

## **Christian Education**

# **The Law as Teacher**

Lesson #3 for October 17, 2020

Scriptures: Deuteronomy 6:5; 31:9-27; Romans 3:19-23; Revelation 12:17; 14:12; Mark 6:25-27; Hebrews 5:8.

1. Do you think of God's law as a teacher? Does He seem more like a judge? What is the purpose of God's law? And what is included in God's law? Is that only the Ten Commandments, as many believe? Or, does it include a large section of Scripture? When Jesus talked about *the law and the prophets*, what was included under *the law*?

**Deuteronomy 6:5:** Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation\** (2nd ed., Deuteronomy 6:5). New York: American Bible Society.

2. Is our need to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, all our souls, and all our strength a part of *the law*?
3. How do you understand what Paul wrote in this verse?

**Galatians 3:21:** Does this mean that the Law is against God's promises? No, not at all! For if human beings had received a law that could bring life, then everyone could be put right with God by obeying it.—*Good News Bible.\**

4. Is there a conflict in thinking here? If *the law and the prophets* involves all of Old Testament Scripture, don't we believe that God's Word gives life? Paul went on to say:

**Galatians 3:22:** But the scripture says that the whole world is under the power of sin; and so the gift which is promised on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ is given to those who believe.—*Good News Bible.\**

5. So, what is the purpose of the law? Is it just to accuse us because we are all sinners? Does the law have only a negative function? Or, does it have any positive function? In ancient Hebrew thinking, the *Torah*, which is often translated as *Law*, included the five books of Moses, everything from creation in Genesis 1:1 to the death of Moses at the end of Deuteronomy. Is that what you think of when you hear the word *law*?
6. Think of the stories of Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph. Are these all parts of the law? After 80 years of training, Moses began his work as leader of the children of Israel. It was 40 years of hectic up-and-down experiences, many of which should not have been necessary. But, at the end of those years, Moses had to climb to the top of Mount Nebo and be buried by the Lord as the children of Israel entered the promised land. However, before doing that, Moses gave them three sermons as recorded in the book of Deuteronomy.

**Deuteronomy 31:9-13:** <sup>9</sup> So Moses wrote down God's Law and gave it to the levitical priests, who were in charge of the LORD's Covenant Box, and to the leaders of Israel. <sup>10</sup> He commanded them, "At the end of every seven years, when the year that debts are cancelled comes round, read this aloud at the Festival of Shelters. <sup>11</sup> Read it to the people of Israel when they come to worship the LORD your God at the one place of worship. <sup>12</sup> Call together all the men, women, and children, and the foreigners who live in your towns, so that everyone may hear it and learn to honour the LORD your God and to obey his teachings faithfully. <sup>13</sup> In this way your descendants who have never heard the Law of the LORD your God will hear it. And so they will learn to obey him as long as they live in the land that you are about to occupy across the Jordan."—*Good News Bible.\**

7. Try to imagine the throne room in heaven where God is surrounded by millions of angels, waiting to do His will. He is trying to decide exactly what directions, what instruction, He is going to give to the children of Israel. Remember that we believe God knew in advance exactly everything that was going to happen in His interaction with those people. So, what would you have done? God gave them very clear, plain instruction about what was coming. Were they aware of them? Was it read to them at least every seven years as directed? Unfortunately, no!
8. One simple illustration of God's interaction with the children of Israel is the stories of their wars. As you read through the Bible, you discover that every time they went to war following God's instructions, things worked perfectly. Sometimes, they conquered nations without losing a single soldier! But, every time they went to war without consulting God, it was a disaster. How long did it take for them to figure out which was the right way to do things?
9. What methods is God using in our day to make sure that we do not forget His law? Notice that God says, first, you must hear, and then, learn to fear God. What does it mean *to fear God*? I thought we were told to love God. The word *fear* in the Bible means everything from absolute terror to respect and honor. Consider these words, which immediately followed the giving of the Ten Commandments.

**Exodus 20:18-20:** <sup>18</sup> And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.

<sup>19</sup> And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

<sup>20</sup> And Moses said unto the people, **Fear not:** for God is come to prove you, and that **his fear** may be before your faces, that ye sin not.—*The Holy Bible: King James Version.\** (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., Exodus 20:18–20). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.†

10. So, in light of that passage, is it possible to love and fear God at the same time? Surely, if we love God, we will honor and respect Him for all that He has done for us and wants to do with us.
11. If God knew exactly what the children of Israel were going to do after Moses's death, what do you think He should have said to them?

