

Listen, That You May Live!

A Study of Deuteronomy

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Deuteronomy Gatherings | Fall 2022

1. Aug 24: Deut 1:1–5
2. Aug 31: Deut 1:6–46
3. Sep 7: Deut 2–3
4. Sep 14: Deut 4:1–43
5. Sep 21: Deut 4:44–49
6. Sep 28: Deut 5:1–6:3

No meeting Oct 5; Fall break

7. Oct 12: Deut 5:6–21
8. Oct 19: Deut 6:4–25
9. Oct 26: Deut 7
10. Nov 2: Deut 8
11. Nov 9: Deut 9–10
12. Nov 16: Deut 11

Deuteronomy Gatherings | Winter/Spring 2023

1. Jan 11: Deut 12
2. Jan 18: Deut 13
3. Jan 25: Deut 14:1–21
4. Feb 1: Deut 14:22–15:23
5. Feb 8: Deut 16:1–17
6. Feb 15: Deut 16:18–17:13
7. Feb 22: Deut 17:14–18:22
8. March 1: Deut 19–23
9. March 8: Deut 24–26

No meeting March 15; Spring break

10. March 22: Deut 27:1–29:1
11. March 29: Deuteronomy 29:2–30:20

No meeting April 5; Holy Week

12. April 12: Deut 31–32
13. April 19: Deut 33–34

Listen, That You May Live!

DEUTERONOMY

Who wrote Deuteronomy? Moses wrote much of the material in Deuteronomy (Deut 31:9, 22, 24). A later editor assembled Moses's writings and added some material, such as the concluding account of Moses's death.

What is the context? Deuteronomy, the fifth and final book of Moses, records the prophet's last words to the Israelites on the brink of entering the Promised Land.

The setting is dramatic: In faithfulness to his promises to Abraham (Genesis), God has used Moses to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt (Exodus) and through the wilderness for forty years (Leviticus–Numbers). Now, on the plains of Moab, 120-year-old Moses gathers the whole assembly to prepare them to go in and take possession of their inheritance, the land God promised to give them. This is what the generation before them had failed to do forty years earlier due to their unbelief. The book concludes with Moses's death and burial outside the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy summarizes key themes of the books that precede it. It also helps lay the foundation for the books that follow it. The Old Testament historians, prophets, and psalmists often use Deuteronomy's language and themes in their writings. The New Testament authors frequently quote Deuteronomy, handling it as God's authoritative Scripture. Jesus quotes Deuteronomy more than any other OT book except for the Psalms. In many different ways, Deuteronomy points to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

These words were for God's people then, who were redeemed from slavery in Egypt and preparing to enter the Promised Land. And these words are for God's people now, who are redeemed from the curse of the law in Christ and awaiting our promised imperishable inheritance.

What is a "covenant"? Though not all biblical covenants are the same, a covenant essentially establishes a family-like relationship of love and commitment, which is sealed with a specific and binding oath that one or both parties undertake. God takes the initiative throughout history to make a series of covenants between himself and various individuals or groups. God always fulfills his covenant promises, even when the other party fails to trust him.

Deuteronomy speaks in different ways about the covenant relationship between God and the Israelites, whom God redeemed from Egypt to be his treasured possession among all the peoples (Exod 19:4–6). God accomplished this redemption in faithfulness to his ancient covenant promise to Abram (Gen 15). At various points in Scripture, God expresses the heart of his covenant relationship with his people in this way: "I will be your God, and you will be my people" (for example, Exod 6:7; Jer 31:33; 1 Pet 2:9–10; Rev 21:7). The old covenant anticipates the new covenant, which Jesus Christ mediates and inaugurates in his blood (Heb 9:11–22).

How does Deuteronomy hold together structurally? The left column of the chart below shows that Deuteronomy mostly consists of Moses’s last words. The right column shows that covenant renewal lies at the heart of the book—that is, Moses calls the people to renew their covenant relationship with God established forty years earlier at Horeb (Mount Sinai).

Deuteronomy’s structure resembles that of ancient treaty documents prevalent in Moses’s day in which a mighty king would formalize a relationship of mutual obligation with a less powerful foreign kingdom. Moses and the narrator shape these words in Deuteronomy in a way that shows the nature of God’s covenant relationship with his people.

God has proven himself faithful to his covenant promises. Will his people choose to respond to God by shaping their lives according to the grace he has given them?

