



12

SESSION TWELVE

Moses' Farewell Address

SESSION SUMMARY

In this study, we will take a closer look at Moses' final instructions to the children of Israel. In his farewell address, Moses explained how God had given them the law for their own good, and he also claimed that the requirement of the law was total perfection. Obedience to God's law would bring blessing, but disobedience would bring God's curse. As believers, we recognize the law as a good gift of God, but we rely on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to save us from the penalty for our disobedience.

SCRIPTURE

Deuteronomy 10:12-22; 11:1,26-28

THE POINT

God's law is a gift, but it cannot save.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

Many television shows and movies tell stories about seeking justice for those who have broken the law. From the Westerns of years ago to sci-fi of today, we long for the good guys to win and the bad guys to get what's coming to them.

- **What is your favorite movie that shows the “good guys” bringing the “bad guys” to justice?**
- **What circumstances might cause us to see the law as difficult (or bad) instead of good?**

Option 2

Write some ridiculous rules for your class on a large sheet of paper or on the board, such as: you must stand on one foot to talk; only people with blue eyes can sit down; you must raise both hands to ask a question; and so on. Make sure to enforce the rules for at least five minutes. Take note of students who disobey the rules and those who try to find creative ways to twist the rules.

- **Do you like following rules? Why or why not?**
- **Do you think most students are lawbreakers? Explain.**

Add to the following list of laws/rules that students might violate: skipping school, breaking curfew, texting and driving, shoplifting, using illegal drugs, cheating, speeding, etc.

State that there are some laws we like and some we don't; however, we don't get to pick and choose which ones to obey. We are to obey all of them.

When you think of laws in the Bible, what are some that come to mind? How many of the Ten Commandments can you recite? Lead students to call out as many as possible from memory.

- **Why are the Ten Commandments in the Bible?**

God gave us the commandments and other laws to guide and protect us.

- **Which of the commandments do you think is the most important? Why?**
- **Which is the most difficult for you to keep? Why?**

The first and most important commandment is to love God with everything (Mark 12:28-30).

- **Is it possible to love God with all you are without being in a relationship with Jesus?**

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

God's law is a gift, but it cannot save.

CHARACTERS

- **The Triune God:** Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- **Moses:** biblical patriarch; chosen by God to lead His people out of captivity and to the promised land

PLOT

This session draws our attention to the purposes of God's law, revealed to the Israelites by Moses. It came from the perfect Lawgiver, thus it was perfect—unlike contemporary legal codes. Yet like today's laws, Old Testament law involved both a blessing and a curse.

The books of Moses include extensive narrative about Israel's wilderness wanderings. At last, there was a new generation. They were on the verge of entering the promised land under Joshua. Many, perhaps, were wondering: What is the importance of all these laws? Why does God expect us to follow so many rules?

In this study, we will take a closer look at Moses' final instructions to the children of Israel. In his farewell address, Moses explained how God had given them the law for their own good, and he also claimed that the requirement of the law was total perfection. Obedience to God's law would bring blessing, but disobedience would bring God's curse. As believers, we recognize the law as a good gift of God, but we rely on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to save us from the penalty for our disobedience.

MOSES' FAREWELL ADDRESS*Moses' final instructions to the children of Israel.**Beginning Spring 2016***SCOUTING THE PROMISED LAND***The spies deliver their report.*

THE LAW IS FOR OUR GOOD

Deuteronomy can be translated “second law.” The book is essentially Moses’ farewell instruction manual for Israel, after he had led them for 40 years and was about to die. An example of this “second law” is that Deuteronomy 5 repeats the original Ten Commandments of Exodus 20.

The following passage from Deuteronomy 10 is part of Moses’ longer discourse:

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you except to fear the LORD your God by walking in all His ways, to love Him, and to worship the LORD your God with all your heart and all your soul? Keep the LORD’s commands and statutes I am giving you today, for your own good. The heavens, indeed the highest heavens, belong to the LORD your God, as does the earth and everything in it. Yet the LORD was devoted to your fathers and loved them. He chose their descendants after them—He chose you out of all the peoples, as it is today. Therefore, circumcise your hearts and don’t be stiff-necked any longer. For the LORD your God is the God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty, and awesome God, showing no partiality and taking no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner, giving him food and clothing. You also must love the foreigner, since you were foreigners in the land of Egypt. You are to fear Yahweh your God and worship Him. Remain faithful to Him and take oaths in His name. He is your praise and He is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome works your eyes have seen. Your fathers went down to Egypt, 70 people in all, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of the sky. (Deut. 10:12-22)

In this passage we can see that Moses indicated a number of truths about the law. First, the law reveals the greatness and goodness of God. Notice how Moses spoke about God in these verses:

- He is the God of heaven and earth, as the Creator of all there is (10:14). Therefore, He has ownership rights over His creatures.
- He is the God who chose a people out of His great love (10:15). The theme of God’s salvation flowing from His love is one of the great themes of Scripture.
- He is “the God of gods and Lord of lords” (10:17). Therefore, whatever other powerful supernatural beings or human rulers there may be, He is greater.
- He is the God of justice, especially for those often subject to injustice, such as orphans, widows, and foreigners (10:18).
- He is the God who has redeemed (10:22).