**Deuteronomy 31:14-27:** <sup>14</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, "You haven't much longer to live. Call Joshua and bring him to the Tent, so that I may give him his instructions." Moses and Joshua went to the Tent, <sup>15</sup>and the LORD appeared to them there in a pillar of cloud that stood by the door of the Tent.

<sup>16</sup> The LORD said to Moses, "You will soon die, and after your death the people will become unfaithful to me and break the covenant that I made with them. **They will abandon me and worship the pagan gods of the land they are about to enter. <sup>17</sup>When that happens, I will become angry with them; I will abandon them, and they will be destroyed. Many terrible disasters will come upon them, and then they will realize that these things are happening to them because I, their God, am no longer with them. <sup>18</sup>And I will refuse to help them then, because they have done evil and worshipped other gods.**

<sup>19</sup> "Now, write down this song. Teach it to the people of Israel, so that it will stand as evidence against them. <sup>20</sup>I will take them into this rich and fertile land, as I promised their ancestors. There they will have all the food they want, and they will live comfortably. But they will turn away and worship other gods. They will reject me and break my covenant, <sup>21</sup>and many terrible disasters will come on them. But this song will still be sung, and it will stand as evidence against them.

Even now, before I take them into the land that I promised to give them, **I know what they are thinking.**"

<sup>22</sup> That same day Moses wrote down the song and taught it to the people of Israel.

<sup>23</sup> Then the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun and said to him, "Be confident and determined. You will lead the people of Israel into the land that I promised them, and I will be with you."

<sup>24</sup> Moses wrote God's Law in a book, taking care not to leave out anything.

<sup>25</sup>When he finished, he said to the levitical priests, who were in charge of the LORD's Covenant Box, <sup>26</sup>"Take this book of God's Law and place it beside the Covenant Box of the LORD your God, so that it will remain there as a witness against his people. <sup>27</sup>I know how stubborn and rebellious they are. They have rebelled against the LORD during my lifetime, and they will rebel even more after I am dead."—*Good News Bible*.\*†

12. Look especially at versus 16b-18: A description of *God's wrath*.

13. It is interesting to notice that Moses instructed the Levites, the priests, to carefully copy what he had written and place it on a scroll next to the Ten Commandments in the most holy place. Surely, they must have made copies they could refer to that they kept outside. So, what does it mean to have a witness against us? Does the New Testament talk about that?

**Romans 3:19-23:** <sup>19</sup> Now we know that everything in the Law applies to those who live under the Law, in order to stop all human excuses and bring the whole world under God's judgement. <sup>20</sup>For **no one is put right in God's sight by doing what the Law requires; what the Law does is to make people know that they have sinned.**

<sup>21</sup> But now God's way of putting people right with himself has been revealed. It has nothing to do with law, even though the Law of Moses and the prophets gave their witness to it. <sup>22</sup>God puts people right through their faith in Jesus Christ. God does this to all who believe in Christ, because there is no difference at all: <sup>23</sup>everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence.—*Good News Bible*.\*†

14. Have you ever learned any Scripture songs? Anyone who has learned to sing hymns in church should recognize that it is much easier to remember words that are set to music. Is that why God gave this hymn to the children of Israel? Very few of whom could read or write at that time when writing had just been "invented."

15. So, what is the function of the law? In addition to its instruction, it functions as a mirror, pointing out our defects; then, the gospel helps us to seek forgiveness and correct those bad habits.

16. Very soon after Moses was gone and Joshua was in charge of the people, we have these words from God directed to Joshua:

**Joshua 1:7-8:** <sup>7</sup> "Just be determined, be confident; and make sure that you obey the whole Law that my servant Moses gave you. Do not neglect any part of it and you will succeed wherever you go. <sup>8</sup>**Be sure that the book of the Law is always read in your worship. Study it day and night, and make sure that you obey everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.**"—*Good News Bible*.\*†

17. These instructions seem pretty simple and straightforward. The promise that they would be prosperous and successful should have been an encouragement. Shouldn't it? So, why were

they so quickly forgotten? If you have forgotten the history of the children of Israel, look briefly at Judges 2&3.

18. In our society, is success measured by how well we are obeying God's commandments? In many people's eyes, success is measured in terms of dollars. And dollars end up in the hands of people who invent new things, create new things, or exhibit a lot of self-reliance. Is that real success in God's eyes?

