



## LESSON 3

*God promises to bless or curse*

DEUTERONOMY 28:1-68



**Obedience leads to happiness and life, disobedience leads to sadness and death.**



***“And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God.... But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God...then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you” (Deut 28:2, 15).***

## Supporting Truths

1. God blesses obedience.
2. God curses disobedience.
3. Blessing and cursing are the natural results of obeying and disobeying God.
4. God curses in order to restore.
5. Obedience is a product of salvation.

## Objectives

1. List some of the good things God promised to give to those who obeyed.
2. List some of the good things God promised to take away from those who disobeyed.
3. Explain that disobedience is rejecting the God of life, but obedience is holding onto the God of life.
4. Explain the purpose of the curses.
5. Define true obedience as a response of undivided devotion to God.

# STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

*God promises to bless or curse • Deuteronomy 28:1–68*



## Lesson Summary

Moses' second speech to Israel before his own death focused on God's commandments. He began by explaining that love is the motive and goal of keeping God's commandments. Now he concludes by showing the results of obedience and disobedience. Those who obey will experience blessing in every aspect of life. Those who disobey will experience failure in every aspect of life. These are the natural results of either holding onto or turning away from God, who is the only source of life.

## Spotlight on the Gospel

Human hearts are naturally rebellious. Even though we know sin will make us miserable, we choose to disobey. Because of our disobedience, we are under the curse of death. But God sent Jesus to suffer the curse of death for us. If we belong to Him, we are set free from the curse and cannot be condemned. Once we are set free, we enjoy the blessings of Christ through obedience.

LAST WEEK



**God calls Israel to love  
through obedience**  
*Deuteronomy 6:4–9*

THIS WEEK



**God promises to  
bless or curse**  
*Deuteronomy 28:1–68*

NEXT WEEK



**God calls Joshua to be  
His servant**  
*Joshua 1:1–9*

POSSESSION

## Lesson Commentary

*Obedience leads to happiness and life, disobedience leads to sadness and death.*

As Moses prepared the Israelites to enter Canaan without him, he urged them to respond to all God had done for them by loving and trusting God as their ruler, protector, and provider. So Moses began his second sermon by showing that love and faith are the center of obedience (Deut 6:4–6). Now Moses ends this sermon by describing in vivid detail the blessings of obedience and the horrors of disobedience (Deut 28). Since God is the source of life and blessing, living His way naturally leads to life and blessing, and rejecting His way leads to death and cursing.

### The principles of blessing and cursing (28:1–2, 13–15, 20)

There are four principles that help to interpret the blessings and curses. First, the LORD is the one who blesses and curses (28:1, 20). Joy and grief are not due to luck or fate or nature. Both good and bad are given by the LORD who controls all things (Isa 45:7).

Second, the blessings and curses are given to those who belong to God. God made Israel His own when He purchased them out of slavery in Egypt, so Moses called the LORD Israel's God (Deut 28:1). While many Israelites were not true believers, the nation as a whole stood for those who belong to God. So the blessings and curses urge obedience not to earn salvation but to enjoy the benefits of belonging to God (Gal 6:7–9).

Third, **blessing** comes when a person obeys God's commands by faith (Deut 28:1–2, 13–14). Happiness, success, and good gifts from God are the natural result of obeying God who is life (30:20). Since true **obedience** is doing what God says because we love Him more than anything (6:5), the goal must be God's glory (Isa 43:7), rather than the blessing.

Fourth, curses come upon the one who disobeys God (Deut 28:15, 20). Sadness, failure, and trouble from God are the natural result of disobedience. But even the curses are for the good of God's people, opening

the eyes of the disobedient person to the horribleness of life without God. God curses in order to restore His people to Himself (30:1–3; Hos 6:1–3).

### The LORD blesses obedience (28:1–14)

Israel's blessings were summed up in the promise that Israel would become greater than all other nations (Deut 28:1). God had chosen them to be His holy nation (Exod 19:6), so if they obeyed, they would enjoy the benefits of being God's nation. This included power, leadership, and independence among the nations (Deut 28:13). Israel's national blessing will ultimately be fulfilled when the Messiah, Israel's King, reigns supreme on earth and exalts Israel over all nations (Zech 14:9–21).

But God's blessings are not just about exalting the nation of Israel. They permeate every aspect of life, even the most mundane like cooking dinner (Deut 28:3–6). Obedience would lead to victory over enemies (28:7), successful work (28:8), wealth, fruitfulness, and plenty of rain (28:11–12).

