



LESSON 1

God requires obedience

DEUTERONOMY 4:1-40



God blesses those who obey His commands.



“Therefore you shall keep his statutes and his commandments, which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for all time” (Deut 4:40).

Supporting Truths

1. God blesses those who obey His word.
2. God punishes those who disobey His word.
3. God’s people must obey God’s word because of what He has done for them.
4. Obedience to God’s word sets God’s people apart from all others.
5. Idolatry values the things of this world more than the things God revealed by His word.

Objectives

1. State that the Israelites would live and enjoy the land only by obeying.
2. Give two examples of punishment in this chapter.
3. List several of the amazing things Moses taught that God did for Israel.
4. Explain that God’s word leads to wisdom, righteousness, and a close relationship with God.
5. List several of the reasons Moses gives to guard against idolatry.

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Lesson Summary

As Israel prepared to cross the Jordan into the promised land, Moses spoke his last words to them. He began with a sermon recalling God's relationship with Israel over the last forty years, and he showed that Israel's relationship with God should produce faithful obedience. This obedience was the path to blessing. But since God is invisible, the temptation to create visual representations of God in the form of idols would be strong. They needed to guard themselves against this sin and follow God's commands so they would live happily in the land.

Spotlight on the Gospel

The principles Moses preached to Israel apply to all believers. Just as Israel was redeemed from Egypt in order to serve God through obedience, so all believers were redeemed from sin in order to serve Christ through obedience. Just as Israel was called to obey in response to the deliverance God had already accomplished, so believers are called to obey in response to the deliverance Christ has already accomplished. And just as Israel would be blessed for obedience, so believers often experience blessing when they submit to Christ's commands.

THIS WEEK



**God requires
obedience**

Deuteronomy 4:1–40

NEXT WEEK



**God calls Israel to love
through obedience**

Deuteronomy 6:4–9

IN TWO WEEKS



**God promises to
bless or curse**

Deuteronomy 28:1–68

POSSESSION

Lesson Commentary

God blesses those who obey His commands.

For 40 years Moses had led the Israelites with miraculous power and a glowing face, which came from speaking openly with God. So we can only imagine the uncertainty Israel faced as Moses prepared to die, right before the daunting task of conquering Canaan. To counteract this uncertainty, they needed to be grounded anew in their true leader, the LORD, their Redeemer. So on the plains of Moab, Moses taught the people and passed on the covenant to the next generation. In three speeches (Deut 1:1–4:43; 4:44–28:68; 29:1–30:20), a song (31:1–32:47), and a blessing (32:48–34:12), Moses reminded Israel of God's character, His mighty deeds and good promises, and His requirement that Israel walk by faith expressed through obedience.

Moses' first speech reviewed Israel's history from Mt. Sinai to the plains of Moab. He recalled how God had graciously cared for them in the wilderness and given them victory over enemies. But he also reminded them of how God had punished them when they doubted, grumbled, and disobeyed. Deuteronomy 4 is the conclusion of this speech, urging Israel to find blessing by obeying the God who had made them His own and revealed Himself to them by His word.



THINK ABOUT IT

Paul urged Christians to obey God's commands on the basis of the redemption they already received in Christ (Rom 12:1; Eph 2:8–10).

Obey God's law in order to be blessed (4:1–8)

Moses urged the people to listen to God's commands in order to live (4:1). This seems to contradict the idea that the law cannot give life (Gal 3:21). But there is no contradiction. In both the Old and New Testaments, salvation is a

gift of God's grace, not something earned by keeping God's commands (Deut 7:6–8; Rom 5:8). But then, in both testaments, those who are saved are to obey God's commands since they now belong to Him (Exod 19:4–6; 2 Cor 5:15). Moses was calling the people to obey God's commands after God had already redeemed them from Egypt.

This kind of obedience—obedience that springs from faith in what God has already fully accomplished—receives God's blessing, both in this life and in the next (Ps 119:1). This blessing does not exclude persecution or suffering, but it does ensure God's help and support in transforming us in to the image of Christ (Rom 8:28–29). On the other hand, the way of disobedience is hard (Prov 13:15), and a life of disobedience indicates that a person is not on the path to eternal life at all (1 John 3:9). To illustrate this, Moses reminded Israel of their immorality on the plains of Moab and the deadly judgment that resulted (Deut 4:3–4; Num 25:1–9).

THINK ABOUT IT

God often uses our obedience to display the gospel to our world (1 Pet 3:1–2; Phil 2:14–16).