19. We as Seventh-day Adventists have claimed three verses in the New Testament, the book of Revelation, as key to our existence as a denomination.

**Revelation 12:17:** The dragon was furious with the woman and went off to fight against the rest of her descendants, all those who **obey God's commandments** and are faithful to the truth revealed by Jesus.—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

**Revelation 14:12:** This calls for endurance on the part of God's people, those who **obey God's commandments** and are faithful to Jesus.—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup> [See also Revelation 19:10b.]<sup>‡</sup>

20. Don't these verses make it clear that obeying God's commandments is one of the hallmarks of God's end-time people?

21. Paul also made the point very clear in the book of Romans.

**Romans 1:5:** Through him God gave me the privilege of being an apostle for the sake of Christ, in order to lead people of all nations to **believe and obey**.—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

22. **Romans 16:26:** Now, however, that truth has been brought out into the open through the writings of the prophets; and by the command of the eternal God it is made known to all nations, so that **all may believe and obey**.—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

23. Suppose you are very successful in the eyes of the world and you live comfortably and well. Is that more important than going to heaven? Remember Jesus's comments.

**Matthew 16:26:** For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?—*KJV*.<sup>\*</sup> Compare Mark 8:36.

24. So, what has been your personal experience with success? Has it made you happy to obey God's laws and do His will? Or, to follow the methods, manners, and wishes of the world?

25. King Hezekiah was one of the better kings in the kingdom of Judah. What was his secret of success?

**2 Chronicles 31:20-21:** <sup>20</sup> Throughout all Judah, King Hezekiah did what was right and what was pleasing to the LORD his God. <sup>21</sup> **He was successful, because everything he did for the Temple or in observance of the Law, he did in a spirit of complete loyalty and devotion to his God.**—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*†</sup>

26. But, let us be honest. The Devil is alive and well on this earth. And if he sees someone carefully following God's commandments, he will do everything he possibly can to disrupt that life. The only reason any of God's people are still alive is because of God's protection.

**Mark 6:25-27:** <sup>25</sup> The girl hurried back at once to the king and demanded, "I want you to give me here and now the head of John the Baptist on a dish!"

<sup>26</sup> This made the king very sad, but he could not refuse her because of the vows he had made in front of all his guests. <sup>27</sup> So he sent off a guard at once with orders to bring John's head. The guard left, went to the prison, and cut John's head off.—*Good News Bible*.<sup>\*</sup>

27. Think of the story of John the Baptist, preaching so powerfully that he attracted much of the nation to listen to him. And then, he was imprisoned and, suddenly, beheaded. Would that be considered a success story? And think of the story of Job! Of course, Job was very successful earlier in life with thousands of head of livestock; but, then came that disaster. Why do you think God allowed that to happen? After listening to the rantings and ravings of Job's friends, it is essential to read Job 42:7-8.
28. Think also of the story of Saul/Paul. No doubt, in his earlier days, he thought that he was on his way to becoming a very successful leader in the Jewish nation. But, then there was the stoning of Stephen and, then, the experience on the Damascus road. What happened between that time and the time he began his missionary journeys a number of years later is unknown to us. But, consider these words of Paul.

**2 Corinthians 11:23-29:** <sup>23</sup>Are they Christ's servants? I sound like a madman—but I am a better servant than they are! I have worked much harder, I have been in prison more times, I have been whipped much more, and I have been near death more often. <sup>24</sup>Five times I was given the 39 lashes by the Jews; <sup>25</sup>three times I was whipped by the Romans; and once I was stoned. I have been in three shipwrecks, and once I spent 24 hours in the water. <sup>26</sup>In my many travels I have been in danger from floods and from robbers, in danger from fellow-Jews and from Gentiles; there have been dangers in the cities, dangers in the wilds, dangers on the high seas, and dangers from false friends. <sup>27</sup>There has been work and toil; often I have gone without sleep; I have been hungry and thirsty; I have often been without enough food, shelter, or clothing. <sup>28</sup>And not to mention other things, every day I am under the pressure of my concern for all the churches. <sup>29</sup>When someone is weak, then I feel weak too; when someone is led into sin, I am filled with distress.—*Good News Bible*.\*

29. These words were written **early** in Paul's ministry. Would you be willing to go through what Paul went through? King David was a very wealthy, very successful, and very powerful king and soldier. Nevertheless, he said: "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." (Psalm 84:10, NKJV\*)
30. Would that be true of you as well?
31. There are others whose stories we may not even know such as those mentioned in Hebrews 11:13-16.

**Hebrews 11:13-16:** <sup>13</sup> It was in faith that all these persons died. They did not receive the things God had promised, but from a long way off they saw them and welcomed them, and admitted openly that they were foreigners and refugees on earth. <sup>14</sup>Those who say such things make it clear that they are looking for a country of their own. <sup>15</sup>They did not keep thinking about the country they had left; if they had, they would have had the chance to return. <sup>16</sup>Instead, it was a better country they longed for, the heavenly country. And so God is not ashamed for them to call him their God, because he has prepared a city for them.—*Good News Bible*.\*

32. Fortunately, for us on this side of the cross, we have not just the words of God in the Old Testament for our instruction but also the example of the life and death of Jesus Christ.

**Luke 2:51-52:** <sup>51</sup> So Jesus went back with them to Nazareth, where he was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. <sup>52</sup>Jesus grew both in body and in wisdom, gaining favour with God and people.—*Good News Bible*.\*

**Philippians 2:8:** He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to

death—his death on the cross.—*Good News Bible*.\*

**Hebrews 5:8:** But even though he was God’s Son, he learnt through his sufferings to be obedient.—*Good News Bible*.\*

**John 8:28-29:** <sup>28</sup>So he said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, you will know that ‘I Am Who I Am’; then you will know that I do nothing on my own authority, but I say only what the Father has instructed me to say. <sup>29</sup>And he who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, because I always do what pleases him.”—*Good News Bible*.\*

33. So, do we not only talk the talk but also walk the walk?

**1 John 2:6:** Those who say that they remain in union with God should live just as Jesus Christ did.—*Good News Bible*.\*

34. What better example could we possibly have than the example of Jesus?

That so-called faith in Christ which professes to release men from the obligation of obedience to God, is not faith, but presumption. “By grace are ye saved through faith.” But “faith, if it hath not works, is dead.” Ephesians 2:8; James 2:17. Jesus said of Himself before He came to earth, “I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart.” Psalm 40:8. And just before He ascended again to heaven He declared, “I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love.” John 15:10. The Scripture says, “Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.... He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked.” 1 John 2:3-6.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*\* 61.2.

35. How can we do a better job of following His example?

Love, the basis of creation and of redemption, is the basis of true education. This is made plain in the law that God has given as the guide of life. The first and great commandment is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.” Luke 10:27. To love Him, the infinite, the omniscient One, with the whole strength, and mind, and heart, means the highest development of every power. It means that in the whole being—the body, the mind, as well as the soul—the image of God is to be restored.

Like the first is the second commandment—“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Matthew 22:39. The law of love calls for the devotion of body, mind, and soul to the service of God and our fellow men. And this service, while making us a blessing to others, brings the greatest blessing to ourselves. Unselfishness underlies all true development. Through unselfish service we receive the highest culture of every faculty. More and more fully do we become partakers of the divine nature. We are fitted for heaven, for we receive heaven into our hearts.—Ellen G. White, *Education*\* 16.1-2.

36. Revelation 14:7 is a verse precious to Seventh-day Adventists. Are we prepared for the final judgment of God? Do we worship Him and praise His greatness?

37. How many Seventh-day Adventists are striving with all their might to follow the example of Jesus in their lives? If we had a church full of that kind of individuals, would it make a difference in the community?

38. When someone starts talking about *the law*, do you get excited? There are so many Christians in our day who basically ignore the Old Testament, including the Law or five books of Moses. Many think the first 11 chapters of Genesis are just myth. While it is true that the circumstances and conditions of life in ancient times were quite different from the conditions

we have now, setting aside the law or even directly rejecting it because it is not a means of salvation is like throwing out your toaster because it does not vacuum the floor!

