



Covenant Relationship

BELIEVERS FIND GOD'S BLESSINGS THROUGH OBEDIENCE.

Scripture Passage: Deuteronomy 28:1-6,15-19 **Memory Verse: Deuteronomy 28:9**

A classic hymn contains the words, “Trust and obey, for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey.” Over the course of my 60+ years of walking with God, He has shown me the truth of these words again and again. God has provided His Word, the Bible, as our guide for life, and we can trust His words. The Bible is right about marriage. The Bible is right about the value of family. The Bible is right about money. The Bible is right about business dealings. The Bible is right about servanthood. The Bible is right about relationships.

Most important of all, the Bible is right about Jesus. God sent His Son to secure the salvation of all who place their faith in Him. We can best live for the Lord by learning His commands and trusting in His Spirit to help us obey them. God’s way is not the sheltered way, as some might suggest; rather, God’s way is the right way.

As you dig into the verses for this session, ask God to help you better understand the blessings that can come through obedience to God’s commands. Seek His wisdom as you lead your group to experience His blessings through their obedience to Him.



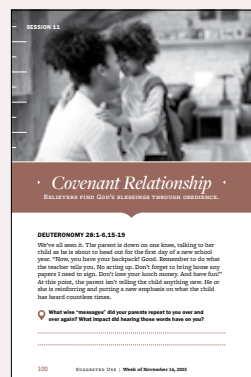
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We've all seen it. The parent is down on one knee, talking to her child as he is about to head out for the first day of a new school year. "Now, you have your backpack? Good. Remember to do what the teacher tells you. No acting up. Don't forget to bring home any papers I need to sign. Don't lose your lunch money. And have fun!" At this point, the parent isn't telling the child anything new. He or she is reinforcing and putting a new emphasis on what the child has heard countless times. (PSG, p. 100)

**What wise "messages" did your parents repeat to you over and over again?
What impact did hearing those words have on you?**



Understand the Context (Deuteronomy 27:1–28:68)

Moses and Israel's elders charged the people to keep God's commandments (27:1-8). After they entered Canaan, they were to plaster large stones and write God's commands on them. They were to set them up at Mount Ebal in the central region of Canaan. They also were to build an altar there and offer sacrifices as God commanded. Moses and the priests stressed to the Israelites that since they were God's people, they needed to follow His statutes (27:9-10).

Moses also instructed the people how they should affirm publicly the terms of the covenant (27:11-26). Half the tribes were to stand on Mount Ebal while the other half were to stand on nearby Mount Gerizim. They were to recite the curses that would come on those who forsook God's commands. Some of the curses related to the Ten Commandments (27:15-16,24), while others mentioned sexual sins (27:20-23). Still others highlighted matters of basic justice in the community (27:17-19,25). God was giving the people His commands for their blessing, but disobedience would bring a curse upon them. Consequently, writing down the curses and reciting them publicly would remind God's people of the importance of faithfully obeying all He commanded.

Moses highlighted all the blessings of following the Lord (28:1-14). Israel would be blessed above all nations, whether they lived in the city or the country. Their children and their lands would be blessed, along with their flocks and herds. Their enemies would flee in battle, and the Lord would grant them abundant harvests. Other peoples of the earth would stand in awe of

them. He would bless them in every way, and they would enjoy life to the fullest measure as they submitted to His commands.

However, Moses also reviewed the awful curses they would experience if they disobeyed the Lord's commands (28:15-68). Instead of prospering, other nations would prosper more. The Israelites' children, lands, flocks, and herds would all be cursed. God's people would flee before their enemies in battle, and He would oppose all they tried to do (28:15-19).

The Lord would bring all sorts of disasters against His people: pestilence, disease, drought, and more (28:20-29). They would lose their wives and children, their homes, their vineyards, and their animals. Other nations would oppress them, and God eventually would exile them to another land (28:30-37).

Their agriculture would fail (28:38-42), and foreigners would become their leaders (28:43-44). All these curses would come as a reminder of the people's disobedience (28:45-48). Nations would besiege them, and the Israelites would experience the horrors of war and captivity (28:49-57). No escape would come because God's disobedient people would experience life's worst situations no matter which way they turned (28:58-68).