Speeches	Text Divisions	Covenant Flow
	1:1–5	Preamble
Moses’s First Sermon (1:6–4:43)	1:6–3:29	Historical Review of Covenant Relationship
	4:1–40	Overview of Covenant
Moses’s Second Sermon (4:44–29:1)	4:44–49	Introduction
	5–11	Covenant Obligations: General Exhortation
	12–26	Covenant Obligations: Specific Laws
	27:1–29:1	Covenant Blessings and Curses
Moses’s Third Sermon (29:2–30:20)	29:2–30:20	Call for Covenant Renewal
Moses’s Final Words and Actions (31–34)	31	Provisions for Covenant Relationship
	32–34	Final Acts of Covenant Mediator (Moses): Song of Witness, Blessing, Death

What is Deuteronomy's unifying theme? Moses calls the covenant family to respond to the LORD's redemptive grace by faith-fully listening to his instruction and choosing life, that they may enjoy (*and not forfeit!*) his covenant blessing in the promised land he is giving them.

Moses exhorts the whole Israelite congregation in Deut 30:19–20: *“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. **Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live**, loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”*

What is Moses's main aim/purpose in Deuteronomy? Moses aims to explain and apply God's instruction to a new generation on the plains of Moab so that they might choose to take possession of Canaan live in his blessing there.

Select Passages Relating to “Life” in John's Gospel

Jesus describes his mission as Messiah by highlighting his aim to grant life to those who receive him. Jesus likens himself to the sheep's door and says: *“I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep”* (John 10:10).

Moreover, before his crucifixion Jesus prays for his disciples and those who will follow him in the future. He notes that he has received from his Father *“the authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given [me]”* (John 17:2). He then says, *“And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent”* (John 17:3).

John himself articulates his purpose in writing the Gospel along these lines: *“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name”* (John 20:30–31).

Deuteronomy Cited in the New Testament¹

Deuteronomy 4:24	Hebrews 12:29
Deuteronomy 4:35	Mark 12:32
Deuteronomy 5:16	Matthew 15:4; Mark 7:10; Ephesians 6:2
Deuteronomy 5:16–20	Matthew 19:18; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20
Deuteronomy 5:17	Matthew 5:21; James 2:11
Deuteronomy 5:17–21	Romans 13:9
Deuteronomy 5:18	James 2:11
Deuteronomy 5:21	Romans 7:7
Deuteronomy 6:4	Mark 12:29,32
Deuteronomy 6:5	Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30, 33; Luke 10:27
Deuteronomy 6:13	Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8
Deuteronomy 6:16	Matthew 4:7; Luke 4:12
Deuteronomy 8:3	Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4
Deuteronomy 9:3	Hebrews 12:29
Deuteronomy 9:4	Romans 10:6
Deuteronomy 9:19	Hebrews 12:21
Deuteronomy 10:20	Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8
Deuteronomy 17:7	1 Corinthians 5:13
Deuteronomy 18:15	Acts 7:37
Deuteronomy 18:15–20	Acts 3:22
Deuteronomy 19:15	Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1; 1 Timothy 5:19
Deuteronomy 21:23	Galatians 3:13
Deuteronomy 24:1	Matthew 5:31, 19:7; Mark 10:14
Deuteronomy 25:4	1 Corinthians 9:9; 1 Timothy 5:18
Deuteronomy 25:5	Matthew 22:24; Mark 12:19; Luke 20:28
Deuteronomy 27:26	Galatians 3:10,13
Deuteronomy 29:4	Romans 11:8
Deuteronomy 29:18	Hebrews 12:15
Deuteronomy 30:12	Romans 10:6
Deuteronomy 30:14	Romans 10:8
Deuteronomy 31:6	Hebrews 13:5
Deuteronomy 32:4	Revelation 15:3
Deuteronomy 32:21	Romans 10:19
Deuteronomy 32:35	Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30
Deuteronomy 32:36	Hebrews 10:30
Deuteronomy 32:43	Romans 15:10; Hebrews 1:6 (citing the Greek version)

¹These references are mostly copied from the ESV Study Bible, Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008.

God Gathers His People at Canaan's Edge: Introducing Moses's First Sermon
Deuteronomy 1:1–5

When the events narrated in Deuteronomy are unfolding, the prophet Moses has led God's people for forty years. He has led them out of slavery and through the wilderness and now has brought them again to the edge of Canaan. For one final time, he gathers all the people of Israel to appeal to them about what is most important. He preaches three sermons (1–30), arranges for their future (31), sings to them (32), and blesses them (33), all right before he dies (34). The dying prophet reminds the Israelites about who God is, what God has done for them, and what God promises to do for them in the future. On this basis, Moses motivates God's people to trust God's word and follow his commands.

