



NOW CHOOSE

LIFE

7 STUDIES IN DEUTERONOMY

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Introduction

It's been a long journey to this point.

Way back in Genesis 12 God made some promises to Abram that it would be through his descendants that God would save rebellious humanity. God promised Abram his descendants would become a great nation, in a land of their own and they would be blessed and they would be a blessing. As the story of Abrams descendants unfolds, things don't seem to work out so well... they begin to become a great nation... but they end up as slaves in Egypt far from their own land and far from blessing. In the book of Exodus God rescues Abraham's descendants, now known as the nation of Israel, from Egypt and with a few bumps along the way brings them to the edge of the promised land. That's where they sit in the book of Deuteronomy, on the very edge of the promised land.

The promise of being a great nation with a land of their own now seems set to be fulfilled as they sit and wait for their entry (1:1-5). The book of Deuteronomy, probably mostly written by Moses around 1400BC, is a call on the people of God to remember God's loyal love to them and to respond by showing him a corresponding loyal love that expresses itself in trust and obedience. The book is largely made up of three speeches by Moses. In chapters 1 to 4 Moses explains how loyal God has been to them despite their faithlessness on their journey to the edge of the promised land. In his second speech in chapters 5 to 26 we see exactly what it will look like for Israel to be loyal to God. The remainder of Moses' words and the book as a whole clearly explain the consequences of listening and not listening to God's instruction and guidance for life in the promised land. The book finishes with a sad reminder of the consequences of a lack of faith in God for even the most notable of all the people, Moses himself. It is foreboding that the giver of the law, that is the instruction and guidance on how to live as God's faithful people, will not get to experience the blessing of life in the land.

As the title of this series suggests the overall aim in all these speeches and the book as a whole is to encourage and exhort the people to 'Choose life' in the land by loving the Lord their God with all their heart, soul and strength by walking in obedience. Everything is geared toward that ongoing decision of choosing to love God and obey him. This isn't something they do just once, but it is a call to continuing to make that decision. However, in the unfolding story of the OT this proved to be beyond the people. They needed the new heart God promised in 30:6 which we receive through faith in Christ. Because of God's action in saving us through Christ, and giving us new hearts by his Spirit, we are called to love God and walk in obedience in dependence on his strength.

1 Looking back to go forward

Deuteronomy 1-3

Getting started

1. Share a time where you've learned something from past mistakes or past successes.

Explore

Read Deuteronomy 1:1-4

Almost the entire book of Deuteronomy is a sermon preached by Moses on the edge of the promised land and this section gives us the setting and a very brief summary of the story so far.

2. Where is Moses and the people when he gives them this sermon? How far is this from Mt Horeb (Sinai)? How long did it take them to reach this point (Hint: v. 3)?

Read Deuteronomy 1:5-8

3. Why do you think Moses needs to remind the people what the Lord said to them when they left Sinai/Horeb the first time?

NOTE: Mt Sinai which in Deuteronomy is regularly called **Horeb** was the place where God officially made a covenant with his people and gave them the 10 commandments.

Read Deuteronomy 1:19-46

4. How did the Israelites go at obeying what the Lord told them to do? What excuses did they give?

5. How did Moses respond?

6. How did God respond?

7. The whole of Moses' sermon in Deuteronomy is aimed at motivating the people to choose to obey the Lord and go in and take the land he'd promised them which lies before them. With that in mind, why do you think Moses reminds them of this failure?

Read Deuteronomy 2:16-23

Deuteronomy 2:1-23 recounts some of their wanderings in the wilderness among lands that the Lord hadn't promised to them but to other people.

8. What does Moses tell the Israelites that the Lord did for the descendants of Lot and Esau? Why do you think he tells them this? (*Hint: Compare this to the excuses the Israelites gave for not wanting to enter the land back in chapter 1*)

NOTE: Rephaites, Zam-zummites, Anakites:
These peoples are talked about in the bible as ancient races of giants. They elicited considerable fear. King Og mentioned in 3:11 was a Rephaite.

Read Deuteronomy 2:24-3:11

9. How does reminding the Israelites of these events serve Moses' overall aim in the sermon?

Read Deuteronomy 3:12-29

10. Here we see the people begin to receive the land. What does Moses want the people to learn from this for the rest of the conquest of Canaan?

Apply

11. When are you most tempted to doubt God's faithfulness? What promises has God made you that he's kept that can help you move through those doubts?

