

The Law as Teacher



SABBATH—OCTOBER 10

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Deuteronomy 31:9–13; Deuteronomy 31:14–27; Joshua 1:7, 8; Luke 2:51, 52.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and strength’ ” (Deuteronomy 6:5, ICB).



The law shows us the way of life. The way of life is found only in Jesus.

PAUL WARNS THE GALATIANS about trying to earn God's favor by their good behavior. Paul writes: “Does this mean that the law works against [changes] God's promises? Of course not. The law was never God's way of giving new life to people. If it were, then we could be made right with God by following the law” (Galatians 3:21, ERV). Of course, if any law can “give life,” then God's law is the only law that can. But Paul says that God's law cannot give life to sinners. Why? “The Scriptures [the Bible] put the whole world [all the people on the earth] in prison under the control of sin, so that the only way for people to get what God promised would [will] be through [by] faith in Jesus Christ. It is given to those who believe in him” (Galatians 3:22, ERV).

But if the law cannot give life to sinners, what good is it? True, the law shows us our need of God's forgiveness and mercy. But does the law only show us our sins?

No. The law also shows us the way of life. The way of life is found only in Jesus. True education should show us our need for God's forgiveness and mercy. True education also should show us why we must obey Jesus. This week, we will study the part that God's law has in Christian education. As we study, let us see what the law can teach us about faith, mercy, and God's love for sinners.

TO LOVE AND TO FEAR GOD (Deuteronomy 31:9–13)

In Deuteronomy, Moses records his last words to Israel before they go into the Promised Land. But before they do, Moses has some clear words and lessons for God's people.

Read Deuteronomy 31:9–13. What does it mean in these verses to “fear” the Lord?

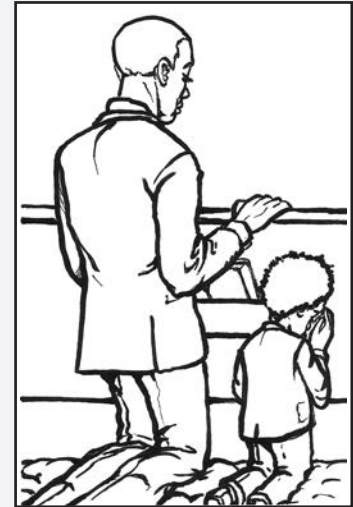
God did not want His people to forget His law. So, He gave them many ways to remember this law. This proves that God is a patient Teacher. God teaches the same lesson again and again. He also sends His prophets, or special messengers, to teach His people. God gives His prophets special messages to share with Israel. Much of the Old Testament is about God trying to teach His people to follow the right way of life.

Do you see in Deuteronomy 31:9–13 how Moses says that Israel's future children must learn the law? Moses says this education has two parts. First, the children will **hear** the law. Then they will “ ‘learn to **fear** [respect] the Lord your God’ ” (Deuteronomy 31:13, NLV).

First, the children listen and learn God's Word. Then they learn to fear, or respect, God. So, we can understand that respect for God must be learned. Moses hints in these verses that knowledge and respect are things we learn over time. Just because we learn about God does not mean we will respect Him. We must learn respect for God.

Also, what does “fear God” mean when Moses tells the people to “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and strength’ ” (Deuteronomy 6:5, ICB)? Maybe the best way to explain what “fear God” means here is to compare it to the way a child loves and fears a good father. The father shows his love and care by saying what he means and meaning what he says. When the child does wrong, the father punishes the child. Yes, we can, and must, love and fear God at the same time. They are not two different ideas. The more we learn about God, the more we love Him because He is good. At the same time, the more we learn about God, the more we fear, or respect, Him. Why? Because we see God is worthy of our fear, or respect. He is holy. We are sinners. Because of God's love and mercy, we are not destroyed.

How is it possible to love and fear God at the same time?



The more we learn about God, the more we fear, or respect, Him.

A WITNESS AGAINST YOU (Deuteronomy 31:14–27)

Moses knows he will die soon. After his death, the Israelites will go into the Promised Land in Canaan. Moses also knows that the Israelites will turn away from God in their hearts soon after they start living in Canaan.

Read Deuteronomy 31:14–27. What does Moses do before he dies? What was Moses worried about? How does he take care of the problem in these verses?

Moses acts the same as a teacher who gets ready for the substitute teacher who will take his job. Moses knows that his “students” have not behaved in class. He is not foolish enough to believe that God’s people will not sin when he is gone. So, Moses orders the Levites to put the Book of the Law next to the ark. Then the book will become a “witness.” A witness is a living person. In what way is the Book of the Law a witness? When Moses says “witness,” he talks about the Book of the Law as if it is a person. So, the Book of the Law is a witness to God’s people about the evil that is in their hearts.

The law acts as a “witness against” the Israelites (Deuteronomy 31:26, ERV). How does the law show us that we need God’s grace? Grace is God’s gift of mercy, forgiveness, and power over sin. What does Romans 3:19–23 tell us?



Moses talks about the Book of the Law as if it were a living person who can show men the evil in their hearts.