In addition, we see specific guidelines on what the Lord meant when He asked His redeemed people to love Him “with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Deut. 6:5). Here are the ways that the law guided Israel’s understanding of what it means to love God:

- **Fear the Lord** (10:12,20). God expects His people to be in awe of Him and to respect Him. Such fear includes commitment to please Him and a dread of disappointing Him in any way.
- **Walk in all His ways** (10:12,13). God’s people do not get to pick and choose which of His laws to follow. All are to be kept, not only out of regard for Him but “for your own good.”
- **Worship the Lord** (10:12,20). The first of the Ten Commandments was “Do not have other gods besides Me” (5:7). God has exclusive rights on His people’s worship.
- **Circumcise your hearts** (10:16). This instruction is a reminder that physical circumcision was of only limited value, as Paul also emphasized in Romans 2:25-29. A changed heart is required, and heart circumcision suggests removing the stubbornness that keeps the heart from loving God right. (See also 30:6, where God is the One who circumcises the heart.)

The list could go on, but the point is that not only does the law reveal God’s greatness and goodness, but also provides for us specifics about how to express our love for Him and others. The law was a great blessing to have.

- **What does your love for God have to do with your obedience to God?** (*p. 78, PSG*)
- **Does God only love us if we obey Him? Explain.** (*p. 78, PSG*)

GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

As Christians, we believe Jesus fulfilled all of the law in our place, and yet we recognize there are different kinds of laws in the Old Testament. For centuries, Christians have divided the laws into three categories: civil laws (dealing with the people of Israel within their theocratic context), ceremonial laws (the rules and regulations of temple observance and the sacrificial system), and moral laws (the laws explained in the Ten Commandments and the principles that transcend cultures). These categories are not explained in the Bible, and many believe them to be somewhat arbitrary in their distinction. They do, however, help us recognize the different kinds of laws and how some principles may apply differently in different contexts.

THE LAW REQUIRES PERFECTION

As noted throughout these sessions, God gave the law to people whom He had already redeemed. The commands of God were never, ever, intended by God as a way to earn salvation. In fact, the laws about sacrifice were given to guide Israel in what to do when people broke the law. The law was meant as a blessing for the good of God’s people.

But what if the Israelite people misunderstood? What if they came to think that the way they related to God was essentially a matter of law-keeping? Even worse, what if they came to think that by doing the works of the law, they earned favor with God or even merited salvation? It is not surprising that many Israelites made this mistake. Unquestionably, as sinful humans we suppose that by our own deeds we earn divine favor. As can be easily observed, most of the world's religious activities can be understood as an attempt to work one's way to God.

The apostle Paul addressed this problem as he found it in his day, a time when many (self) righteous Jews found themselves in bondage to the law. For example, he noted, "For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, because it is written: Everyone who does not continue doing everything written in the book of the law is cursed" (Gal. 3:10). Paul was quoting from Deuteronomy 27:26. But he might just as well have quoted Deuteronomy 11:1:

Therefore, love the LORD your God and always keep His mandate and His statutes, ordinances, and commands.

Here Moses noted the strictness of the law. Notice the term "always." The demands of the law were relentless. There was no time off for good behavior. The essence of living under the demands of the law is that it requires perfection. And because no one is capable of perfectly obeying the law, all have broken it. In fact, by knowing the strict demands of the law, human beings actually become more and more aware of how far short of perfection they have come.

The apostle James gave us another way of looking at this when he claimed that failing to keep even one of God's Commandments—just one—would make us guilty of breaking it all (2:10). Disobedience is failure to love. If love is the beginning of the law and the purpose of the law, then disobeying even one Command is enough to bring it all crashing down around us. The demand is total perfection. Jesus didn't shy away from this truth either. Far from loosening the restrictions or making the law easier to digest, He commanded us to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect (Matt. 5).

Earlier, we saw how the law of God shines light on the character of God. The law shows us many things about the God who has saved us. One of the things it shows us is His absolute, stunning holiness. There is no trace of sin or evil in Him. There is no stain of rebellion or wrongdoing. He is holy love. It's no wonder, then, that the law of God immediately shows us our sinfulness because it accurately reflects God's holiness.