As you read through Deuteronomy 27:1–28:68, underscore "today" and "this day." How do these add a sense of importance for God's people to make a decision or commitment? (PSG, p. 101)

ENGAGE



PREPARE: On a focal wall, display **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outlines of Numbers, Deuteronomy*) and **Pack Item 6** (*Poster: Ancient Covenant Structure*).

INTRODUCE:

Guide adults to read the opening paragraph on page 100 of the PSG.

ASK:

What wise “messages” did your parents repeat to you over and over again? What impact did hearing those words have on you? (PSG, p. 100) Record responses on the board.

DISCUSS:

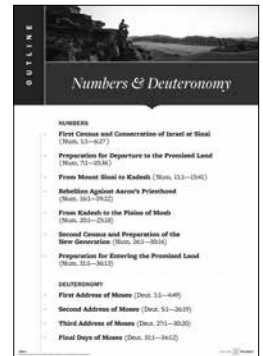
Review the list and encourage adults who are parents to share how many of these messages they have repeated to their children. Encourage them to share additional messages they share regularly with family members. Lead a brief discussion on why passing down wisdom from one generation to the next is so important. Suggest that this can be seen as an act of love based on a parent’s desire to see the best for their children.

EXPLAIN:

Reference **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outlines of Numbers, Deuteronomy*) and mention that today’s Bible study passage is part of the third address of Moses to the Israelites. Point out that while some of the content may seem repetitive, each new generation of Israelites benefited from the continual reminders of their covenant obligations to the Lord.

TRANSITION:

Today, as we study these verses from Deuteronomy 28, reflect on the blessings of faithfulness and obedience to God. At the same time, examine your life in light of the consequences God promised to those who rebel against His commands.



Group Activity Option

Music

Display the lyrics and show a video or play a recording of the song “Goodness of God.” Encourage adults to share ways that they have experienced God’s goodness and blessings in their lives. Ask: **What responses should God’s goodness to us elicit?** Challenge adults to consider the blessings of obedience and the consequences of disobedience as they study this session’s verses.

Faithfulness (Deut. 28:1-6)

1 “Now if you faithfully obey the LORD your God and are careful to follow all his commands I am giving you today, the LORD your God will put you far above all the nations of the earth. **2** All these blessings will come and overtake you, because you obey the LORD your God: **3** You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. **4** Your offspring will be blessed, and your land’s produce, and the offspring of your livestock, including the young of your herds and the newborn of your flocks. **5** Your basket and kneading bowl will be blessed. **6** You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out.”

(v. 1) Moses instructed the people to affirm God’s covenant in a ceremony on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim after they entered Canaan (Deut. 27:11-26). Earlier, he had delineated the blessings obedience would bring (Lev. 26:3-13). However, he wanted to share these truths again before Israel crossed the Jordan River.

The words translated *faithfully obey* reflect a strong emphasis in the original language. Likewise, *careful to follow* denote an intentional and watchful obedience of God’s *commands*. In the words *I am giving you today*, Moses stressed his role in passing along God’s statutes to them. He would not be with them when they entered Canaan, and the priests would provide spiritual leadership moving forward (Deut. 31:9). If the people were faithful, they would find themselves *above all the nations of the earth* because of God’s blessing on them.

(v. 2) *All these blessings* anticipates the benefits Moses was about to pronounce (vv. 3-14). In fact, Israel’s leader assured the people that the blessings would *overtake* the Israelites. The wording suggests that God’s blessings would pursue His obedient people. He wanted them to experience the best He had to offer them.

Moses’s words were not some promise of prosperity theology. The blessings He described did in fact apply to many aspects of life, but God’s blessing far exceeded material things. *The LORD your God* would honor the people’s covenant relationship with Him, a personal relationship established through faith and obedience.

(vv. 3-4) *Blessed in the city and blessed in the country* indicated that God’s people would be blessed wherever they lived. Some Israelites would find security within a walled city. Others might want to live off the land. Moses said they would experience God’s blessing either way.

The Hebrew word for *offspring* occurs three times in the verse. The English translations help clarify the context, but the Israelites would have clearly understood the message. God was promising fruitfulness on every level.

The Israelites would experience fruitfulness in their families, in the *produce* they grew, and in the animals they domesticated. Their *herds* (cows and oxen) and their *flocks* (sheep and goats) would multiply and be protected from predators, which was an ongoing concern.

(vv. 5-6) The word for *basket* occurs only four times in the Old Testament, all in Deuteronomy 26 and 28. It always denotes a receptacle for produce. A blessed basket implied a plentiful harvest.

The word for *kneading bowl* describes a household vessel that contained unleavened dough. Women would knead leaven into their dough in such containers. When God’s people left Egypt, they took unleavened dough in their kneading bowls because they had no time to wait for the dough to rise (Ex. 12:34). A blessed kneading bowl meant the people had plenty of grain to grind into flour and to make dough.

The verbs *come in* and to *go out* often appear as a comprehensive designation of daily activities (see Ps. 121:8). In the current verse, the expression highlights how every aspect of the people’s lives would experience God’s blessing.

Key Doctrine

Man

Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. (See John 1:16-17; Romans 5:20-21.)



APPLICATION POINT: Believers should enjoy the blessing that comes from following God’s commands.

READ:

Invite a volunteer to read aloud Deuteronomy 28:1-6 as adults listen for the blessings promised by God.

LIST:

Create two columns on the board: *Blessings* and *Curses*. Guide adults to call out the blessings from verses 1-6 and write their responses on the board. Examples include:

Verse 3: Israel would be blessed in all areas.

Verse 4: Children, agriculture, and livestock would multiply.

Verse 5: God would meet the families’ most basic needs.

Verse 6: God’s people would be blessed in all respects.

DEFINE:

Ask adults their definition of the word “blessed.” Share this content from page 103 of the PSG:

We tend to think of prosperity in terms of financial resources. The Hebrew word did not have this limitation. To be blessed meant to have one’s life filled with benefits. God is the ultimate source of all blessings (Jas. 1:17).

ASK:

How do these promised blessings differ from the prosperity theology that is commonly taught and preached today? (PSG, p. 105)

TRANSITION:

Using **Pack Item 6** (Poster: *Ancient Covenant Structure*), guide adults to identify elements of the covenant in Deuteronomy 28:1-6. Explain that the next section parallels this passage.



Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Bread

Display a loaf of bread and read Deuteronomy 28:5. Ask: **How is the loaf of bread a symbol of blessing for the Israelite community?** Lead adults to scan verses 3-6 and to call out other items that represented God’s blessings on those who were obedient to Him. Ask: **What items in our daily lives could represent God’s blessings on us?**

Disobedience (Deut. 28:15-19)

15 “But if you do not obey the LORD your God by carefully following all his commands and statutes I am giving you today, all these curses will come and overtake you: **16** You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country. **17** Your basket and kneading bowl will be cursed. **18** Your offspring will be cursed, and your land’s produce, the young of your herds, and the newborn of your flocks. **19** You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out.”

(v. 15) Previously, Moses had highlighted the curses God would bring upon the people if they disobeyed His commands (Lev. 26:14-39). He now restated them because he wanted the Israelites to have both the blessings and the curses fresh in their minds as they entered the promised land.

The topics in verses 15-19 closely parallel verses 1-6. However, Israel would experience God’s curses instead of His blessings if the people were not *carefully following* God’s ways. The word *commands* denotes God’s laws in general. The word *statutes* comes from a verb that means “to inscribe” and emphasizes the permanent, written nature of God’s words. Moses warned the people sternly that *all these curses* would *overtake* them if they compromised spiritually. He soon would go on to articulate those curses—all the way through verse 68. God was determined to underscore the disaster of disobedience.

(vv. 16-17) Living in a *city* would not provide security for those who were *cursed*. The book of Genesis uses this word to describe those who cursed Abraham (Gen. 12:3), but here God was saying the same consequence applied to His own people! The book of Lamentations records how Judah’s sad situation under siege resulted in cannibalism as those who died became food for the living (Lam. 2:20; 4:10). The Israelites could not trust in the apparent security of their city walls.

Those who lived in the *country* would fare no better. Isaiah later compared Judah’s weakness against an invasion to “a shelter in the vineyard” or “a shack in a cucumber field” (Isa. 1:8). Jeremiah noted how some tent dwellers sought refuge in Jerusalem during Nebuchadnezzar’s siege, though this offered only temporary relief (Jer. 35:11; 39:1-10).

