

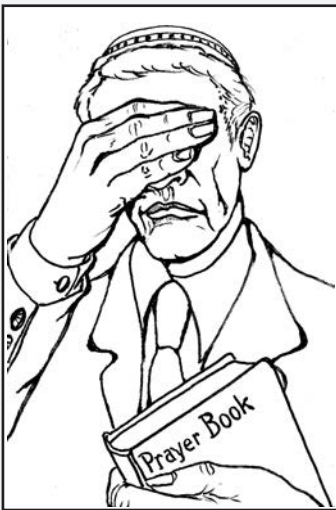
# To Love the Lord Your God



## SABBATH—OCTOBER 16

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Deuteronomy 6:4, 5; Deuteronomy 10:12; Deuteronomy 4:37; Mark 12:28–30.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “ ‘Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul [spirit]. Love him with all your strength’ ” (Deuteronomy 6:5, NIV).



**Jews cover their eyes to show that nothing should take away their attention from God.**

**ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PRAYERS** in the Jewish religion comes from Deuteronomy 6. This prayer is named “the Shema.” The prayer gets its name from the first word of the prayer: “shema.” The word “shema” comes from the word “**shama**.” “**Shama**” means “to hear,” “understand,” and “to obey.” The word “**shama**” is used again and again in Deuteronomy and all through the Old Testament.

Let us read the first line of the Shema in Hebrew:

**Shema Yisrael Adonai Elohenu Adonai echad.**

What do these words mean? “ ‘Listen, people of Israel! The LORD is our God. The LORD is the only God’ ” (Deuteronomy 6:4, ERV). Many times, when Jews say this part of the prayer, they cover their eyes. Why do they do that? They want to show that nothing should take away their attention from God. Bible thinkers believe that the first line of the Shema shows that there is only one God. So, Israel must be loyal only to the Lord our God. Israel must not worship any other god. That is why this first part of the prayer also can be written as “the LORD is our God.”

This one line is part of the first sermon Moses gives to the Israelites just before they enter the Promised Land. The rest of the sermon shows powerful Bible truth. This truth is as important now as it was back then.

**LOVE GOD (Deuteronomy 6:4, 5)**

Moses tells the people their history. Next, Moses tells the people everything they must do. Then they will win the land God promised them and have long, happy lives.

Deuteronomy 6 starts with these words from Moses to the Israelites: “ ‘These are the commands, the laws, and the rules that the LORD your God told me to teach you. Obey these laws in the land that you are entering to live in. You and your descendants [future family] must respect the LORD your God as long as you live. You must obey all his laws and commands that I give you. If you do this, you will have a long life in that new land’ ” (Deuteronomy 6:1, 2, ERV).

**Read Deuteronomy 6:4, 5. What command does the Lord God give to the children of Israel in verse 5? What does this command mean?**

Moses tells the Israelites to “ ‘Love the LORD your God with all your heart’ ” (Deuteronomy 6:5, NIV). Do you see that the command from Moses to love God comes in the middle of a list of warnings and rules? Also, Moses tells the people to love God “ ‘with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength’ ” (Deuteronomy 6:5, ERV). This command shows us something very important about love: love is all or nothing with God. That means God wants us to love Him with everything in us.

So, our love for God always should come first. Our love for God must be stronger than our love for everything and everyone else. God is the reason we live. So, our love for God should make everything else second in our lives.

In the Hebrew language, the word “your” in Deuteronomy 6:5 means only one person. So, when Moses writes “ ‘love the LORD your God with all your heart’ ” (Deuteronomy 6:5, NIV), Moses shows us that God is talking to each person. Moses shows us that God wants each one of His followers to be loyal to Him. Yes, God talks to all the people of Israel as a group. But a group is only as strong as each person who is part of the group. So, that is why God wants each of His followers to obey Him personally. Our obedience shows our faith in God. Our obedience must come from our love for God, for who He is, and what He has done for us.