TIMELINE

THE BRONZE SERPENT

The people look and are healed.

THE PARTING OF THE JORDAN

God calls Joshua to lead His people.

THE BATTLE OF JERICHO

Rahab helps the Israelites in their conquest of Jericho.

CHRIST CONNECTION

There is no question that each of us is inclined to disobedience—we've all broken the law at some point. We are rebels against God and therefore justly under His curse. However, in the fullness of time, Jesus came and took the curse for us. As Paul explained, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13).

All who are in Christ are set free from the eternal condemnation that the law decreed against us. We are liberated by faith in the One who took the curse on our behalf. We don't have to fear the curse, because "no condemnation now exists for those in Christ Jesus, because the Spirit's law of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:1-2).

Yet in this life, "we make it our aim to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the tribunal of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or worthless" (2 Cor. 5:9-10). Or, as James noted, "Speak and act as those who will be judged by the law of freedom" (Jas. 2:12).

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

God Is Holy

God's holiness refers to His uniqueness in being separate from all He has created. The Hebrew word for holy means "separate" or "set apart." God's holiness also refers to His absolute purity. God is unstained by the evil of the world. His goodness is perfect, and the moral code we find in the Scriptures is a reflection of His holy nature. As people made in God's image, we are called to holiness.

YOUR STORY

10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **Why do you think many people focus on God's law apart from His goodness? What is the danger of doing that?** *By focusing on God's law only, we fall into the mind-set that God is merely trying to put a bunch of rules and regulations on our life. However, by focusing on His goodness also, we realize that God isn't trying to minimize our joy or happiness, but is rather in fact trying to maximize it, knowing that His law is for our good and joy in the end.*
- **What are some examples where rules and laws are given for our good and protection?** *Answers might include rules within the home, such as common chores and curfews, or civil laws like speed limits and shoplifting.*
- **How does understanding God's moral laws help you understand His character? How should understanding His character in this way shape the way you treat others?** *By understanding God's law as an extension of His holiness and moral perfection, we should also see that following God's law, especially as it relates to others, is a means of showing love for our neighbor.*
- **How has this session challenged the way you understand God's commands in your own life?** *Answers to this question will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION 10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

Rules get a bad rap sometimes. We tend to think of regulations as unnecessarily confining and restricting. But rightly understood, rules do not oppose freedom; they make freedom possible. A home without any rules would mean that the loudest, strongest-willed child would rule the roost, leaving everyone else to no longer have the freedom of a happy, well-balanced home. God's people need guidelines for their life.

- **Have you ever had the impression that God's commands are restrictive and burdensome? Why or why not?** *Answers to this question will vary.*
- **Why is it important to see God's commands as flowing from His character?** *God is holy, and therefore we must see His Commands as being an extension of His holy character.*



HEART

In Deuteronomy 10:1 we see two words that are very important. The first is *love* the Lord your God. We know from Jesus' words that obedience is the sign of love. In other words, the way we express our love for God is to obey Him without begrudging or with a bad attitude. And that leads us to the other scary word—*always*. We are to always keep His mandate and statutes, ordinances, and commands. God demands total obedience from a loving heart.

- **What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word *obedience*? Why does obedience have such a negative connotation?** *Answers to this question will vary.*
- **How does understanding the demands of the law help increase our desire and gratitude for grace?** *Part of what the law accomplishes is showing us that we have failed to live up to God's holy standard. Our response to this reality should be neither an attempt to work harder at keeping God's law, nor complete despair in failing to keep it. Instead, it should cultivate within us an appreciation that Christ has kept the law for us through faith in Him.*



HANDS

Once we realize that God's commands are for our good and joy, and that they reflect the moral character of God Himself, the way we treat and approach His commands in our everyday life should change. And once we do that, people around us will see that instead of treating them as burdensome and constraining, we seek to live according to them so that we might emulate God's holiness in our own lives.

- **How can following God's commands show your love for Him?** *Answers to this will vary.*
- **How can others be challenged when they see the difference being obedient to God makes in our lives?** *They may be challenged by seeing us live differently than the world around us, challenged by seeing us reflect the holiness of God in our lives, or challenged as a living testimony that even though we seek to live according to God's commands, we are still sinners in need of God's grace in Christ.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

LEADER PACK

For this session, point out item #3 to the students, which contains a biblical timeline of all the events and people they have encountered throughout this quarter.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/storystart15)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for ***free online training*** on how to lead a group visit

MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject