In the overall covenant structure of Deuteronomy, chapters 6–11 focus on relationship, heart, and life. As a result of choosing to focus on God’s grace and mercy, the change of heart brings a change in the whole life. This passage summarizes the overall aim of the covenant and sets the stage for the laws that follow, which are arranged in the consecutive pattern of the Ten Words. In light of Deuteronomy 10, the laws are clearly not the means of salvation, but are case laws and examples of what it looks like to live a life with a circumcised heart.

The heart is central here, because only with the heart can one truly serve God. And yet our hearts are naturally stiff and stubborn, even stony. They need to be circumcised to be able to follow God (Deut. 10:16). It seems that part of the circumcision process is learning to understand who God really is, to focus on His mighty and awesome power, and to understand His love. When we know God’s heart, our hearts are drawn into a faith relationship with Him, and we naturally begin the process of living well. As a result, we also have love for others. When we understand that God has rescued us from slavery and that we were the strangers and foreigners as well, we are then inspired to reach out in love to other strangers and foreigners. God’s love for us grows a responsive chord in our own hearts and overflows into love for others that would not have been there before. It is easy to forget from whence we have come, but God wants us to remember.
Write out Deuteronomy 10:12–22 from the Bible translation of your choice. If you’re pressed for time, write out Deuteronomy 10:12–16. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
INWARD CIRCUMCISION

Moses calls the people to reflect on the covenant and on their relationship with God, which comes first before obedience. God wants us to fear Him first, “fear” being the equivalent word in the Old Testament for a saving faith (Deut. 10:12). This is true relationship, not being scared or terrified. And this is what leads to the next aspect of covenant, which is to walk in God’s ways and to love Him (v. 12). When we are in relationship with God, we naturally want to be close to Him, to follow Him, to walk with Him. And this grows the love in our hearts for Him. As a result, we are led to serve Him with all our hearts and all our lives, which is the same phrase used in Deut. 6 for loving God (v. 12). This is not a service of legalism but a willing, voluntary service of gratitude and joy.

Most powerfully of all, verse 13 is grammatically and theologically an outpouring or consequence of all the elements in the previous verse. When we fear God, walk with Him, love Him, and serve Him with all our hearts, then we will keep the commandments and statutes. But it will be the result of our changed hearts, and not a way to be saved. Not only that, but these commandments are for our good! God rules the universe, and yet He loves us, and that is the foundation of our relationship to Him, and our love in return (vv. 14–15).

However, the people have a problem. Their hearts are not circumcised. They are stiff-necked and stubborn (v. 16). They have not yet given their hearts to God. And so Moses notes that circumcision of the heart is a necessary element to this relationship with God. Fascinatingly, this is the only type of circumcision that is mentioned in Deuteronomy, implying that this is what God wanted all along, and that the outward circumcision was only to represent in a visual and physical way what was going on in the heart. In fact, when God first gave the covenant to Abraham, He did not ask for outward circumcision (Gen. 12:1–3, 15:1–20). It was only after Abraham rebelliously sinned two different times, each related to sexuality and his wife (Gen. 12:10–20, 16:1–16), that God instituted circumcision. Perhaps this was to remind him of where he fell, and where he really needed God’s grace and changing power in his life. But inward circumcision was always the goal, and Deuteronomy’s focus on this alone seems to corroborate this possibility.
GRACE, GRACE, AND MORE GRACE

The main key to truly understanding God’s heart in Deuteronomy is to see that it is all about grace. There is no legalism here. When taken out of context, certain passages could seem to imply a legalistic mindset, but when read as a whole, Deuteronomy is the opposite of legalistic. God is a relational God; He does not want robots. He would rather have your heart, even if you are continuing to struggle with sin, than for you to be perfect and sinless but have your heart far from Him. In fact, this is one of the main issues that the later prophets have with the people. The prophets often quote from Deuteronomy, noting that the people do many of the right things (although they sin terribly too), but that their hearts are far from God. Jesus, when asked about the two greatest commandments, first quotes from Deuteronomy about loving God (Matt. 22:34–40)! Of course, this love implies covenantal commitment, and actions that demonstrate that love, but it starts with love! And this love then leads to love for other people.

God does not only love Israel, but He loves all people. This is a reference to the aspect of God’s choice in the covenant, in that God had to choose someone through whom to give His message of grace to the world. And God did not choose them because of their righteousness (Deut. 9:4–12). God is certainly not limited to Israel, because He works through many other non-Israelite people throughout the Bible to share His grace (think of Balaam, Rahab, and others). But that choice by God gives a greater responsibility to Israel to pass on this love to other people. Here in Deuteronomy 10, God calls the people to care for the fatherless, widows, and foreigners, because this is what God does (vv. 18, 19). God provides for them, and because He loves us and loves them, and we love Him, we are also to love them. In addition, we were foreigners also, and this should be the reason that we understand and sympathize and bring love and help. We were adopted into God’s family, and so we have the privilege of sharing that joy with others and inviting others in as well. This says a lot about how we are still called to right the social wrongs around us today. We are to be ministers of God’s love to any and all who need it, especially to the most vulnerable and needy. This passage says nothing about ascertaining their motives, but only that we are to love them as God has loved us.

