



NG Study Guide: Deuteronomy 6:4-6 :: “Flourishing In Relationship With God” [3.3.24]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. Regularly review the notes at the bottom.

The Study

Thesis: Today, we begin a 4-week series on “Family Life” and begin with the theme of flourishing in relationship with God. To flourish means to grow or develop in a healthy or vigorous way, especially as a result of a particularly favorable environment. The most significant positive impact that you will make in your marriage, children, family legacy, friends, neighbors, work, school or worship community is to flourish in relationship with God. Let’s discover how.

Subject: Growing in relationship With God

Object: Flourish in Christ

Context: Moses’ swansong or final address to God’s people. It is in effect a commencement address (Cf. John 13-17). The whole Book of Deuteronomy was presumably recited as a singular message from Moses to God’s people. The climax of the book is the call to return to God and choose life and the renewal of a covenant between God and His people (29-30). The book follows a familiar treaty pattern in the ancient world: the Sovereign is identified, His goodness and power declared, the responsibilities detailed, the blessings of yielding and adverse consequences of rebellion described, and finally provision for continuing the covenant with future generations. ***Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! ⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. ⁶ “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.***

A. Remember God (Deuteronomy 6:4)

Moses calls Israel to remember who God is. Moses says, *hear* or listen intently with understanding. Moses implores them to *hear, O Israel...* The Hebrew word translated “hear” is *shma*, and this declaration is the premier prayer of Judaism, and is recited daily in the morning and evening in synagogues around the globe.

1. God’s goodness and power (Deuteronomy Ch. 1-5)

In the first five chapters, Moses reminds God’s people of God’s faithfulness: His miraculous deliverance from Egypt (10 plagues + Red Sea), God’s desire to lead the prior generation into the Promised Land, Israel’s failure to believe, God’s provision and protection for 40 years in the wilderness, God’s defeat of their enemies, and God’s desire for Joshua to lead this new generation into the Promised Land (Ch. 1-3). They were warned of the dangers of idolatry (making anything or anyone else the object of devotion) (Ch. 4). They were reminded of the Ten Commandments, the covenant, and Moses concludes with the promise of abundant life flowing from yielding to God (5:33, John 10:10).

2. Who God is (6:4)

The term “Israel” is referring here to Jews, but the term means “governed by God” and thus applies to all believers. The LORD refers to YHWH as the Covenant God. This is God who promised Abraham a multitude of descendants and the Land of Promise, and repeated the promise to the patriarchs, Isaac, Jacob and his twelve sons. This God will be faithful to fulfill his promises. He is *our God*, and thus the relationship with God is personal and must also be experienced in community. The *LORD is one* is a declaration that there is only one true God, and thus there is no place for any other claimed god or deity. Jews and Christians are the globe’s only true monotheistic religions. The Hebrew *ehod* translated “one” refers to a compound unity, or the idea of a unity of one (e.g. Trinity – Genesis 2:24).

A.W. Tozer, in his Christian classic, *The Knowledge of The Holy*, poignantly observes that the most important thing about you is what you think about God. That is profound! The better your understanding of who God is, the greater contentment you can experience.

a. God is worthy of your love because of who He is

As you grow in understanding of God’s kindness, mercy, love, grace, generosity, faithfulness, holiness, justice, awesomeness, it is only reasonable that we would grow in love for God. The eternal, self-sufficient, infinite, wise, all-powerful, all-knowing, Sovereign, Creator God is worthy of your love simply because of Who he is. Whenever I’m anxious, afraid, discouraged, frustrated it is either misunderstanding who God is or failing to remember.

B. Respond to God (6:5-6)

1. What God requires

Again, keep in mind that God is using Moses to prepare God’s people to renew their covenant relationship with God. There will be another 24 chapters containing details of what is expected from God’s people (i.e. what God requires from them per this covenant). Yet, if we were to distill all of those commandments to their essence, the distilled result would be, *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength* (5). What does it tell us about what God requires? Once we begin to appreciate who God is, then we can respond to God with the whole person: all of our heart, soul, strength (and mind) (Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37). We are called to worship and total commitment of our affections, spirit, body, and mind.

a. God is to be the master passion of your life

Does this passage tell us something about priorities and competing affections? Does this command imply that we cannot have other loves or objects of affection? How might we know? Genesis 2:24 states, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” We understand that God is revealing that the marriage relationship is to be prioritized over any other familial or human relationship. In essence, love your spouse more than parents, children, siblings, friends, or employer. Nevertheless, what it says is “leave father...” Who is Adam’s Father? Thus, is Adam being told to prioritize Eve over his heavenly Father? How could you know for sure?