In Deuteronomy 31:19 (NIRV), God tells Moses, “I want you to write down a song and teach it to the Israelites. Have them sing it. It will be my witness against them.” Here we see that the Bible talks about this song the same way that it talked about the Book of the Law. God says that the song is the same as a witness. In the same way, the Book of the Law is a witness. So, both the song and the Book of the Law teach us the same as living persons teach us. This song can help people see what is wrong in their hearts.

We should want to obey God’s law with all the strength God gives us. How does God’s law act as a “witness against” us? What does this witness teach us about our need of the Good News about Jesus in our lives?

**YOU WILL HAVE SUCCESS IN EVERYTHING YOU DO
(Joshua 1:7, 8)**

The Bible tells us about the good things that will happen when we know and obey God's law.

Read Joshua 1:7, 8. What does the Lord say to Joshua in these verses? Why are the rules in these verses important for our lives today?

The Lord tells Joshua as he goes into Canaan: “ ‘Be strong and brave. Be sure to obey all the teachings my servant Moses gave you. If you follow them exactly, you will be successful [have success] in everything you do’ ” (Joshua 1:7, ICB).

The Bible says that success comes from our obedience. This idea is different from what most people today think about success. Many people today believe that success comes from hard work, new ideas, and a lot of skill. You must take risks in many jobs to be a big success.

But in God's eyes, success is something different.

Read Revelation 12:17; Revelation 14:12; Romans 1:5; Romans 16:26; and James 2:10–12. What are these verses saying to us today about why we must obey God's law? True, we are not saved by God's law. But why is it important that we keep it anyway?

As Christians, we believe in the Bible. The Bible commands us to obey God's law. Breaking God's law can lead only to pain, suffering, and everlasting death. Each one of us has felt the pain that comes from sinning and breaking God's law. God promises His people Israel during Bible times that they will have success if they follow His law. It is the same for us today. God's law is the center of Christian education. God's law shows us how to live with faith and trust in God's grace. Grace, as we know, is God's gift of mercy, forgiveness, and power over sin.

How has sin caused you suffering and pain? What have you learned from your experience that you can share with people so that they will not make the same mistakes?



Who has not felt the pain that comes from sinning and breaking God's law?

LIVING ON AN EARTH RUINED BY SIN (2 Chronicles 31:20, 21)

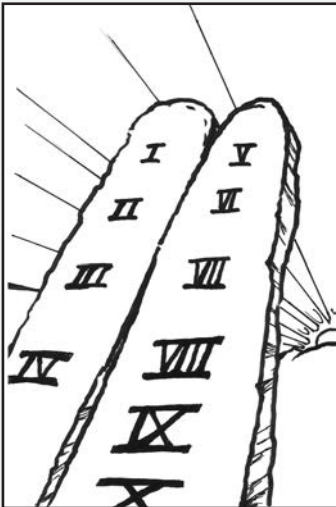
When we obey God's law, we will enjoy many wonderful blessings. The Bible shows us that God blesses people who obey Him. Again and again, the Lord tells His people Israel that if they obey His law, they will have success. Joshua is a good example of success. Joshua carefully obeys God's law. God blesses Joshua with strong leadership skills. As we see, Joshua is a good leader.

Read 2 Chronicles 31:20, 21. Think about the message in these verses. Why did Hezekiah succeed?

As teachers, we must show our students that obeying God is an important part of their lives. But our students are not stupid. They will see the truth. Some people who obey God suffer awful things in life. How do we explain this?

We cannot explain it. We live on an earth ruined by sin and evil. Everyone living on this earth is in the middle of the worldwide war between good and evil. No one can escape being hurt by this war.

Read Mark 6:25–27; Job 1; Job 2; 2 Corinthians 11:23–29. What do these verses teach us about why bad things happen to good people who love and obey God?



Again and again, the Lord tells His people that if they obey His law, they will have success.

For sure, good and loyal people who love God have not always enjoyed success in this life. What exactly does “success” mean? This question is important because we must teach our children and students why they should obey God's law. Let us see what the psalmist has to say. “One day in your Temple is better than a thousand days anywhere else. Serving as a guard at the gate of my God's house is better than living in the homes of the wicked” (Psalm 84:10, ERV). In the eyes of most people, people who obey God do not always have “success.” Not right now. So, it will not do any good to tell our students that obedience always leads to success in this life.

Read Hebrews 11:13–16. How do these verses help us understand why people who obey God suffer in this life?

JESUS, OUR EXAMPLE (Luke 2:51, 52)

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. On earth, He was the only human who ever lived a perfect life of obedience to God's law. Jesus obeys so that He can be our Substitute and our Example.

Read these verses: Luke 2:51, 52; Philippians 2:8; Hebrews 5:8; and John 8:28, 29. How do these verses help us remember Jesus' perfect obedience during His life?

Maybe John says it best when he writes this: "If we say we live in God, we must live the way Jesus lived" (1 John 2:6, ERV). We must look at the life of Christ and His work on earth. When we do, we will see that Jesus makes His Father in heaven happy because He obeys. Jesus obeys God's laws His whole life. He does everything that God's special messengers promised He will do.