Specifically, Moses urges the Israelites to take possession of the Promised Land and to keep God's instruction about loving God and one another. He expounds the law God had given them forty years earlier at Horeb (Mount Sinai) and applies it to their future situation in the Promised Land. Moses assures them that God intends to bless his faithful people in this land of abundance, but that God will judge them if they rebel against him. To put it simply, Moses is appealing to God's people to listen to God's voice and live in light of his word. Above all else, Moses wants them to hold fast to God, who is their life and source of blessing.

But there's a problem, and it's a problem we know. This is a hard-hearted people that God is calling to whole-hearted obedience. The people are rebellious, and a *law*—no matter how good—is powerless to change the human heart.

What's Deuteronomy's solution? God promises to perform the spiritual heart surgery his people need. The book's optimism is thus grounded in the gospel's grace. In other words, Deuteronomy does not anchor ultimate hope in the perfect law-keeping of God's people, but rather in God's mercy to his sinful people.

Deuteronomy thereby defies legalism. The grace God extends to his people on the plains of Moab utterly depends upon his promise to send the prophet and mediator greater than Moses, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We cannot understand Deuteronomy apart from the promised Christ to whom it points.

Many English translations of the Old Testament use all capital letters—“**the LORD**”—to translate the Hebrew original's word for the personal, covenant name of Israel's God (see Eoxd 3:14–15).

As we take in Moses's sermons, we will see how all of Scripture points us to the Lord Jesus and puts forth a single remedy for rebel hearts: faith in the God of grace, who calls us to himself and saves us through his Son. We will also see how a person's genuine faith in the God of grace always produces a life of grace—that is, a life of whole-hearted, loving obedience.

Open our eyes, O Lord, that we may behold wondrous things out of your law!
(Ps 119:18)

Basic Preparation: Questions 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9

Five-Day Plan for Full Preparation

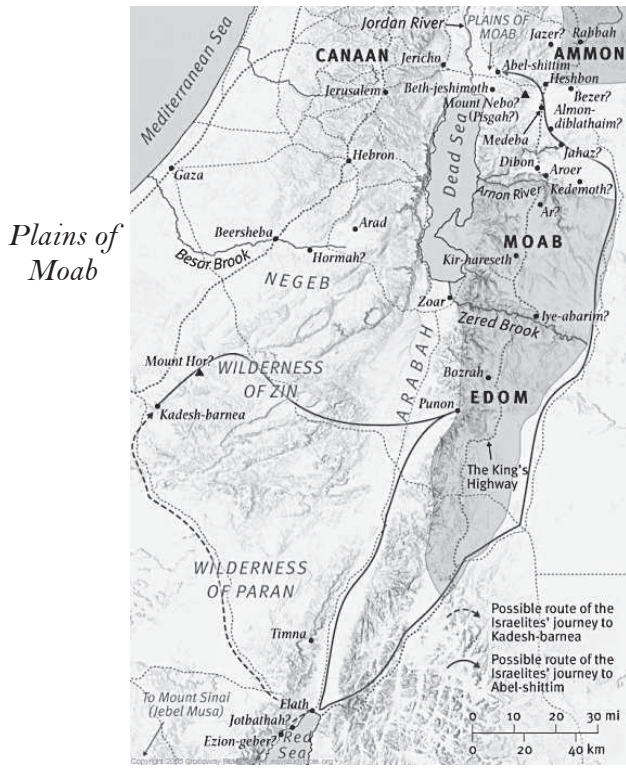
- **Day 1:** Read Deuteronomy 1:1–5; Question 1
- **Day 2:** Read Deuteronomy 1:1–5; Questions 2–5
- **Day 3:** Read Deuteronomy 1:1–5; Question 6
- **Day 4:** Read Deuteronomy 1:1–5; Questions 7
- **Day 5:** Read Deuteronomy 1:1–5; Questions 8–9