The *basket* and *kneading bowl* represented the places where Israelites carried or prepared food. The baskets that normally held produce from the harvest would be lacking, perhaps because of a drought (Lev. 26:19-20). A slim

harvest would prove disastrous for farmers who counted on crops both for their own food and their personal livelihood.

Without plentiful grain, the women who prepared the bread would not have the raw materials to fix meals for their families. Without God’s blessing, the people would face a lack of food.

(vv. 18-19) Moses also warned God’s people *your offspring* would be *cursed*. The next generation would experience the sad consequences of their parents’ disobedience. The children would go hungry when the crops failed. They also might follow their parents in disobeying God’s commands and bring guilt upon themselves. The Lord’s judgment would continue as long as the people persisted in their disobedience.

Israel’s *herds* and *flocks* would feel the consequences of sin as well. People needed food, but they also needed to feed their animals. After the harvest, farmers might allow shepherds to graze their sheep and goats in their fields. This helped clear the stubble for the next planting season. However, if no crops had grown, shepherds wouldn’t have this option. A drought, and the famine it created, could cripple a society.

Come in and *go out* summarize the comprehensive curse Israel would experience in every aspect of life, just as verse 6 described comprehensive blessings. Verses 20-68 more specifically describe the extent to which God’s curses could fall on His rebellious people. No matter what course of action they pursued, God’s curse would rest on the sinful people.

God set before His people blessings and curses, and Moses encouraged them to choose God’s blessings. Living according to God’s commands leads to life as God designed it, and His people experience joy. Conversely, disobeying God’s commands brings humiliation and disaster.



APPLICATION POINT: Choosing to disregard God's commands leads to humiliation.

READ:

Read aloud Deuteronomy 28:15-19 and encourage adults to listen for elements of God's covenant.

SAY:

The list of prescribed disasters and miseries (vv. 15-68) is longer than the list of blessings for obedience (vv. 1-14). This was common in ancient agreements. Evidently, negative reinforcement was more effective in eliciting compliance than promised future rewards. (PSG, p. 106)

COMPARE:

Complete the list on the board by asking adults to call out curses mentioned in Deuteronomy 28:16-19. Record their responses in the "Curses" column. Discuss the similarities between the blessings and curses. Emphasize that obedience and disobedience are what make the difference.

ASK:

What do these curses say about God's nature and character? (PSG, p. 107)

BIBLE SKILL:

Direct adults to read and reflect on the Bible Skill activity on page 107 of the PSG.

Read and reflect on a Bible Passage: Read Deuteronomy 28:1-6. Try to imagine a life where every aspect of it experienced God's blessing. *What would that look like in your life? How and where would God's blessing manifest itself?* Now read verses 15-19 and try to imagine life totally apart from God's blessing. *How might the thought of such an awful alternative motivate people to live faithfully by God's commands? God wanted to see His people demonstrate their faith in Him through obedience to His commands. How does James describe that concept (Jas. 2:18)?*

DISCUSS:

Lead adults in a brief discussion about the potential of a life filled with God's blessings and a life devoid of His blessings.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE:

Review the following statements from Apply the Text on page 108 in the *Personal Study Guide*:

- *Believers should enjoy the blessing that comes from following God's commands.*
- *Choosing to disregard God's commands leads to humiliation.*

REFLECT:

Lead adults to evaluate the statements and select the one they believe is easiest to explain to a child. Encourage them to consider writing their thoughts in a journal as they review these verses and application points during the week.

DISCUSS:

Direct adults to review the first set of questions on page 108 in the *Personal Study Guide*. Lead them to make plans to be a conduit of God's blessing to someone in the coming week. Suggest they review their motivations for good works using the second set of questions on page 108 during their prayer times this week.

PRAY:

Guide adults to reflect on the blessings they have received from God. Open a time of prayer, inviting adults to say aloud a blessing they have received from God.

AFTER THE SESSION

Send the group an email or text to remind them of the plans they made to seek to be a conduit of God's blessing to someone this week. Challenge them to view these plans as a way to bring glory to God—not to themselves. Encourage them to continue expressing gratitude for the things He has done and is doing in their lives.

ADULT COMMENTARY



Want to go deeper in your study?
Explore the Bible Adult Commentary offers additional information and biblical insights related to the key passages.
(Available for purchase at [Lifeway.com](https://www.lifeway.com).)

EXPLORE  THE BIBLE.