—which most likely come from the secular world around us. The danger, therefore, lies not just in the fact that we don't do them, whether

meeting together, praying, or reading Scripture, but also in what we replace them with. Allowing our hearts and minds to become influenced by the world around us can lead us to become slack in other areas such as witnessing or sharing the gospel, discipling or mentoring, or giving. As a church whom God has knit together perfectly in Christ, may we **warn** the **unruly** or idle in love, so that we can all be in step with Him working together harmoniously for the purpose to which He has called us as His people.

1 Thessalonians 5:14b-c

A LOVE THAT EDIFIES:

In addition to seeking restoration so we might all walk in step with God's directives, love also edifies or builds relationships within the community that point to Him. Therefore, it should compel us to encourage those who are disheartened and aid those who are **weak**. As a result, Paul charges us to **comfort the fainthearted** and **uphold the weak** (v. 14b). At times, we will all become discouraged or depressed by the stress

and strain that life places upon us. We need someone to remind us of the hope and life we have in Christ. That's why God has placed us in a family—both a nuclear family as well as that of the church! Therein we have people to encourage us and prod us to remain on course when life gets tough.

If the pandemic has taught us one thing, it is how much we need the stability of the Lord in our lives daily and how much we need fellow believers to strengthen and encourage us. Although we have many modern technological devices to keep us connected, we still experience isolation and loneliness. To cope with that isolation and stress, people have turned to everything but the Lord. As we have just learned about idleness, if we fail to fill our lives with Christ and His Word, we will fill them with something else! Verifiable studies show an increase in alcohol and substance use over the last two years.* This has only served to exacerbate loneliness and depression which has caused a whole host of other dysfunction and issues in our communities. God, however, has created us to live within a community and tasked us with encouraging one another and helping the **weak** by pointing them to Him.

In-Depth Information



A cursory search on the Internet will yield hundreds of articles on alcohol and substance abuse during the pandemic. Here is a sample of reputable articles with which to begin. Grace Hauck, "[Americans are Using Alcohol to Cop with Pandemic Stress: Nearly 1 in 5 Report 'Heavy Drinking,'](#)" USA Today (Sept 22, 2021); Baptist Health South Florida, "[Survey: Alcohol and Drug Use Increase during COVID-19 Pandemic,](#)" (Sept 10, 2020); and Ashley Abramson, "[Substance Abuse during the Pandemic,](#)" American Psychological Association (March 1, 2021).

First and foremost, we need to look to Christ for the strength to cope. But we also need others in Christ to walk alongside of us and encourage us. We can't do that if we're isolated and withdrawn! As much as we need others to reach out and connect with us, we also must be willing to reach out and connect with others. It's a two-way street as is any relationship. Let's cultivate a spirit of comradery in which we experience life together in Christ. God has allowed us to encounter difficult situations in our lives and experience different kinds of heartaches and hardships so that we can use our experiences to walk alongside others facing similar difficulties. Yet, God has also allowed us to experience the elation of victory and the celebration of triumph at points in our lives as well. We also need others to share in these times so that we might rejoice

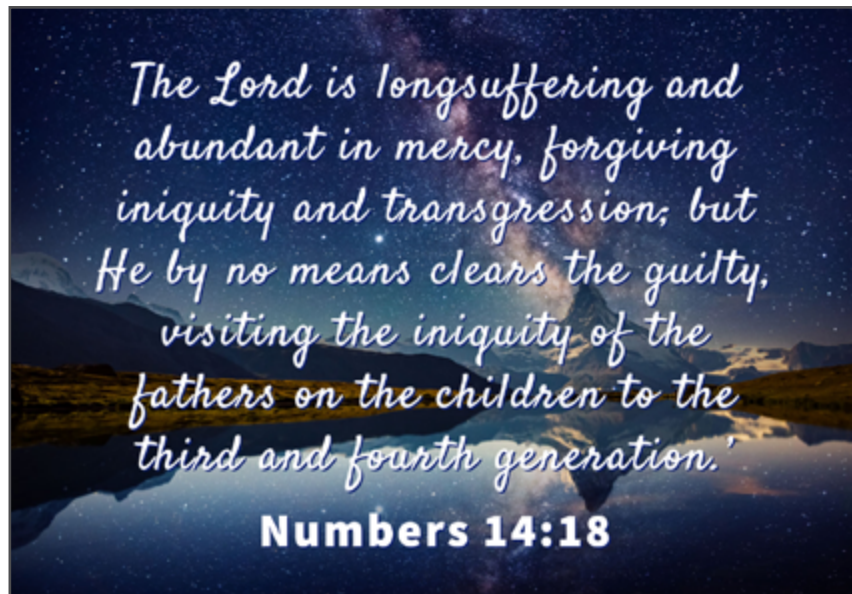
Instruct

together. Scripture pictures this aspect of the church best: “And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it” ([1 Cor 12:26](#)).