HEAR THE WORD

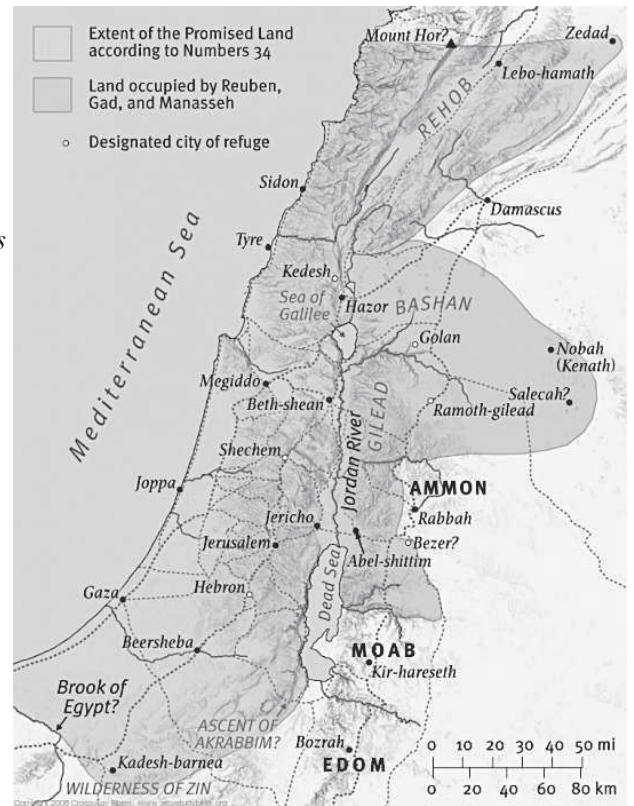
^{5:1}And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them.”

After **praying** that God will open your heart to listen to his Word in faith, **read** the full passage.

1. Before studying Deuteronomy, it is helpful to consider what the New Testament says about the Old Testament. Read the passages below and make observations about **what** these New Testament passages teach us about the Old Testament and **why** we should read it today.
 - a. Matthew 5:17–20 (*Jesus is speaking*)
 - b. Luke 24:13–35 (*Luke is narrating*)
 - c. 1 Corinthians 10:1–13 (*Paul is writing*)
 - d. Revelation 15:2–4 (*John is describing what he saw: “the revelation of Jesus Christ” [1:1]*)
2. Take a moment to familiarize yourself with Deuteronomy’s setting, using the maps below.² The action takes place east of the Jordan River, “in the wilderness” (1:1), on the plains of Moab (1:5). The specific locations of those towns named in Deut 1:1 are unknown.



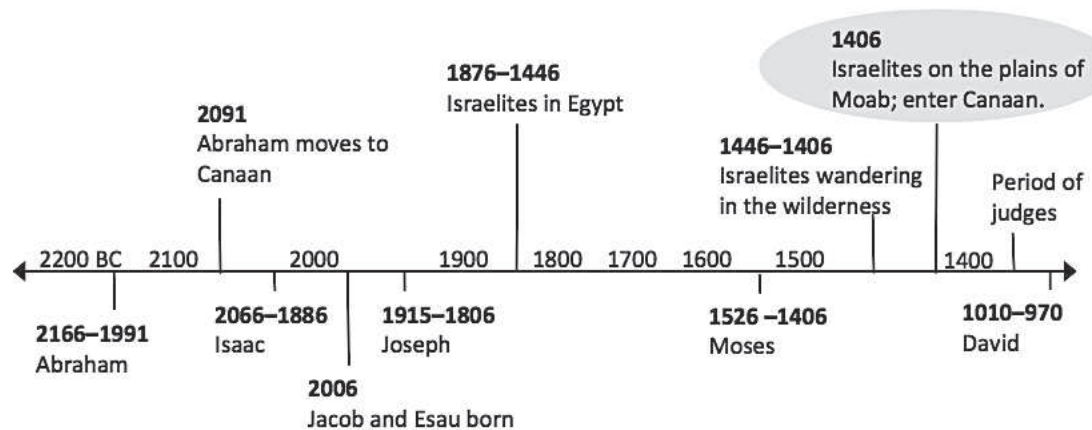
Canaan's
Boundaries



²The maps and some illustrations in this Study Guide come from the ESV Study Bible (Crossway Bibles, 2008) unless otherwise noted. Used with permission.

Why might the narrator have considered it important to describe the **geographical setting** of Moses's final sermons and actions? *For example, the narrator's level of detail in describing the Israelites' location helps convey his intent to recount real (rather than fictional) historical events.*

3. Along with giving the geographical setting, the narrator notes the **temporal setting** in Deut 1:2–4. Deuteronomy's introduction describes the journey from Mount Sinai (called "Horeb" throughout Deuteronomy) to Kadesh-barnea as one that takes *eleven days* (v. 2). But the next temporal marker indicates that God's people are at Kadesh-barnea in their *fortieth year* (v. 3).
 - a. **Why** are God's people at the same place, forty years later?
 - b. Question 2 directed you to contemplate the import of the narrator's relaying a detailed geographical setting. Along the same lines, why might the narrator highlight **the temporal dimension** in the book's introduction?