Because blessing comes from obeying God's commands (Josh 1:8–9), God's commands are a precious gift (Ps 19:10). They are wise and cause those who follow them to become wise (Deut 4:6; Ps 19:7). They are God's own words, allowing a close relationship with God (Deut 4:7; John 15:10). They are righteous and produce righteousness in those who keep them (Deut 4:8; Ps 19:9; Eph 5:26). If Israel would keep them, not only would they be a great nation, but they would also draw other nations to God's word (Deut 4:6), thus fulfilling their destiny of becoming a blessing to all nations (Gen 12:3; John 4:22).

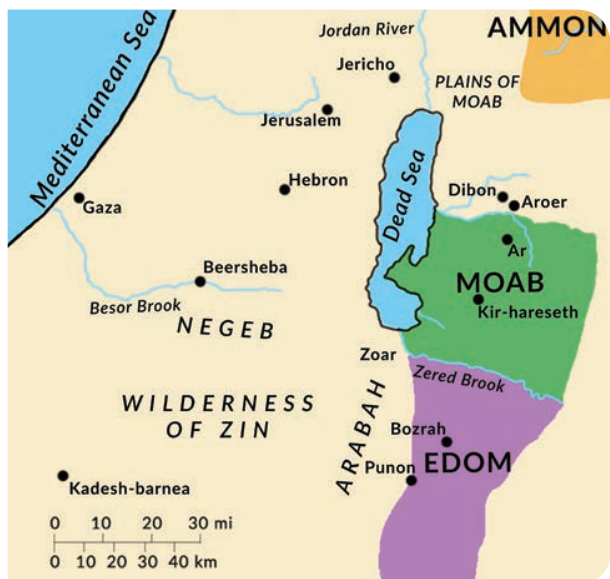
Do not forget God's word by turning to idols (4:9–31)

Even though God's commands are so precious, sometimes it is hard to believe them because we cannot see the God who spoke them (John 4:24). Because they could not see Him, Israel would be severely tempted to worship visible things in the place of the invisible God. Since there were people still alive who remembered Mt Horeb (Mt Sinai), Moses reminded them of what they did see when God spoke to them (4:9). They saw the mountain burning with fire and covered by a thick, black cloud (4:11). This shows that even though God is invisible, He is real.

But the center of God's relationship with mankind is His word (4:10, 12–14). Twice Moses emphasized that Israel heard the sound of His words, but saw no form (4:12, 15). God is encountered through His

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word. Each generation has the opportunity to encounter God anew as they remember His word. If we want our children to enjoy the life of obedience, it is essential that we

Moses knew Israel would turn to idolatry, so he warned them of the terrible destruction idolatry would cause (4:25–27; Dan 9:11–12). They had a covenant, an agreement, with God, and heaven and earth were witnesses (Deut 4:26). If Israel did not uphold their end of the contract by obedience, they would not enjoy the blessings of the covenant.

Even so, God is gracious, and He is faithful even when His people are not (4:31). He would let Israel realize how miserable it is to worship idols with whom no relationship is possible and who cannot save (4:28; Judg 10:14). This would provoke Israel to repent and seek the LORD from a sincere heart (Deut 4:29).

Be in awe of the Lawgiver, for there is none like Him (4:32–40)

Moses concluded his speech by reminding Israel of how remarkable their God is. He questioned Israel, challenging them to answer for themselves, because they themselves knew what God was like. No other god has rescued a nation with such incredible power (Deut 4:33–35). No other nation has heard God Himself speak (4:32, 36).

God deserves complete obedience because of the amazing things He has done. He chose Israel not because of their value, but because of His great love (4:37). He would fight to win an inheritance for them (4:38; Eph 1:11). To sum up, God's awe-inspiring actions toward Israel prove that He is the only God, the only One able to give life and blessing, and the only One worthy of obedience (Deut 4:39–40; Jude 1:25).

This message applies not just to Israel but to all believers. In Christ, God has chosen them in love before the world began in order to bless them beyond imagination (Eph 1:3–6). This way of blessing comes by faith, the kind of faith that produces obedience (Eph 2:8–10). May we delight in all of God's commands, because He is worthy, and because He blesses those who live out the purpose of their redemption.

teach our children God's word and God's real actions in history that confirm His word (4:9). While many Israelites failed to do this, some were faithful to teach their children the amazing experience of Mt Sinai (Judg 5:5; Ps 68:8; Hab 3:3).

Since God is present with His people by means of His word, no one should try to worship God through images (Deut 4:15–16). When we replace the right view of God as revealed in the Bible with a view that fits our own human ideas, we forget the true God and disobey His commands. Also, no one should worship any visible thing instead of God (4:17–19). Israel was tempted by all the idol-worshiping nations around them, and today we are tempted to forget God also.