**What does it mean to you to love God with all your heart, spirit, and strength?**



**Our love for God must be stronger than our love for everything and everyone else.**

**RESPECT GOD (Deuteronomy 10:12)**

As we saw yesterday, Moses tells the Israelites to love God fully. A few verses earlier, Moses tells the people what will happen when they obey the laws of God: “ ‘Then you and your son and your grandson will fear the Lord your God’ ” (Deuteronomy 6:2, NLV). So, in one verse Moses tells the people to “fear” God. But in another verse, Moses tells the people to both fear and love God at the same time. What is going on here?

**Read Deuteronomy 10:12. What does this verse say about love and fear? What does this verse mean?**

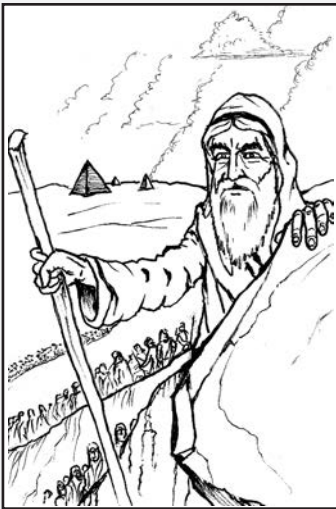
Today, when we think of “fear,” we mean being afraid. But when the Bible asks us to fear God, the Bible really wants us to show God honor and respect. We honor God because He is powerful. He is fair and holy. These are all very good reasons for why we should fear or honor God.

**Read Ephesians 2:1–10. How do these verses help us understand how we can fear and love God at the same time?**

In the past, we refused to obey God. Our disobedience made God angry. (His anger is another reason we should fear Him.) But then Jesus died for us. Jesus gave us a new life in Him, too. This new life includes freedom from sin and punishment. (This freedom is why we should love God.)

This same Bible truth also is true for Israel: yes, they were slaves in Egypt. But God loved the Israelites. His love is the reason He made them free. “ ‘Remember that you were servants in the land of Egypt. The Lord your God brought you out of there by a powerful hand and a long arm’ ” (Deuteronomy 5:15, NLV). No wonder the Israelites should both love and fear God at the same time! If they needed to do that, then how much more should we both fear and love God at the same time, too? Can we really not love Jesus when we think about His dying for us on the cross?

**Read the message of the First Angel in Revelation 14:6, 7. This end-time message starts with, “Fear [respect and honor] God” (ERV). Why should this command be the first message from God to people on the earth in the end times? We know what will happen in the future. How does our knowledge help us to see why this command is so important?**



**“ ‘Remember that you were servants in the land of Egypt. The Lord your God brought you out of there by a powerful hand and a long arm’ ” (Deuteronomy 5:15, NLV).**

## HE FIRST LOVED US (Deuteronomy 4:37)

As we saw already, God commands His people to obey Him. He gives them many warnings and rules to follow. What is the first and most important command that God gives His people? They must love God with all their heart, spirit, and might. Of course, God gives His people many good reasons to love Him.

**Read Deuteronomy 4:37; Deuteronomy 7:7, 8, 13; Deuteronomy 10:15; Deuteronomy 23:5; and Deuteronomy 33:3. What do these verses teach us about the love of God for His people?**

Again and again in Deuteronomy, Moses tells the people about the love of God for them and their fathers. God shows His love for His people by His nice words. God also shows His love by His actions. So, when the Israelites fail, make mistakes, or sin, the love of God does not change. God continues to love His people. God shows His people He loves them very much by everything He does for them.

**“We love Him because He loved us first” (1 John 4:19, NIV). How does this verse show why we should love God?**

God loves us so much. He loved us before He made us! How do we know? Because God made a plan to save us before He made the earth. As Paul explains, “God chose us to belong to Christ before the world [the earth and everything in it] was created [made]” (Ephesians 1:4, NIV).

Ellen G. White writes about this idea, too. She says, “God did not wait for Adam to sin before He made a plan to save us. His plan ‘was kept secret for a long time in the past. But it has now been made known’ (Romans 16:25 [WE]). This saving plan showed the important rules that have been part of the government of God forever.”—*The Desire of Ages*, page 22, adapted.