Rain was especially important: whereas Egypt was watered through man-made irrigation (11:10–12), Canaan was entirely dependent on rain. The inhabitants of Canaan worshiped Baal, the false god they thought brought rain, in hopes of motivating him to send rain. But Moses warned Israel not to follow the example of the Canaanites. He reminded them of the necessity of following God's words and worshiping Him alone (28:14).

Israel's obedience would also lead to spiritual blessings. They would be established as God's holy people (28:9), and their good reputation would bring glory, honor, and praise to God (28:10). One day this will come true when many nations come to the Jews in order to meet their God (Zech 8:23).

#### THINK ABOUT IT

The motive is love for God, and the blessing is merely the result—although sometimes even the blessing does not immediately seem like a blessing to us (Rom 8:28–29; Heb 12:11).





# STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

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## THINK ABOUT IT

Like Israel, when believers obey, their light shines so that others glorify God (Matt 5:16).

Although some aspects of these blessings relate only to Israel as God's nation, many of the same principles apply to believers in general. While success on earth is not guaranteed, it is a common blessing to those who are committed to the

Lord (Prov 16:3). And the spiritual blessings of holiness (1 John 1:7), closeness to God (John 15:10), and heavenly reward (Eph 6:8) surely come to those who obey by faith.

## The LORD curses disobedience (28:15–68)

Disobedience produces the opposite of blessing.

**Disobedience** is *rejecting God and not doing what He says* (Deut 28:20). It is living without thought of God. If Israel abandoned God, their success would turn to failure in every aspect of life (28:16–19). Health would turn to disease, rain to dust, and victory to defeat (28:21–27). They would lose everything: physical sight, spiritual sight, possessions, children, and food (28:28–32). In the end, they would lose the land and the great name that were at the center of God's promise (28:36; Gen 12:1–3).

Moses goes into greater detail describing the curses in order to make his warning more powerful. All Israel's efforts would be undone (Deut 28:38–41). They would decline, going from leadership to servitude (28:42–44). The blessing of serving the Lord would be replaced with the misery of serving their enemies (28:47–48).

By their disobedience they would lose every benefit of their redemption from Egypt. The plagues that had delivered them from Egypt would now afflict them (28:58–62). God had made them grow numerous, but now He would make them few again (28:63). They were saved from idols to worship the living God, but now they would go back to lifeless idols (28:64). They had inherited a good land, but now they would have no land and no rest, no security or joy at all (28:65–67). Finally, they would return as worthless slaves to Egypt (26:68).

These curses are horrible. They show the utter foolishness of turning away from the God of life. They show that God does not take sin lightly (Ps 5:5), and neither should we. Sin, even sin that seems small to us, is in fact rebellion against the holy God who is our only source of life and happiness. That is why the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23).

But in these curses there is yet hope. A few Israelites would always survive, and one day this small remnant will repent, returning to Him with all their heart (Deut 30:1–2). They will be forgiven, restored, and given new hearts so that they will truly live (30:3–6; Rom 11). They will be like dry, cracked ground rejuvenated by gentle rains (Hos 6:3).

The principles of the curses apply to all believers. When we lose sight of our redemption in Christ, we begin living as if we were slaves of sin again (Gal 5:7, 19–20), creating needless trouble (Prov 13:21; Jas 4:1–3) and missing out on the benefits of God's presence (Isa 59:2). Not all suffering is the result of our sin (Job 1:1), but if it is, we must repent quickly, for those who never turn from their sin do not belong to God at all (Gal 5:21).

We are left with the same choice as Israel: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life" (Deut 30:19–20).

# Lesson Outline

*Obedience leads to happiness and life, disobedience leads to sadness and death.*

## AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. God makes us happy when we obey (28:1–14).
2. God makes us sad when we do not obey (28:15–68).

## AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. **The principles of blessing and cursing (28:1–2, 13–15; 20).**
  - God is the one who gives both blessing and cursing (28:1, 20).
  - Blessing and curses teach God's people how to enjoy belonging to God (28:1).
  - Faithful obedience brings blessing because God is life (28:1–2, 13–14; 30:20).
  - Forgetful disobedience brings curses designed to restore people to God (28:15, 20; 30:1–3).
2. **The LORD blesses obedience (28:1–14).**
  - Happiness in all of life (28:3–6).
  - Victory over enemies (28:7).
  - Successful labor (28:8).
  - Holiness, honor, and glory to God (28:9–10).
  - Many children who are a blessing (28:11).
  - Wealth, rain, and fruitful land (28:11–12).
  - Power, independence, and progress (28:13).
3. **The LORD curses disobedience (28:15–68).**
  - Failure in all of life (28:16–19).
  - Disease, drought, and defeat (28:21–27).
  - Loss of sight, reason, family, wealth, health, land, relationship with God, and honor (28:28–37).
  - Fruitless labor, decline, dependence (28:38–44).
  - Deadly siege and depravity (28:47–57).
  - Sick, small, scattered, enslaved (28:58–68).



# TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

*God promises to bless or curse • Deuteronomy 28:1–68*



## Lesson Questions

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



### Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

1. **What does God bless?**  
God blesses obedience.
2. **What does God curse?**  
God curses disobedience.
3. **What does blessing mean?**  
Blessing means happiness, success, and good things.
4. **What does cursing mean?**  
Cursing means sadness, failure, and bad things.



### Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

1. **What result can we expect if we respond to God with obedience?**  
We can expect blessing: joy and peace in our hearts, and often good things in life.
2. **What result can we expect if we reject God in disobedience?**  
We can expect cursing: unhappiness, insecurity, and often bad things in life.
3. **What are some ways God promised to bless Israel's obedience?**  
He promised to give them many children, rain, lots of animals and food, victory in battle, independence, wealth, good land, honor, holiness, and closeness to God.
4. **What are some ways God promised to curse Israel's disobedience?**  
He promised to take away their children, animals, and food; make them sick; send dry dust instead of rain; cause them to be defeated by their enemies; drive them out of their land; kill most of them; and ruin their reputation.
5. **Which life is easier, the life of obedience or the life of disobedience?**  
The life of obedience is easier. Even though it can be hard to obey, it is better than the misery of the cursed life.
6. **Does God bless obedience and curse disobedience today?**  
Yes. When we obey, we grow in holiness, enjoy God's presence, and look forward to eternal reward in heaven. When we disobey, we stop enjoying God's presence, and if we never repent, we will not go to heaven at all.
7. **So is obedience just about making God do good things for us?**  
No. We cannot make God do anything. If that is our goal, then we are not obeying, because obedience means wanting God and His glory most.
8. **What is God's reason for blessing and cursing?**  
He blesses to show His goodness to His people. He curses to restore His people to Himself.

# Lesson Activities

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

AGES 3–5



## LOVE GOD AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS

This game is a variation of “Mother may I?” Instead of saying, “Mother may I?” when a command is given, have the child say, “Love God and keep His commandments.” Pull a command out of a bag and read it. If the child remembers to say, “Love God and keep His commandments,” he gets to move one step closer to the Promised Land. If he forgets, he must go back to the starting line.

*Ideas for commands:* Take one giant jump over Jordan's bank or two small jumps over Moab's rocks; spin or turn like the wind; take 10 little steps, a fast step, or Joshua's giant step; donkey trot two steps.

## THE SILENT GAME

Set the children in small groups at tables. Give them PlayDoh, but tell them they can play with it only if they are quiet. If they are not quiet, then you will take it away. After play time, talk about what happened and how it relates to today's lesson on God's promises, Israel's choice to obey or disobey, and God's blessings and curses on Israel.



## WHAT IS DISOBEDIENCE?

Ask the children to tell you what disobedience is. Answers may include: lying, cheating, stealing, etc. Pointing to different parts of the body (mouth, ears, eyes, hands, and feet) identify some common ways children sin. Explain that disobedience is sin. It is doing something that you were told not to do or not doing something that you were told to do. Explain that God told Israel to obey His instructions, but they chose to do what they wanted and disobeyed God.

## BLESSINGS AND CURSES

To illustrate the blessings and curses on the land, bring in two plants. The first should be a very healthy plant that has been watered and well taken care of. The second plant should be wilting and discolored, dying because of lack of water. Talk about why rain was so important for the land and the children of Israel.