So we must flee from **idolatry**, from devoting ourselves to anything this world has to offer instead of to God alone. It is silly to value the things God made more than God Himself (4:19). It is ungrateful to live for anything except the God who redeemed us and made us His own (4:20, 23). It is dangerous to provoke God's anger, as Moses knew firsthand (4:21–22). It is wrong to rebel against God by choosing idolatry instead of obedience (4:23). So as Israel prepared to enter the land without Moses, they needed to remember that God is a consuming fire (4:24). He is **jealous**: He will not share His glory with an idol.

THINK ABOUT IT
May we
cling to Him,
because He is
our life (Deut
30:20).



Lesson Outline

God blesses those who obey His commands.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. Obey God because God blesses obedience (4:1–8).
2. Obey God because God spoke the commands Himself (4:9–14).
3. Obey God because God punishes disobedience (4:15–31).
4. Obey God because God deserves obedience (4:32–40).

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. Obey God's law in order to be blessed (4:1–8).
 - Obey the law in order to live (4:1–4).
 - Obey the law in order to be wise (4:5–6).
 - Obey the law in order to enjoy a close relationship with God (4:7).
 - Obey the law in order to be righteous (4:8).
2. Do not forget God's word and thus turn to idols (4:9–31).
 - Teach your children that God Himself spoke the words with great power (4:9–14).
 - Guard yourself from worshiping idols in the place of God (4:15–24).
 - Be warned that God punishes those who serve idols instead of God (4:25–28).
 - Seek God with all your heart because He is compassionate (4:29–31).
3. Be in awe of the Lawgiver, for there is none like Him (4:32–40).
 - He delivered you with great power (4:33–35).
 - He let you hear His own voice (4:32, 36).
 - He loved and chose you (4:37).
 - He won an inheritance for you (4:38).
 - He is the only God (4:39–40).



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

1. **What did Moses tell the people of Israel to do?**
He told them to listen carefully and obey God's commands.
2. **What did Moses say would happen if they obeyed?**
They would be blessed. They would live in the land happily.
3. **What did Moses say would happen if they disobeyed?**
They would be punished, and many of them would even die.
4. **Does God deserve obedience?**
Yes. Because He saved His people, they must obey Him.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

1. **What are some reasons Moses told Israel to obey God's commands?**
Obedience would lead to life, blessing, wisdom, righteousness, and nearness to God.
2. **Can we be saved by our obedience?**
No. We are saved by God's grace, just like Israel was redeemed from Egypt by God's grace.
3. **Is obedience necessary in order to live?**
Yes. A person who does not obey shows that they do not belong to God.
4. **What were the Israelites supposed to teach their children?**
They were supposed to teach their children God's word and the amazing experience at Mt Sinai. The way to have a relationship with God is through His word.
5. **Did the Israelites see God at Mt Sinai?**
No. They saw fire and thick, dark cloud, but they only heard His voice.
6. **Why is idolatry so tempting?**
Because it can be hard to trust in the invisible God, it can be tempting to use images to try to worship God, or to forget God and focus only on the things of this world.
7. **What are some reasons to avoid idolatry?**
Idolatry is rebellion against God, provokes His jealousy, and leads to punishment. Also, idols promise more than they deliver, because they cannot save or bring blessing.
8. **What are some ways God's word sets Christians apart from non-Christians?**
God's word leads to wisdom, righteousness, and a close relationship with God.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



HOUSEHOLD COMMANDMENTS

Talk about rules parents have at home. Ask the reason for a particular rule. What happens when you obey? Disobey? Show that God's commands, like rules set by good parents, lead to happiness.

MOSES SAYS

Play this game like "Simon Says." Have "Moses" give instructions for the children by saying, "Moses says...." If Moses does not say, "Moses says" before giving an instruction, the children who follow the instruction have "disobeyed" and are eliminated.



LIKE A TREE

Read Psalm 1. Bring in a small potted plant and sawdust to vividly picture the blessing of obedience and the misery of disobedience.

GOD'S GOODNESS

Who wants this piece of candy? (Hold up some candy.) How do we know that this candy is good to eat? We know because we have tasted candy before and know that it is good. How do we know that God is good? We know that God is good because He has been good 100 percent of the time in the past. We've seen what God has done in the past and what He has promised in the future. If God is perfect and has always been good in the past, can we trust Him to also be good in the future?



A LIGHT TO MY PATH

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, yellow paper, regular paper, scissors, and glue.