12. How does God's grace and faithfulness motivate obedience in the Christian life (See Titus 2:11-14)

Pray

2 The words of life

Deuteronomy 4

Getting started

1. Can you think of an example where listening carefully to what someone says could literally save your life?

Explore

Read Deuteronomy 4:1-14

2. What is the fundamental outcome of Israel obeying God's decrees and laws? Where will they get to be able to enjoy this outcome?

3. What further motivation for obedience is given in verses 5 to 8?

Read Deuteronomy 4:15-31

4. What is the basis upon which the people can experience God's presence?

5. What will cause them to be cast out from his presence?

6. How is God different from the gods of the nations?

Read Deuteronomy 4:32-40

7. What is the key message that Moses wants his people to grasp in this whole section (See particularly v. 35 and v. 39)?

8. How does Moses want them to respond to this knowledge? Why?

Read Hebrews 1:1-2, 2:1-4

9. How is the way God speaks to us the same/different to how God spoke to the Israelites? How is our response to be the same/different to theirs?

Apply

10. Idolatry stopped the people listening to the Lord. What are things that can interfere with us listening to God?

11. If listening to God is life what concrete things can we do to ensure that we keep listening to God?

Pray

3 The LORD is one

Deuteronomy 5-11

Getting Started

1. 'There's no such thing as loyalty anymore' Discuss.

Explore

Read Deuteronomy 5:1-6:3

2. How does Moses describe the relationship between God and Israel at Horeb/Sinai? What does this mean?

3. What commitments does this relationship involve for God and Israel? What does God want the outcome to be for Israel?

Read Deuteronomy 6:4-25

4. How does Moses sum up the commandments in verses 4 and 5? What does it mean that the LORD is one?

5. How has God been loyal to Israel? How are they to respond to his loyalty? What will this loyalty ultimately be for Israel (See especially verse 25)?

Read Deuteronomy 7:6-16

6. Why is it so important for Israel to drive out the nations that dwell in the land?

Read Deuteronomy 9:1-6

6. What does Moses warn his people against? Why?

7. What reasons does Moses give for God's actions?

Apply

*Now we know that as Christians our salvation rests on God's faithfulness to us in the Lord Jesus and not our own personal righteousness and obedience because we will never be good enough. Our righteousness is only through faith in the Lord Jesus. Yet like the people of God in the OT he calls us to live for him and show him loyalty in obedience in **response** to our salvation.*

8. With reference to some of the specific commands in chapter 5 what are some ways you can be living out your loyalty to God in response to his faithfulness to you?

9. How can you guard your heart and mind from thinking that it's your righteousness and not God's faithfulness that has brought you eternal life?

Pray

4 Life in the land

Deuteronomy 12-26

Getting Started

1. Do you have any particular things you do regularly to help you cope with life?

Explore

Read Deuteronomy 12:1, 8-9; 18:9; 19:1-3

2. What is the specific situation this section of Deuteronomy is written for?

Read Deuteronomy 12 and 13

3. Discuss the ways these specific laws flesh out Moses' Summary of the Law in 6:4-5 (as it will apply to Israel's specific situation).

The Laws outlined in this section of Deuteronomy are far from exhaustive but are more indicative of the way God's people should conduct themselves. It seems like most are concerned to promote the holiness and set-apartness of God's people in distinction from the nations around them.

Read Deuteronomy 15:1-11

4. What do you think laws like this were meant to try and instil in the people of God?

Read Deuteronomy 17:14-20

5. How is Israel's king meant to be different from the kings of all the other nations? Why is this so important?

Read Deuteronomy 19:15-21

6. What do you think laws like this were meant to try and instil in the people of God?

Other laws were meant to serve a teaching role and be a regular daily reminder that the people were to be separate from the nations around them.

Read Deuteronomy 22:5-12

7. How would obeying these be a regular visual reminder they were to be separate from the nations around them? (See also Num 15:38-39 for a further explanation of the significance of tassels).

Read Deuteronomy 18:15-22

8. What is the role of the Prophet? Who do you think this is pointing forward to?

Read Deuteronomy 26:16-19

9. How does Moses summarise the purpose of giving them these laws?

Apply

Now these laws were for the OT people of God whom He had made his own and were for the specific context of living in Canaan. As Christians we know that we're saved by Christ alone through faith in him alone. Yet, we too are called to live in response. Yet our context is very different. However, Jesus, 'The Prophet', affirms that the heart of our response is the same: Love God with everything we have and love our neighbour as ourself (Mark 12:29-31).