Do you encourage more than you complain?
How do you point to Christ when you encourage others?

Question
3

Furthermore, love compels us to exercise patience. Therefore, Paul exhorts us to **be patient with all** (v. 14c). This is actually the first characteristic of love listed in 1 Corinthians: “Love suffers long (i.e., **patient**) and is kind” ([1 Cor 13:4](#)). We display



patience in a variety of ways just as Christ demonstrates patience with us! Hence, we most often equate patience with restrained irritation over what someone does either to us or in our presence. We have such expression as, “You’re trying my patience or my patience is wearing thin,” that describe how we refrain from outbursts of anger and fits of rage. To exercise

patience, we must be willing to forgive **all** unconditionally no matter what they have done. Indeed, the Bible frequently reminds us to forgive others limitlessly ([Matt 18:21-22](#)) and to forgive others just as Christ has forgiven us ([Eph 4:32](#))—a display of great patience.

Consequently, we must have patience when people make mistakes—even repeatedly. Patience, however, doesn’t mean we adopt the world’s view of tolerance or that we don’t speak against sin when we clearly see someone contradicting Scripture. We should never tolerate sin. God, for instance, is patient with us when we sin; He gives us numerous chances to repent. His restraint to wrath demonstrates His grace and love for us, desiring that we come to repentance ([2 Peter 3:9](#)). While God is slow to evoke His anger, He never tolerates sin and has clearly warned about its consequences. Thus, to follow the pattern God has set for us means that we patiently point others to Christ

and His Word, seeking to lead them to repentance. We must never deviate from this purpose!

How has Christ displayed patience with you?
How do you use that to remind yourself to show
patience to others?

Question
4

Moreover, patience requires us to teach persistently, reminding others of what God has stated in Scripture—even if they continue making the same mistakes or fail to understand. Almost any teacher would agree that it takes patience to teach students. Most students don't grasp a concept immediately. It takes repetition and practice for them to understand. Jesus' interaction with His disciples proves this! As a Teacher *par excellence*, Jesus' students (i.e., the disciples) often failed to understand what He was teaching. At times, they asked follow-up questions ([Luke 8:1-15](#)) while at other times their actions and responses betrayed their lack of understanding ([Matt 16:21-23](#)). Although He expressed disappointment with Philip at the Last Supper because he had failed to understand His unique relationship with the Father after spending nearly three years under His tutelage, Jesus still took time to explain ([John 14:7-11](#))! After His resurrection, Jesus still had to correct their understanding of the kingdom as the book of Acts opens ([Acts 1:1-8](#))!

Likewise, we must have patience when we teach. If we look at the immediate circumstances rather than envision the final goal, we will become frustrated and distraught because we will mainly see failure. Teaching requires patience in the form of repetition and explanation.

But it also requires us to listen and not just talk! For us to teach effectively, we must listen to ascertain what others know and understand. Therefore, we must tailor the instruction to build upon what they know! As God, Jesus knew what was in the heart of man, so He tailored His instruction to what they needed.



Most importantly, He listened. He took time to answer their questions and correct their wayward actions. Let's not grow weary in doing good nor teaching others to do good

Instruct

according to Scripture—whether we think they are heeding our instruction or not. Above all, patience means that we lay aside our own preferences and opinions (not biblical truths) for the sake of unity in the church. We must remind ourselves that we should look at things from Christ’s perspective according to Scripture. In this case, patience isn’t waiting for others to see things our way. Instead, we must patiently wait for others to see things God’s way ([Phil 3:15](#)). We must exercise patience with everyone as we seek to conform ourselves to the pattern of Christ. Perhaps, this is the area in which we all have the most difficulty. Our society teaches us to view things from a consumerist mindset in which we have the right to get things our way. The greatest amount of conflict in any relationship comes when we put ourselves and our priorities first rather than Christ. We must remember life should not be centered around us. It’s not about us; it’s about Christ! Adopting this mindset requires patience as we wait for Christ to complete His good work in us, transforming us wholly into His perfect image ([Phil 1:6](#); [1 John 3:2](#))

In what ways does the process of sanctification (i.e., becoming more like Christ) require patience?

Question
5

1 Thessalonians 5:15

A LOVE THAT PURSUES RIGHTEOUSNESS:

The love of Christ should also compel us to **pursue** righteousness. In verse 15, Paul defines the righteousness we ought to display by imploring us not to retaliate against others for the wrongs committed against us. Instead of rendering or repaying **evil for evil**, we should **pursue what is good both for ourselves and for all**. As a result, we should never seek revenge, but follow the biblical plan for receiving restitution and justice. This should lead us to forgive and allow the Lord to deal with the wrong perpetrated against us ([Rom 12:17-21](#)).

