



“This is the Story...”

Written by Talashia Keim Yoder and Daniel Yoder. Artwork by Christa and Jonathan Reuel.
Song lyrics and music by Jonathan Reuel.

Week 11: Then, Now and Always

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Intro Video: <https://youtu.be/GaR0Uc0-OXU>

Review the big story: God created the cosmos and humans and called it all good. We were created to live in harmony, but sometimes we miss the mark. Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and all of humanity missed the mark, and they had to live with the consequences, but God stuck with them and continued to love them. Then God called a family, beginning with Abraham and Sarah, to be in a covenant relationship with God. God’s work continued with three more generations from this family. Like the humans before them, they often missed the mark, but God was faithful. When the people became slaves in Egypt, God raised up Moses to be their leader. God performed many signs and wonders, and delivered them from slavery. In the wilderness, they learned to be a people of God, trusting in God’s provision and living out God’s commandments in shalom community. The daughters of Zelophahad show us that sometimes living in God’s way meant wrestling with the law and changing it.

- **Key verses:** Deuteronomy 6:4-6

Tell the story: After forty years of learning to be a shalom community, the people are getting ready to go to the promised land. This is a time of preparation. When they are no longer living in this wilderness of total dependence on God, how will they carry on as the people of God? This passage, known as the *shema* (which means, “Hear!”), or the great commandment, is what they are to remember above anything else. The commandment is love.

- Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9
- Read page 67 in the *Shine On* story Bible.

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**
 - “Keep these words.” This is a powerful phrase. We actually considered naming this series with this phrase! Notice how the people are instructed to keep these words. Is it just by memorizing them? Notice the embodied knowledge of this commandment. If you really did this, how would it change your life?
 - Sometimes in our world, we think we need experts to teach our children to follow God. Is that what this passage seems to say? Where are we supposed to learn these words?
 - Is Deuteronomy 4:5 familiar?
- **Background information:**
 - This passage is a really big deal. Pieces of it come up again and again throughout the Bible. If you’re intrigued by this, look up “*shema*” and learn about how these words are still kept in Jewish tradition.
 - The Bible was written in a polytheistic (many gods) world. This text doesn’t concern itself with refuting the idea of other gods, but instead focuses on the commandment to worship only one god, the true God. It is a declaration of monotheism.
 - Until now, people have been told to fear God. Now they are told to love God with all their heart, being and might. The NRSV translates the Hebrew *nefesh* as “soul,” but it more literally means “life-breath” or “essential self” (Alter, vol 1, 641). In modern times, the word “soul” is associated with body/soul dualism, so it might be helpful to use one of these other terms instead.

- **Conversation starters:**

- The big commandment here is to love God with our whole being. Why should we do that? What does it mean for our lives if we do?
- How can you “keep these words”?

Microsong: “Then, Now and Always” (Listen: <https://youtu.be/8CPioJvZqt0>)

Hear and do these words when you begin your life across the Jordan. Write them on your hearts, get them inside you and then teach your children. Love and worship God with your whole being, with your whole heart. And with all you have, in awe remember God is one, then, now and always, God is one, only God.

Sing the big song: (Listen: <https://youtu.be/f1e1laVDQ84>)

This is the story of how it all began. God made matter, and chaos shattered.

Eve and Adam, they tried to hide. The world got violent and God replied with a mark and a flood and a rainbow sign, God’s love written on skin and sky,

And then God called a family to be a blessing to the earth, ahhhhhh

A mother and her favorite son wrestle for the blessing, another son becomes a slave, the land is saved from famine.

God’s family grows. Egypt oppresses. They groan to God and God sends Moses.

Ten strange signs say “Please release them!” By the sea God saves them. Ahhhhhhhhhh.

The people complain. God rains bread. Daily food and ten new rules.

Five sisters come and ask for land. God says “Yes, amend the law!”

Moses says, “In your new life across the Jordan, love God with your whole heart and with all your being, and your strength, now listen: God is One, only God! God is One, only God!”

God loves every one of us, it’s true, and God loves the universe.

Go do your household project!