9. Are there specific ways of living for Jesus that you want to be growing in to better reflect this call to love God or neighbour?

10. As we try and work hard to live our lives to please our Lord Jesus can you think of things he has given us to help us remember that we're dependent on his grace?

Pray

5 Consequences

Deuteronomy 27-28

Getting Started

1. Have you ever been told there would be consequences if you did something but did it anyway?

Explore

Read Deuteronomy 27:1-8

2. What do these verses tell us about the place of God's word in the life of Israel?

Read Deuteronomy 27:9-26

3. Re-enact verses 15-26 in your group (no need to stand on a mountain though!).

4. Verse 9 tells us Israel are now (if not earlier...) the people of God. How do the first and last curses serve as a summary reminder of what that is to mean for their life from now on?

Read Deuteronomy 28

4. How can Israel obtain these blessings or these curses?

5. How will these blessing and curses effect the fulfilment of God's promises to Abram in them, with respect to:

- Their possession of the land and its fertility?
- Their status as a nation among the nations?
- Their size?
- The way the nations are blessed through them?

6. How are the curses presented as a reversal of their exodus from Egypt?

7. What does God telling them the consequences of both obedience and disobedience in advance tells us about what God wants for his people?

8. Does this mean God's faithfulness to his promises is ultimately dependent on what his people do? (Read Romans 8:1-4)

Apply

9. Discuss what the following passages tell us about the consequences of the disobedience of those of us who enjoy new life in Christ:

- Gal 3:10-14
- 1 Peter 2:24
- 1 John 3:2-10

10. It is not possible for us to not sin... but God still takes sin seriously (It cost Jesus his life). Share some of the ways you might not have taken sin seriously in the past week and what you can do to help you take it more seriously in the week ahead.

Pray

6 Now choose life

Deuteronomy 29-30

Getting Started

1. What is a covenant?

Explore

Read Deuteronomy 29

2. What has been the nature of the relationship so far between God and Israel according to verse 1 to 9?

3. Who are the parties to this covenant/contract set out in Deuteronomy according to verses 10 to 15 (See also Acts 2:39)?

4. What is the basic requirement that Israel is agreeing to according to verses 16 to 18?

5. What does verses 19 to 29 say will happen if they break the covenant? How is this different from what Moses said back in 4:6-8?

Read Deuteronomy 30

6. How does this passage present the likelihood of Israel keeping the covenant?

7. What option does this passage hold out to them in the face of the likelihood of their failure to keep the covenant?

8. What does verse 8 say will have to happen for it to be possible for this repentance to happen and for the people to experience the blessings of life with God?

9. What decision does Moses ultimately want the people to make based on everything he's told them in verse 19-20? What will this look like?

Apply

10. How does John 3:16 tell us that we can choose life today? How is this similar and how is this different to what God calls Israel to do in Deuteronomy?

11. Discuss some ways we can put God first in our life?

- At home
- At work
- At church

Pray

7 Beyond Moses

Deuteronomy 31-34

Getting Started

1. What would the world say is a great leader?

Explore

Read Deuteronomy 31

2. Who are Israel to follow across the Jordan and into the Land when Moses is gone (see particularly 1-13)? How are they to remember to keep following the Lord after they enter the land?

3. Why is God getting Moses to compose this song? What will the Israelites do to provoke the Lord to anger?

Read Deuteronomy 32

4. What does this song tell us God has done for Israel? How does it tell us they have responded to him?

5. What does God have in store for his people (don't forget to include v. 43 in your answer)? What effect do you think this is meant to have among the people when they hear this sung?

6. What does Moses warn them of again in verse 46 and 47? How does Moses himself become an embodied example of this warning to the people in what follows?

Read Deuteronomy 34

7. This passage recounts how impressive a character Moses was in Israel's history. This seems like a hollow and disappointing way for his life to end. How do you think this bodes for Israel?

Read Hebrews 3:1-6

8. How is Jesus greater than Moses? How can we become part of God's house now?

Apply

9. In what ways can we place too much emphasis on the role of our ministers in our relationship with God? How can a minister best help us in our relationship with God?

10. How can we ensure that our churches are full of people who realise following God's word is what counts?

11. Discuss some ways we can cling to God's word in the life that Jesus has bought us.

Pray