In this world, we will experience injustice. Just as they did to Jesus Himself, people will commit **evil** against us. We cannot control what other people do, but we can control how we choose to respond. Paul begins by instructing us to **pursue good for ourselves** in these situations. Four principles come to mind which will help us to respond wisely during these times. First, always act with integrity—never stray from what Scripture says. Anger, rage, and retaliation exacerbate the situation; they never change the

results or make one feel any better. We ought to heed James' advice in 1:19-20: "So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." What does hurling projectiles at a referee after a perceived bad call in a football game do? It only causes more problems and changes nothing. It can, and should, in the very least result in a fine or an arrest since



throwing objects has the potential to afflict physical harm on the referee and players. It does absolutely nothing to change the outcome of the game!

Second, we **pursue good for** ourselves by not dwelling upon the **evil** perpetrated against us. Dwelling upon it only prolongs the situation and can cause the development of unhealthy habits. Physically, it leads to stress which creates a whole host of adverse effects upon the body. The adage "it makes my blood boil" literally proves true in the form of high blood pressure and strain on the heart. Not only does harboring hatred and pondering revenge prove detrimental to our physical health, but it can also harm our mental and social health. It can lead to emotional problems like depression or even fits of rage in which one lashes out at others not even involved in the situation. As a result, revenge consumes our thoughts which can inhibit us from thinking clearly and making reasonable, rational decisions. It can increase the mistakes that we make on our jobs or while doing other everyday activities because we have allowed our minds to become preoccupied.

Third, we must actively forgive and move forward by trusting the Lord to deal with the situation. Consequently, we must not only pray for our "enemies" ([Matt 5:44](#)), but also for ourselves so that we will stay focused on Christ and imitate Him. Because we will never actually "forget" the **evil** done to us, we need Christ to help us overcome and maintain the right perspective which is opposite our natural, fleshly tendencies. Finally, we must also take steps to protect ourselves from the situation happening again. We must apply the wisdom God has shown us while going through the difficulty. If possible, we should try to avoid finding ourselves in the same situation repeatedly. If someone were to hack one of our accounts, for example, would it be wise

Instruct

to do nothing? Most of us would immediately take steps to prevent it by changing our password and calling the company with which we do business. This same model can apply when someone wrongs us in life. We should forgive and continue to love them, but we should take biblical steps to protect ourselves intentionally and ensure we don't find ourselves in the exact same situation again.

When someone has wronged you, how have you pursued good for yourself according to biblical principles? What did God teach you through that situation?

Question
6

Just as we are to **pursue good** for ourselves, we are to **pursue good** for others. We should continue treating others kindly and with respect no matter what they do to us. Contrary to the world's thinking, respect and dignity are not earned. We should treat everyone who is created in God's image with respect and dignity! As a result, treating others in this manner is for their **good** so that it might lead them to repentance and right relationship with Christ. What better thing could we **pursue** than acting in such a way that points and leads someone to Christ? What better thing could we do for them than to introduce them into a relationship with the One who can change their lives and give them eternal life? Above all, the disposition others see in us should be the love of Christ that restores, edifies or builds, and pursues righteousness.

Inspire

As we have gone through this brief checklist on love this week from [1 Thessalonians 5:14-15](#), hopefully we have found all systems are in order and we are safely on course in our imitation of Christ. As carefully as all involved with the launch of the space shuttle check every detail before ignition, may we be as thorough in the examination of our lives. If, as we have scrutinized our actions, our thoughts, and our attitudes, we have found even a small area amiss, may we turn to the Master Mechanic who can overhaul our lives so that we more closely reflect His disposition. May our love in Christ seek to restore others, edify believers in His body through encouragement, comfort, and patience, and pursue righteousness at all times even when people commit evil against us. Therefore, may others see the love of Christ in us in these ways.

Incorporate

Who do you know that might need a gentle warning and a reminder of what Scripture says as applied in their lives? How have you reached out to them? How have you helped to restore them according to Scripture?

Who do you personally know that needs encouragement or comfort right now? How have you reached out to them?

When someone has wronged you in the past, how did you respond? How did you pursue good for them? How did that pursuit affect the situation?

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FOR MORE INFORMATION
OR FOR QUESTIONS
PLEASE CONTACT
MIKENEAL@FBCFW.ORG

INTERACTIVE PDF AVAILABLE ONLINE AT
CURRICULUM.FBCFW.ORG

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5001 NE LOOP 820 • FORT WORTH, TX • 76137
(817) 485-7711 • INFO@FBCFW.ORG