Directions: Pre-cut objects from craft sheet. Pre-cut yellow paper into strips for light beams. Pre-cut long strips (1 in wide) of regular paper to serve as a headband. In class, help students to fold the box template into a box. Create a headlamp by gluing the headband, verse, and light beam strips onto the box.



A Light to My Path
See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1

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AGES 6–8



INTRODUCE

FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS

Ask the children if they have ever helped bake a cake. There are a lot of ingredients that go into making a cake, but if you were to eat salt, vanilla extract, or oil by themselves they would probably not taste yummy. But if you don't put them into a cake, it will not taste the way it should. Obedience is like this. Sometimes we are asked to do things that, by themselves, don't seem to make sense. But we must be obedient and follow all the directions that God and our parents give us. In the end, we will see that it was for our good.

OBEDIENCE, PART ONE

When your parents tell you to do something, it is for your own good. What are some things that your parents tell you to do? Why do your parents tell you these things? Is it so that you won't have fun? No; your parents love you and want what is best for you. God also gives instructions that are for our good. In today's lesson, Israel will be reminded to obey God in order to enjoy His blessing.



ILLUSTRATE

MY INVISIBLE FRIEND

Choose a volunteer. Ask the children, "Who is real, this volunteer or my invisible friend right here named Fred?" My invisible friend, Fred, is not real, but there is an invisible person who is very real—God. Explain that though it might be hard to believe in God because we cannot see Him, God gave us His word to show that He is real and to give us a way for us to really know Him.

OBEDIENCE, PART TWO

Ask the children how we show our parents that we love them. Tell them that we show love by being obedient when they ask us to do something. If you are obedient to your parents' instructions, you are telling them that you care about what they say and that you love them.



APPLY

MOTIVATION MOBILE

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft sheet, four 12-inch pieces of yarn, wire hanger, scissors, hole puncher, crayons, or other decorations.

Directions: Have students cut out the square on the first "Motivation Mobile" craft sheet. Fold the square on the solid line in the middle. Punch holes where indicated. Complete the sentence on the mobile sheets and then color and decorate the circles. Finally, cut out the circles, punch holes in the tops, and attach them to the mobile using yarn.

*Motivation Mobile
See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1*



AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

GOING TO THE PROMISED LAND

Divide the class into teams. Use the lesson questions from previous lessons (Genesis–Numbers) to review the events leading up to Israel's journey to the Promised Land. At the end of the game, emphasize that obedience was required for the Israelites to reach the Promised Land.

OTHER WAYS TO SAY "OBEY"

Ask the children if they can think of other ways to say "obey." Direct them to think about words their parents might use when asking them to obey. Write their ideas on the board. Explain that Deuteronomy 4 uses five other phrases to talk of obedience. Read Deuteronomy 4 aloud together as a class, and ask the children to raise their hands every time they hear another way to say "obey." Write these words and verse numbers on the board.

Answers:

Observe (vv. 1, 6, 14)

Keep (vv. 2, 9, 40)

Act according to (v. 5)

Take heed (vv. 9, 15, 19, 23)

Perform (v. 13)



ILLUSTRATE

OBEDIENCE LAMP

Bring in a lamp. Show that when it is not plugged in, the light will not turn on no matter how many times you turn the switch. This shows that unless you have been born again (saved), no amount of obedience will make you righteous. Then plug the lamp in while it is still turned off. It is plugged in, but you can't tell by looking at the light bulb. This shows that a believer who is not obeying will not enjoy God's light or blessing in His life. Finally, turn the lamp on. This shows that a believer who obeys on the basis of God's redeeming power enjoys His blessing, becomes a blessing to others, and shines with God's glory.

WHAT IS GOD FAMOUS FOR?

Have you ever seen a famous person? What are some things that people are famous for? Some are famous for movies, some are famous for sports, some are famous for their leadership, and others are famous for their money. What is God famous for? God is famous because of the obedience of His people. The surrounding nations knew who God was because of how Israel acted.



APPLY

GOD IS...

After teaching the lesson, ask the children if they heard any words that describe God (attributes of His nature). If the children cannot remember any attributes, direct them to begin reading through Deuteronomy 4:24–40, searching for adjectives or the phrase "God is." List these attributes of God on the board as the children find them in the passage. They may need help identifying attributes that are not stated directly in the text, such as faithfulness.

God Is... Verse:

Worthy of fear and reverence (10)

A consuming fire (24)

Jealous (24)

Merciful (31)

Faithful (will not forsake you nor forget the covenant) (31)

Unique (there is no other beside Him) (35, 39)

Loving (37)

Mighty in power (37)