Read more at
www.inversebible.org/deut07-4
What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Micah 6:1–8
Deuteronomy 30:1–6
Deuteronomy 6:4–9
Deuteronomy 15:4–11
Deuteronomy 9:4–29
Ezekiel 36:22–27
Deuteronomy 26:12–15
Ephesians 2:4–10

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with Deuteronomy 10?
LOVE AND JUSTICE INTERTWINED

Yahweh’s character is on full display in Deuteronomy 10. God loves first, and longs for our love in return (v. 15). We are not able to do anything on our own, but we can respond with love to the love Jesus pours into our hearts. We can choose to be in relationship with God, to let Him work on our hearts, to follow His voice, to serve Him with all our person, and to trust that He will work out our salvation and our sanctification. Love comes before obedience. Indeed, we cannot obey on our own. Even our good deeds are like filthy menstrual rags (Isa. 64:6) and need the cleansing of Jesus’ righteousness. There is no hope for us without God’s love.

God owns the universe, but He also comes close in our hearts. He is the great, mighty, and awesome God (v. 17). And yet He sets His heart in love on us. The heart is key to a closer relationship with God, and yet it starts with God’s heart. This is such a powerful picture of salvation by faith and prevenient grace (God’s grace which is at work to draw us to Him before we are even aware of it). Then God continues to do many awesome and amazing things for us in the plan of salvation. He multiplies blessings to us and leads us into better and better things with Him. God is also worthy of praise (v. 21), and we are to hold fast or cling to Him as honey does to our skin (v. 20). This is a reminder that as we focus on gratitude to God for what He has done, our relationship grows ever sweeter and more precious.

Ultimately, God is also a God of justice. He does not play favorites, and He does not take bribes. Although it may seem this way to our eyes blinded by sin, these are the lies of the devil to make us distrust God. Yahweh loves everyone equally and desires for each person to share eternity with Him. Especially for the people that humans tend to look down on, like the poor, the ones without a family or inheritance, and those who have to flee their native land (v. 18), God takes extra care to make sure they are provided for equally. And He calls on His followers to live out His desires for the vulnerable, to care for them as He would, and to see their inner soul as having infinite value, rather than the outward circumstances (see also Deut. 15:7–11). But even if we do not, God will ultimately execute justice on their behalf (Matt. 25:31–46).
inSight

Review the memory verse. How does it apply to your life this week?

After this week’s study of the chapter, what applications can be made personally?

What applications can be made publicly and/or socially?

Read more inSight from the Spirit of Prophecy at www.inversebible.org/deut07-7

CONSECRATION

“In giving ourselves to God, we must necessarily give up all that would separate us from Him. Hence the Saviour says, ‘Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple.’ Luke 14:33. Whatever shall draw away the heart from God must be given up. Mammon is the idol of many. The love of money, the desire for wealth, is the golden chain that binds them to Satan. Reputation and worldly honor are worshiped by another class. The life of selfish ease and freedom from responsibility is the idol of others. But these slavish bands must be broken. We cannot be half the Lord’s and half the world’s. We are not God’s children unless we are such entirely.

“There are those who profess to serve God, while they rely upon their own efforts to obey His law, to form a right character, and secure salvation. Their hearts are not moved by any deep sense of the love of Christ, but they seek to perform the duties of the Christian life as that which God requires of them in order to gain heaven. Such religion is worth nothing. When Christ dwells in the heart, the soul will be so filled with His love, with the joy of communion with Him, that it will cleave to Him; and in the contemplation of Him, self will be forgotten. Love to Christ will be the spring of action. Those who feel the constraining love of God, do not ask how little may be given to meet the requirements of God; they do not ask for the lowest standard, but aim at perfect conformity to the will of their Redeemer. With earnest desire they yield all and manifest an interest proportionate to the value of the object which they seek. A profession of Christ without this deep love is mere talk, dry formality, and heavy drudgery.” (Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1892), 44.)

“Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled”

“All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.” (White, The Desire of Ages, 668.)
Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

How do you serve God with all your heart and all your soul? What are indications that this is present in your life?

Have there been times in your life where you have struggled to give God your will? How did you ultimately make that choice?

How do you know if your heart needs to be circumcised?

What does it mean for us that God does not take a bribe or play favorites?

What is the relationship between God giving food and clothing to the foreigner and God’s call for us to love them?

How can you show more love for the vulnerable and foreigners around you?

How has God’s love for you changed your life?