But those who are in a properly oriented covenant relationship with God have no reason to suffer anxiety or aversion toward the law. Being able to say with David, “O how love I thy law!” (Ps. 119:97) provides a good test of whether one is in a healthy relationship with God and the law. If people protest with, “What about love or grace or Jesus?” they are in for a surprise. The most important law of all, the *crème de la crème* of all the laws, is the law to love. “ ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.’ ” This is the greatest of all the laws; at least, that’s what Jesus thought (Deut. 6:5, *ESV*; Matt. 22:36, 37). If people have a problem with law, do they take issue with *this* law too? **So, it is safe to say that there is enough endorsement from King David and King Jesus to give the law a chance as an instructor for life and a revelation of the God who gave it.**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 39.<sup>†§</sup>

**Deuteronomy 6:5:** “Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”—*Good News Bible*.\*

**Matthew 22:36-37:** <sup>36</sup>“Teacher,” he asked, “which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

<sup>37</sup> Jesus answered, “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ ”—*Good News Bible*.\*

39. Why do you think the law has such a bad public relations image? Think of all the depressing cycles that the children of Israel went through as recorded in the Old Testament—up and down, up and down, obeying and prospering, then, disobeying and failing. Those cycles may not be so obvious in our lives today; but, who suffers the most if we break God’s laws? If we read the Law, that is, the books of Moses from Genesis to Deuteronomy, and learn from the experiences of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, would that help us better understand God’s plans for our lives?
40. Remember that God’s plan for us is to: (1) Read Scripture, (2) pray to God, and then, (3) share what we have learned. Are we doing that? When we were young, many of us probably thought of the law as something scary. In that view, if you committed a sin by breaking one of the commandments and did not ask for forgiveness, you would be lost! Is that partly why the law has a bad public relations problem?
41. Look at the hymn that Moses gave the children of Israel as recorded in Deuteronomy 32. It is interesting to note, especially verses 8&9 suggesting as many of the ancient peoples believed, that different gods were assigned to different territories.
42. It is also very significant to notice what has happened and will happen when God’s anger is exercised; He allows people to reap the consequences of their own behavior. See verses 28-30.
43. So, how do you understand verse 39?

**Deuteronomy 32:39:** “ ‘I, and I alone, am God;  
no other god is real.

I kill and I give life, I wound and I heal,

and no one can oppose what I do.’ ”—*Good News Bible*.\*

44. Do you have a problem understanding a statement saying that God kills and wounds? How does that take place?
45. Consider how God knew in advance exactly what the children of Israel were going to do, and

yet, He was so gracious with them. Amazing! What would you have done? Would you have been as kind and considerate as God was?

46. Did any of the children of Israel take seriously the warnings in Deuteronomy 31&32? At the foot of Mount Sinai, they were all down with their faces in the dirt, scared to death of God! Forty years later, Moses wrote the following words to them:

**Deuteronomy 32:23-25:**

<sup>23</sup> “ I will bring on them endless disasters  
and use all my arrows against them.

<sup>24</sup> They will die from hunger and fever;  
they will die from terrible diseases.

I will send wild animals to attack them,  
and poisonous snakes to bite them.

<sup>25</sup> War will bring death in the streets;  
terrors will strike in the homes.

Young men and young women will die;

neither babies nor old people will be spared.’ ”—*Good News Bible*.\*

47. The northern kingdom of Israel reaped the results of their behavior as suggested by Hosea.

**Hosea 2:4-5,8:** <sup>4-5</sup>I will not show mercy to her children; they are the children of a shameless prostitute. She herself said, “I will go to my lovers—they give me food and water, wool and linen, olive oil and wine.”...

<sup>8</sup>She would never acknowledge that I am the one who gave her the corn, the wine, the olive oil, and all the silver and gold that she used in the worship of Baal.—*Good News Bible*.\*

48. Can you imagine learning to sing this song as a young child? Did the children ask their parents why God said that? In any case, the story of the children of Israel was a tragic one.

49. But, imagine, out of all that, we come to stories like the story of Daniel and his three friends.

**Daniel 9:13-15:** <sup>13</sup> “Giving us all the punishment described in the Law of Moses. But even now, O LORD our God, we have not tried to please you by turning from our sins or by following your truth. <sup>14</sup>You, O LORD our God, were prepared to punish us, and you did, because you always do what is right, and we did not listen to you.

<sup>15</sup> “O Lord our God, you showed your power by bringing your people out of Egypt, and your power is still remembered. We have sinned; we have done wrong.”—*Good News Bible*.\*

50. Have you ever wondered how Daniel and his friends ended up being so faithful to God when they grew up in the horrible environment of ancient Jerusalem at that time? To get just an idea of what that was like, read 2 Kings 17:5-41 and 2 Chronicles 36:14-21.

51. We are now near the end of this earth’s history. Are we doing much better than the ancient Israelites did? Does the message of Laodicea recorded in Revelation 3 apply to us? Are we ready for the second coming of Jesus?

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