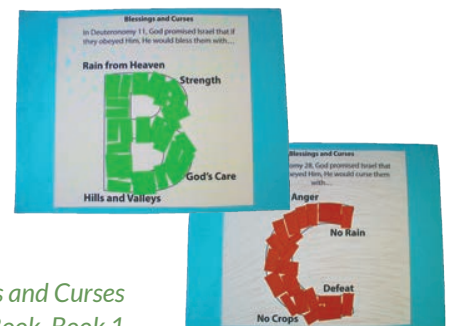


## BLESSINGS AND CURSES

*See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.*

**Materials:** Craft sheet, green and brown paper, glue, stickers, and other decorations.

**Directions:** The B represents the blessings God promised Israel if they were obedient to His commands. The C represents the curses God promised Israel if they disobeyed. Have the students glue green pieces of paper to the letter B and brown pieces of paper to the letter C. Then have them decorate the letters further with elements representing the blessings or curses. For example, for the B add people, cows, fruits and vegetables, rain, and rainbows. For the C add twigs, brown grass, and sand.



*Blessings and Curses  
See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1*



# TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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AGES 6–8



INTRODUCE

## WHICH ONE?

Ask the children which one they would choose (right hand for the first option, left hand for the second). Good food or no food? Drinking clear, fresh water, or pouring dry dust into your mouth? Enjoying your family or losing all your family? Being healthy or being very sick? Having success all the time or failing at everything? Being loved and honored by others, or being rejected by everyone? Holiness or wickedness? Belonging to God or being abandoned by God? Happiness or sadness? Life or death? It seems obvious, but what is amazing is that we often purposely choose the bad things through disobedience.

## FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS

Bring in a simple object for the children to assemble by following the directions. Explain to the children that God also has plans for our lives. In order for our lives to be pleasing to God we must obey His directions, found in the Bible.



ILLUSTRATE

## NO WATER, NO LIFE

Bring in a wilting flower. Ask why it is wilting. Explain that it is wilting because it is not connected to water, its source of life. When we disobey God's commands, we are rejecting God. We suffer because we have disconnected ourselves from our source of life.

## NO SEED, NO FRUIT

Bring apples and apple seeds to class. Hold up an apple seed and ask the class what it produces (an apple tree). Then ask the children what an apple tree produces (apples). You might consider giving each child an apple (check with parents before class for permission). Explain that without the seed there is no fruit. This helps us understand the relationship between salvation and obedience. Without salvation (seed) there is no obedience (fruit). Obedience is the fruit of salvation; it can never produce salvation.



APPLY

## BLESSING AND CURSES CARD

See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1.

**Materials:** White cardstock, 2 craft sheets, 3x5-inch pieces of green and brown construction paper, stickers or other decorations, glue, scissors, and crayons.

**Directions:** Fold a sheet of cardstock into a tri-fold card. On the left-hand cover, glue the heart and Bible verse from the first "Blessings and Curses" craft page. Color the heart red. On the left-hand inside of the card, glue a pop-up of green hills and the additional information about blessings. Decorate the inside center of the card. On the right-hand cover of the card, glue the heart and Bible verse from the second craft page. Color the heart black. On the right-hand inside of the card, glue a pop-up of brown hills and the additional information about curses.

Blessing and Curses Card  
See Year 2 Craft Book, Book 1



AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

### HAPPINESS THROUGH OBEDIENCE

Lead the class in a discussion about the disastrous consequences of an unrestricted pursuit of sinful desires. Explain that this is the kind of life promoted by the world. It promises happiness but yields horrible destruction and despair. Happiness and true joy are actually found in the pursuit of God's law. Tell the class that in today's lesson we're going to see how obedience, not disobedience, leads to true joy (blessing).

### REAP WHAT YOU SOW

Bring in different types of seeds and their corresponding fruit or vegetable. Place these on a table (in no particular order) before the lesson and ask the children to match up the seeds with their fruit. Use this activity to illustrate the main idea of today's lesson: You reap what you sow. Obedience leads to blessing and disobedience leads to cursing.



ILLUSTRATE

### VENDING MACHINE

You put in the right amount of money, push the right buttons, and what you want comes out (usually). Is that how God's blessings work? No. Obedience is not just doing the right things to get what we want. It is about loving God so much we do what He wants. We can expect blessing when we do that, but the blessing is not our goal or idol. Our goal is to please God and display His character to others.

### WHY CURSES?

The story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–24) illustrates the purpose of curses—to restore a wayward sinner. Read this story, pointing out how God used disappointment, discouragement, and great need to drive the younger son back home to his father.



APPLY

### INSANITY

Ask the children to give a definition of insanity. Explain that it is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. Ask the children if they are going through the same pattern of disobedience and hoping that maybe next time it will make them happy. Tell the children that the solution is to quit pursuing the sinful desire and to submit every desire to what God has declared in His word, the Bible. Only through obedience will they find true happiness.