

LIVING THE WORD—Week 6 (Sun., March 1 – Sat., March 7)

The God of the Mighty Acts: the Great Story of God’s Relentless Love

The Exodus (Part 2)—God Gives the Law at Mount Sinai

Deuteronomy 5-6; 10:12-22; 30:11-20; Psalm 19

Key Verse: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

In the story of God bringing Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land, one of the most significant events is the encounter with God at Mt. Sinai. God enters into a covenant with his people and gives them the “Law of Moses.” A covenant is a treaty, in this case made between God and Israel. God sets the terms of his covenant, and the terms are not negotiable. Israel has nothing with which to negotiate. God offers the covenant out of his merciful love, and their choice is to accept the covenant or reject it. If they keep the terms (i.e., keep God’s commandments), they get to enjoy life in the Promised Land. If they reject God’s covenant, they reject a relationship with the God of merciful love, and will face expulsion from the land.

We often use the word “Law” to refer to God’s commandments. But this is probably not the best choice of words. The Hebrew word usually translated “law” is *torah*. It comes from the root verb *yarah*, meaning “teach” or “instruct.” Another noun from this root is *moreh*, meaning “teacher.” The Torah was God’s instructions for Israel’s life and morality and faith and religion. It taught them the will of God by which they could enjoy life in the Promised Land.

We sometimes have a negative view of the Law because of some of Paul’s comments in his letters. But Paul was combating Pharisees who were pressing their legalistic brand of Judaism on Gentiles. Moses and the Psalms speak very positively about God’s law. Moses tells Israel that no other nation has such righteous decrees as the law (*torah*) he is giving them (Deut. 9:8), and that the law is for their good (Deut. 10:13). The Psalmist praises the law as trustworthy and radiant, a source of revival and wisdom and joy, more precious than gold and sweeter than honey (Psalm 19:7-13). The longest chapter in the Bible is a long praise of God’s law (Psalm 119). And those who delight in God’s law and meditate on it day and night are blessed (Psalm 1).

According to Jesus, the greatest of all the commands is the instruction to love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind. What could be more precious than the command to love the God who abounds in merciful love?

Next Week: Kingdom (1 Samuel 13:13-14; 2 Samuel 7:8-29; 1 Kings 8:14-9:9; Psalm 23; 89)

Memory Verse (for Weeks 6-8): Deuteronomy 6:4-5

On the Mountain (“*Love God*”—set aside 30 minutes this week for quiet time with God)

1. Find a time when you can sit alone and uninterrupted. Read Psalm 1 and 19. Spend a few moments preparing your heart to meditate on God’s law. Pray Psalm 19:14 several times.
2. Commit Deuteronomy 6:4-5 to memory (if you already know it, say it a few times).
3. Slowly read the Ten Commandments (Deut. 5:6-21), meditating on each one. Consider which one may be speaking God’s will for your life this week.
4. Pray that you will do what God has commanded.

In the Gathering (“*Love Each Other*”—discuss with your home church or small group)

1. Why do you think so many Christians have a negative view of the Law? Have you shared the perspective of the Psalmist in Psalm 19:7-13? Why or why not?
2. Deut. 6:5 says to love God with all your heart and soul, and Deut. 10:12 says to serve him with all your heart and soul. How are those two related? What does “love God with all your strength” mean?
3. Moses told Israel that God’s Law was not too difficult; it was in their mouths and hearts so they could obey it (Deut. 30:11-14). What does that mean? How can a law written on tablets of stone be in our hearts and our mouths?
4. When Jesus is tempted in the wilderness, he quotes the book of Deuteronomy three times (8:3; 6:13, 16). Why do you think he turned to this book? What does this say about Jesus’ own attitude toward the Law?
5. If there is time, discuss the “In the World” section below.
6. Do you have anything to share from your time with God, your family, or in the world?
7. Pray together that we would love and serve God with all our heart and soul and strength.

Around the Table (“*Love Your Family*”—sit at home and talk together as a family)

1. Talk about what school would be like if there were no rules in the classroom, no rules in the halls, no rules in the cafeteria, no rules on the playground. What would streets and highways be like with no rules?
2. Does your family have rules? Why?
3. What would it be like if no one kept the 10 commandments? Talk about whether rules are good for us and why God gave us his commandments.

Into the World (“*Love the World*”—prayerfully consider God’s mission for us in his world)

1. How is God described in Deut. 10:17-19?
2. What does this say about what we should do and be?
3. What does this suggest about what rulers and governments should do? God judged rulers in Israel on the basis of these criteria. Should rulers in democratic nations be held accountable to the same standards?
4. Look for an opportunity this week to act like God acts.