



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JULY 22 2023

Scripture Story: Deuteronomy 4–6; 28.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets (or Beginning of the End)*, chapter 42.

law and love revisited

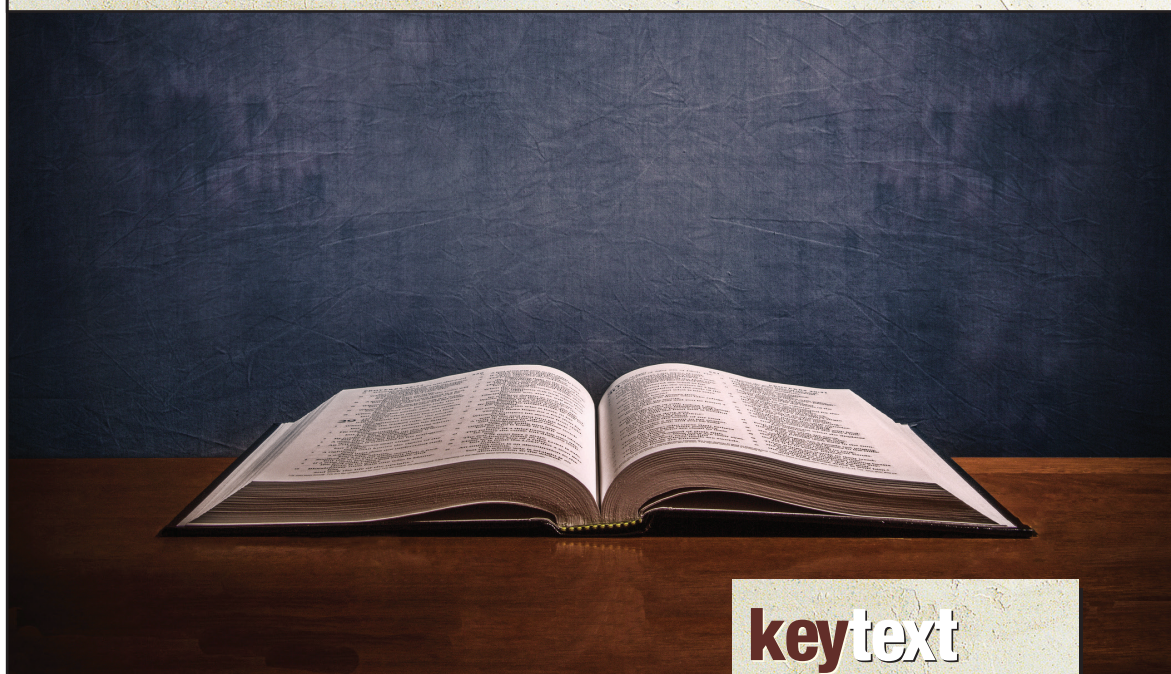


Photo © Thinkstock 2023

flashlight

“After the public rehearsal of the law, Moses completed the work of writing all the laws, the statutes, and the judgments which God had given him, and all the regulations concerning the sacrificial system. . . . Still the great leader was filled with fear that the people would depart from God. In a most sublime and thrilling address he set before them the blessings that would be theirs on condition of obedience, and the curses that would follow upon transgression” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 466).

keytext

“Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.”

(Deuteronomy 7:9, NIV)

what do you think?

What do you think? Write your opinion next to each statement: A (Agree), NS (Not sure), D (Disagree). Explain your answers.

- If I keep God's commandments I will experience optimal happiness.
- Nobody can perfectly obey God's law.
- There is no absolute standard of right and wrong.
- All teenagers know the difference between right and wrong.
- The Bible can be a helpful guide when facing a difficult decision.
- As long as we do our best to obey God's law, we're assured of going to heaven.
- Females are better at keeping God's law than are males.

did you know?