God tells Moses to write down His law so it will teach Israel. In the same way, Jesus is the living example of this witness. He showed a life of obedience to His followers, holy men and women, and sinners. So now, we have more than just rules to follow. We have the living example of Jesus to follow too.

As teachers, what better example can we show our students than Jesus and how He obeyed His Father?

"Some Christians believe that having faith means they no longer need to obey God. But that is not faith. That is belief in a lie. 'You have been saved by grace because you believed' Ephesians 2:8 [ERV]. 'If it [faith] doesn't cause us to do something, it's dead' James 2:17 [NIRV]. Jesus talks about what He will do before He comes to this earth: 'My God, I am happy to do whatever you want. I never stop thinking about your teachings' Psalm 40:8 [ERV]. Right before Jesus goes back to heaven, He says: 'I have obeyed my Father's commands, and he continues to love me.' ' John 15:10 [ERV]. 'If we obey what God has told us to do, then we are sure that we know him. . . . If we say we live in God, we must live the way Jesus lived.' 1 John 2:3–6 [ERV]."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, page 61, adapted.

What can you do to follow Jesus' example in all parts of your life? How can this help you be a better teacher to other people? We know that what we do is more powerful than what we say. Why is this true about our Christian witness?



"If we say we live in God, we must live the way Jesus lived."

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “God made us and saves us because He loves us. True education also starts with God’s love. This idea is made clear in God’s law. God’s law is the guide for our lives. The first and most important commandment is: ‘ “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love him with all your strength and with all your mind.’ ” ’ Luke 10:27 [NIRV]. God knows everything. He has no beginning or end. To love Him with all our strength, mind, and heart means to develop every skill that we have. It means that the whole body, mind, and spirit will become holy. God will live in us.

“The second commandment also is about love. ‘ “ ‘Love your neighbor the same as you love yourself.’ ” ’ Matthew 22:39 [ERV]. The law of love asks us to give our bodies, minds, and spirits to serve God and other humans. This work makes us a blessing to people. At the same time, the work we do for other people blesses us more than it blesses them. It teaches us not to be selfish. All true education is unselfish. As we serve other people with unselfish hearts, we develop every part of our mind and spirit. We become more and more the way God is. Unselfish work gets us ready for heaven. By serving people, we show that we accept heaven into our hearts.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 16, adapted.



“By serving people, we show that we accept heaven into our hearts.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① God commanded the Israelites to love and respect Him. We must do the same. (Matthew 22:37; Revelation 14:7). In class, talk more about how we can love and fear God. Also, answer the question: Why are these two commandments to love and fear God in agreement with each other?
- ② What does the Bible say about being a good example to your church and to your family?
- ③ Obedience is important. But why does our obedience not save us?
- ④ Read Psalm 119. How many times does the psalm talk about these ideas: obedience, freedom, laws, rules, and commands? What does the writer of the Psalm want to teach us about these important ideas?

TAUGHT BY GOD IN BRAZIL

One Saturday afternoon, my aunt gives me a small book filled with Bible verses.

“Just read the book, and God will talk to you in each verse,” my aunt says.

I have not thought about God in more than 20 years. I grew up in a Christian home in Brazil. But I stopped going to church when I was 16. I just finished traveling for a month in Brazil. Now I am ready to go to France to study. I will leave for Paris tomorrow.

I open the small book and see Proverbs 22:19 (ERV): “I will teach you these things now. I want you to trust the Lord.” The words touch my heart because I am a student. I want to know the things that God can teach me.

That evening, I join friends for a goodbye meal. But I keep thinking about Proverbs 22:19. I leave my friends and go to a church.

When I go in the church, I am surprised by the clothes that the young women wear. Every young woman wears the same things as me: jeans, high heels, earrings, and makeup. The music has changed too. The pastor does not ask if anyone wants to give his or her life to Jesus. I leave, feeling disappointed.

The next day, I fly to France. On the plane, I pray: “Lord, no one asked me in that church if I wanted to give my heart to You. Help me find a church in France that I can go to every week.”

I start studying the Bible at home. I watch sermons. I find a well-known Adventist preacher on YouTube. He preaches powerful sermons about Revelation. I watch 25 of his sermons.

One night, I wake up about 3:00 A.M. I decide to pray until the sun comes up. I do the same thing the next night and the next night too. For three nights I pray. As I do, I feel that Jesus’ coming is near. I confess my sins and praise God for His love. On the third day, peace fills my heart. I know God lives.

As I said, I watch many sermons by the Adventist preacher on Revelation. I wonder what church he belongs to. At first, I do not know that the preacher is Adventist. I find the preacher’s personal story about Jesus on YouTube. I learn he is Adventist. Right away, I look for the address of an Adventist church in Paris. On my first Sabbath at the church, I am surprised to see people studying the Bible in Sabbath School. The women wear clothes that do not show off their bodies. The sermon is about Revelation. God knows just what I need. I cry during the sermon because I am so happy to find this church!

God promised in Brazil to teach me. I have been learning from Him in France ever since.

INSIDE *Story*

by SELOMITA HAMZAQOI



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