Deuteronomy 6:5 resolves the issue, by revealing that although there are competing affections that we need to order them God’s way, and He is to be the master passion of your life.

And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart (6). Thus, more than knowing them intellectually (mind) we are to also internalize or love God’s words as a reasonable response (Cf. Romans 12:1-2).

2. What God has done

Moses has recounted all God did for Israel (Deuteronomy 1-5). Thus, we are called to respond to God’s revealed love for us.

a. God is worthy of your love because of what He has done

Perhaps the best known verse in the Bible declares, “For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever would believe in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). God is worthy of your response of love, because of His love for you proven by giving Jesus so that we could experience life with God (Genesis 22). Your love is simply a response to God’s love for you (1John 4:19).

C. Relate to God

Relationships require relating. If you cannot relate it is hard to flourish in relationship. Jesus came to relate to us, and to help us relate to God the Father.

1. Relate to God’s goodness and power

a. The Incarnation

God’s goodness is seen through the Incarnation (Philippians 2:3-7). Through Christ, we can better relate to God. God is Spirit, and thus knowing Him can be nebulous. God took on flesh, and became man, and dwelt among us so that we could better know God (John 1:1-14). Jesus explained that the way to know the Father is to come to Jesus, yield to Him, learn of Him and from Him, and then we would experience true rest for our souls (Matthew 11:27-30). Jesus assured His disciples that if they have seen or known Him, then they have known the Father (John 14:1-9).

b. The cross

God’s goodness is seen through the cross (John 10:17-18, 15:13). We need to appreciate the bad news, that all of us have sinned against an all-holy God and deserve His judgment that we begin to appreciate the good news of the gospel (Romans 3:23, 5:8, 6:23).

c. The resurrection

God’s power is seen through the resurrection of Jesus (John 10:17-18).

2. Relate to God’s requirements

What does Jesus say about this passage? Jesus was asked, which is the greatest commandment of the 613 recorded in the first five books in the Scriptures recorded by Moses, and known to Jews as the Torah. ***Jesus replied, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”³⁸ This is the first and great commandment.³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets”*** (Matthew 22:37-39).

It might seem surprising that Jesus did not quote one of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20), but quoted Deuteronomy 6:5 (and Leviticus 19:18). Jesus is declaring that these two commandments are the essence of God’s requirements. You cannot separate them. Thus, your love for God is revealed by your love for neighbors where you live, work, study, play and worship.

3. Relate to what God has done

a. Jesus provides a better way to flourish

To flourish means to grow or develop in a healthy or vigorous way, as a result of a particularly favorable environment.

The environment is a gospel-centered life where you know that you are loved by God, and right with Him by grace through faith in Jesus (Ephesians 2:8-9). You are motivated to grow and flourish, not to earn God’s acceptance, but because you know that you are accepted in Christ. Through faith in Christ, you enter the New Covenant. You are in Christ and He is in you. The climax of Deuteronomy is a call to flourish in a covenant relationship with God. Similarly, this day we are reminded of Jesus’ offer to flourish in a new covenant relationship in Him.

Study Guide Qs

Q1. What have you learned about God (e.g. this year) that caused you to love Him more?

Q2. Consider the truth of what God did in former generations, as well as your own experiences with God. How does it make you feel?

Q3. How does God's goodness and power as revealed by the Incarnation, cross and resurrection make you feel?

Q4. In what ways might Jesus make it easier to relate to God?

"Disciples Who Dig Deeper" (optional or alternative study)

1. Here is a helpful article on evidences of a growing love for God: <http://gateway.redemptionaz.com/5-evidences-of-a-growing-love-for-god/>

2. Write a love letter to God declaring your understanding of what He has done, who He is, and your devotion, affections, feelings, and faith.

Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors inside or outside the group?

2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?

Disciples who make disciples:

1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?

2. Here is a disciple making idea to consider for the weeks ahead:

Invite a neighbor to attend your NG, and grow in their love for God and neighbors.

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Notes:

1. Preparation and participation: Group participants should read the teacher's notes contained in this study guide prior to your meeting and be prepared to discuss the content. Remember the purpose of preparation and participation is to accelerate growth as disciples who loves God supremely, loves neighbors like self, and make other disciples who do likewise. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

2. Consider what about the passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?

If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.

3. The "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities. As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

4. The "Love your neighbors" section encourages participants to love neighbors inside and outside the group better. As a leader, discuss this section frequently.

5. The "Disciples who make disciples" section provides a helpful idea, and encourages participants to be disciples who make disciples. Leaders should regularly encourage the group to review and discuss this section.

Next week's passage: Deuteronomy 6:7-9