The Hebrew term for "law" is *tôrâh*; this often refers to the first five books of the Hebrew Scripture and includes the idea of "direction" and "instruction." According to Jewish tradition, there are 613 laws contained in the *tôrâh*—365 negative commands and 248 positive commands. There were various

types of laws such as moral, ceremonial, civil, and health laws. When studying the Bible today, it is important to distinguish (by carefully looking at the context of the passage) what type of law is being referred to. In ancient Israel, however, all the laws were considered to be commands from God. Thus, the Jews of old did not distinguish between the various kinds of laws and held every law to be sacred.

—Siegfried H. Horn, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald® Publishing, 1979), p. 660.

INTO THE STORY

"Now, Israel, hear the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you."

"You were shown these things so that you might know that the LORD is God; besides him there is no other."

"Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other. Keep his decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may

live long in the land the LORD your God gives you for all time."

"Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts."

"If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come on you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God: You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country."

"However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come on you and overtake you:

"You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country. . . . You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out."

(Deuteronomy 4:1, 2, 35, 39, 40; 6:5, 6; 28:1-3, 15, 19, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Circle the words that highlight the sovereignty of God.

Underline the commands of God.

Read Deuteronomy 28:1-14 and list some of the blessings that God promises will be the result of obeying His commands:

Now add to that list of blessings any other benefits that you have discovered as a result of obeying God's commands:

Read Deuteronomy 28:15-68 and list some of the curses that God says will be the result of disobeying His commands:

Now add to that list other negative consequences that you have discovered from disobeying God's commands:

Read Matthew 22:37-40. How does seeing God's commands that way help explain the idea of blessings and cursings?

punch lines

"So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good" (Romans 7:12, NIV).

"If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right" (James 2:8, NIV).

"Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?'

Jesus replied: ' "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments' " (Matthew 22:34-40, NIV).

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (Matthew 5:17, 18, NIV).

further insight

"True obedience is the out-working of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer."

—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 97.

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Matthew 22:37-40.

Reflect on the words of Jesus in Matthew 22:37-40: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (NIV).

Review your answers in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. Does Jesus' statement about the law change any of the opinions you expressed in that exercise?

Sunday

Read Deuteronomy 7:9.

So often the law is seen as something negative. However, this is clearly an absurd notion. Try to imagine a world devoid of laws. What would it be like? The *Key Text* reminds us of God's faithfulness. Reflect on the virtue of faithfulness. Who is your most faithful friend?

After reading the *Into the Story* excerpts, write a psalm of praise thanking God for the blessings and benefits of keeping His laws.

Monday

Read Deuteronomy 4:35.

How would your closest friends rate your faithfulness factor? How can you be more like God in this area?

The *Key Text* also references a "covenant of love" that God makes with us. How would you define this covenant? In what ways has God kept this covenant with you? How might you live out this covenant with your friends and family members?

Tuesday

Read Deuteronomy 30:15-18.

Ellen White mentions that Moses "was filled with fear that the people would depart from God." Thus, he tried to communicate clearly both the benefits of following God and the pain of disobeying Him. Moses set before the Israelites "the blessings that would be theirs on condition of obedience, and the curses that would follow upon transgression" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 466).

Identify from Moses' life those experiences through which he learned about the blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience. What can we learn from the experience of Moses?

Wednesday

Based on the texts listed in *Punch Lines*, would you say the picture of the law in Scripture is generally positive or negative? Explain your answer.

Thursday

Read Proverbs 3:5.

Every day you are bombarded with countless decisions. Some of these decisions could impact your life in significant ways ("Will I experiment with drugs?"); other decisions seem much more menial ("Should I wear my blue shirt or my red one?"). In the end, your life will simply be the sum total of these decisions. So what will you base your decisions on? A hunch? Your parents' advice? A book? Obviously there are many options.

Suppose now that you committed to making all your decisions—big and small—consistent

with the laws of God. How might you benefit? Is there any downside to building one's life on the teachings of God?

Make this a matter of prayer and start experimenting with the idea that every decision should reflect the will of God.

Friday

Read Deuteronomy 30:19, 20.

Write a modern paraphrase of this closing challenge that Moses put before the Israelites: "This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Deuteronomy 30:19, 20, NIV).

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 42.

**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URiHf1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.