We should be very grateful that God is a God of love. He loves us so much. His love caused Him to die on the cross for us. “And when he was a man, he was humble [empty of all pride]. He was even [also] willing to die, yes, to die on a cross” (Philippians 2:8, WE).

**God showed us on the cross how much He loved us. Why should this Bible truth fill our hearts with joy?**



**God made a plan to save us before He made the earth.**

**IF YOU LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS  
(Deuteronomy 5:10)**

God asks all Israel to love Him. This love for God happens only when each person, one by one, in the whole group chooses to love God. God gives each Israelite the freedom to choose to love Him. Each Israelite shows his or her love by obedience.

**Read the verses below. How are they all the same?**

**Deuteronomy 5:10** \_\_\_\_\_

**Deuteronomy 7:9** \_\_\_\_\_

**Deuteronomy 10:12, 13** \_\_\_\_\_

**Deuteronomy 11:1** \_\_\_\_\_

**Deuteronomy 19:9** \_\_\_\_\_



**God asks all Israel  
to love Him.**

The Bible is very plain about what God expects from His people. The people show their love to God by their actions. In the same way, God not only says He loves us. But God also shows His love by everything He does. These verses show that we cannot separate our love for God from obedience.

We see this basic teaching in other verses in the Bible. John writes, “We show that we love God when we obey his laws. His laws are not hard to obey” (1 John 5:3, WE). Jesus says, “ ‘If you love me, you will obey me’ ” (John 14:15, WE). So, our love for God always must be shown by our obedience. Our obedience to God means obedience to His law, the Ten Commandments. This law includes the Sabbath, or 4th commandment. Obeying the 4th commandment is not about our trying to save ourselves by our own good behavior.

Some people may try to obey God to earn His favor. But their behavior does not come from real love for God. When we really love God, we want to obey Him. Moses tells the people to love God only after God frees them from Egypt. Then Israel showed God they were grateful by loving Him and obeying His commands. Does God expect anything less from His people today?

**Why do you obey God? Why should love be the reason you obey? What part does our respect for God have in our reasons for obeying Him, too?**



## THE FIRST COMMANDMENT (Mark 12:28–30)

Both the Old and the New Testaments show us that God is good and loving. But some Christians want to throw out the Old Testament. They say we do not need the Old Testament anymore after Jesus came. But this thinking is a mistake. The Old Testament cannot be separated from the New Testament. If we separate them, we will destroy the meaning of the New Testament. The New Testament shows us Jesus and explains His work on earth and in heaven. His work helps us remember the promises God made in the Old Testament. Jesus kept all these promises in the New Testament. The Old Testament helps us understand exactly how Jesus did that.

**Read the story about Jesus in Mark 12:28–30. What questions does a teacher of the law ask Jesus about “ ‘the most important command’ ” (Mark 12:29, ERV)? How does Jesus answer? Where does He get His answer from?**

Some Jews believed there were 613 Jewish laws. So, no wonder the Jews wanted to know which law was the most important one. How does Jesus answer?

Jesus goes straight to Deuteronomy 6. He says this quote: “ ‘The LORD is our God. The LORD is the only God’ ” (Deuteronomy 6:4, ERV). Then Jesus says the next verse, too: “ ‘You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul [mind], and with all your strength’ ” (Deuteronomy 6:5, ERV). Let us look more closely at this answer. Jesus starts with a quote that shows the Lord is God, the only God. Then after this important Bible truth, Jesus says we must love God first.

Is there any command that is more “present truth” than this command? Remember, present truth is the truth people need most in the time that they live. In the end times, everyone on earth will need to make a choice between good and evil. At that time, the commandments of God (Revelation 14:12) will have an important part in our final decision.

Whatever our choice, the love of God will be an important part of our final decision. Our decision will be about how much we really love God. We can love God fully only when we know Him, His mercy, love, and forgiveness.

**What if someone asks you: How can you love a God you have never seen? What will you say? In class, talk about your answer.**



**Some Christians say we do not need the Old Testament anymore after Jesus came.**



Jesus left His throne because He loved us.

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** “All the people saved by Jesus will sing about His cross forever. They will study the cross forever, too. The saved ones will see Jesus their Savior in Jesus their King. The saved ones will always remember that Jesus emptied His heart of all pride. Jesus did this to save humans after they sinned. This same Jesus made all the planets in outer space. Jesus is the One God loves. Jesus is the King of heaven. He is the One that the angels with four wings and the angels with six wings love to praise. This same Jesus accepted the guilt and shame that comes from sin. He accepted the experience of dying on the cross that made the Father hide His face from Him. The pain and suffering of our lost earth broke the heart of Jesus and ended His life on the cross at Calvary. Just think about it some more: the same Jesus who made all the planets also decides what happens in life to each person. This same Jesus left His throne because He loved us. He emptied His heart of all pride, too. This thought will always cause wonder and love in the hearts of everyone in heaven and on earth. The saved ones will look at Jesus in heaven. They will see the glory of the Father shining in the face of Jesus. The saved ones will look at the throne of Jesus, too. His throne continues forever. Then the saved will know that the kingdom of Jesus will never end. So, they will sing this happy song: ‘Jesus is very worthy! Jesus is the Lamb that was killed. The Lamb saved us by His own precious blood! Now we belong to God!’ ”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 651, 652, adapted.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Read the Ellen G. White quote above. How does this quote help us understand why our love for God should be the most important love we have? Think more about this idea: the same God who “made all the planets in outer space” is the One who went to the cross for us. Why should this Bible truth be the reason for our friendship with God and our love for Him?
- ② Think more about the idea of loving God and “fearing [respecting]” Him at the same time. How do we do both?
- ③ Why is it more important to love God during hard times than when things are going well?
- ④ How can you help someone who does not believe in God understand what it means to love Him? How can we, as humans, love Someone we have not seen?

## THE POWER OF A BOOK

Nine-year-old Saki lived on the Japanese island of Okinawa. Saki loved to read. Her favorite books were *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*. Her parents bought these books from a kind stranger who knocked on their door. Again and again, Saki read all five books. Her favorite story was about a boy named Wilford and his Surprise Package Company. Wilford liked to surprise people with gifts. Saki felt happy when she thought about the joy that the people in the story felt when they got the gifts from Wilford.

The books also taught Saki about Jesus. Many people in Japan do not worship Jesus. Saki and her family were not Christian. In the books, Saki learned that Jesus loves children and wants to make them happy.

Saki grew up. Then she moved to Tokyo, the capital of Japan. Saki got married. She had two little boys. Somewhere along the way, Saki lost her favorite bedtime story books.

Soon her oldest son was ready to start school. So, Saki looked for a school for him. Near her home, Saki found a church school named Tokyo Saniku Elementary School. Saki looked for information on the internet about the school. Saki learned that the school was Seventh-day Adventist. She never heard of Adventists. So, she looked for more information about them online. Saki was surprised to learn that Adventist have many schools. They also printed many books for children, including her beloved bedtime stories! Saki knew she wanted her son to study at the Adventist school.

But first, Saki wanted to know some more about the Adventist Church. Saki started to go the Adventist church located near the Adventist school. Saki felt peace as she sang hymns and heard the sermons.

Saki bought a new set of bedtime stories. She read them to her sons. The boys loved the stories. Saki also started to read another Book: the Holy Bible. When her oldest son started the first grade, Saki joined a Bible-study group at the school. Months later, Saki gave her heart to Jesus. Then Saki was baptized.

Today, Saki Takahagi is 35. She continues to read bedtime stories to her young sons. She also shares the Bible with them. Saki loves the Bible. She loves Jesus, too.

Saki learned about Jesus from the bedtime stories. Later she learned more about Jesus by searching for information about Him on the internet. Part of the 13th Sabbath Offering this quarter will help many Japanese people, including young people. The offering will help them learn more about Jesus from the internet. Thank you for giving a big offering.

INSIDE  
*Story*  
by KAZUHIRO HIRAGA



**Saki's favorite books were *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*. The books taught Saki about Jesus.**