**Dates accepted by many scholars. Adapted from NIV Study Bible.*

4. Put in your own words the narrator's description in Deut 1:5 of **Moses's action**.
5. What does this passage reveal, explicitly and implicitly, **about God's relationship with the Israelites**? *Articulate your response in one sentence.*

Throughout this Study Guide, you will find “Toolboxes**” that aim to equip us for understanding and applying God’s Word. These “Toolboxes” do not contain questions for your written response, but rather give information and instruction.

TOOLBOX | Genre

A book’s genre is simply the *kind* of literature it is. It is important to notice the specific genre we are reading, because each genre requires that we ask distinct questions. The key question to ask in determining a book’s genre is: In terms of literary form, how does the author say what he is saying?

What kind of literature is Deuteronomy? Deuteronomy’s introduction (1:1–5) indicates that, in its essence, it is **preached instruction** in the context of a prophet’s valedictory/farewell address.

- It is a *prophet’s preached instruction*: Prophet Moses is exhorting the Israelites to embrace God’s commands. He is calling them to abide by the covenant God has cut with them.

In reference to Deut 15, von Rad writes, “Are we to take this as legal diction, these words of exhortation, warning and promise, which drive the demands home upon the hearer’s conscience in the most personal way? It is law preached”; Gerhard von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker, SBT 9 (Chicago: Regnery, 1953), 16.

- It is preached instruction *in the context of a valedictory address*: Moses and the people know that he is about to die. They know these are his final words.

The prophet’s preached instruction features God’s **covenant relationship** with his people, “Israel.” It is only fitting, then, that Deuteronomy’s shape/structure resembles important aspects of the shape/structure of some ancient Near Eastern (aNE) political treaties. This is no accident. Moses and the later narrator who put the book in its final form have done this intentionally.

In these ancient treaty documents, which were prevalent in Moses’s day, a mighty king (“suzerain”) would formalize a relationship of mutual obligation with a less powerful foreign kingdom.

The generic resemblance between Deuteronomy and some aNE treaties expresses Moses’s covenantal agenda. The LORD, the divine suzerain, has proven his faithfulness to the Israelites by liberating them from Egypt and giving them the land of Canaan according to his promise to their fathers. Israel must respond to his benevolence with whole-hearted allegiance and serve him exclusively.

As Moses preaches to God’s people on the plains of Moab, he does not simply stress *that* they must embrace their covenantal identity and duty, but also *why* they must do so. He aims to persuade and motivate. He saturates his exhortations with “**motive clauses**.” These motive clauses are subordinate clauses or phrases that articulate a command’s rationale or motivation for obeying it.

For example, in Deut 4:1, Moses tells God’s people what they must do: “*And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and rules that I am teaching you, and do them ...*”

And then, as the good preacher he is, he discloses why they must do it: “*that you may live, and go in and take possess of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you.*”

Deuteronomy is often misunderstood and misapplied as a book of rules that people must follow to have right standing with God. But paying attention to Moses’s motive clauses will help show that far from legalistic, Deuteronomy is a book steeped in and driven by God’s grace.

TOOLBOX | Genre (*continued*)

In general, it is best to divide the book according to Moses's speeches/sermons/discourses, while explicitly noting the overarching covenant pattern that thematically holds together these speeches. Prioritizing Moses's speeches on a structural level underscores the book's "sermonic" character.

Following the book's introduction (Deut 1:1–5):

- In Moses's **first discourse** (Deut 1:6–4:43), he recounts the history of Israel's covenant relationship with the LORD and gives an initial exhortation to obey the LORD's statutes and ordinances.
- In Moses's **second discourse** (Deut 4:44–29:1), he specifies the mutual obligations the LORD and Israel are undertaking in this covenant relationship, as well as the consequences of Israel's obedience or disobedience.
- In Moses's **third discourse** (Deut 29:2–30:20), he issues his ultimate appeal to the Israelites to renew the covenant at Moab.
- The narrator then describes a series of **final Moses's actions and words** as covenant mediator (Deut 31–33) before recording Moses's death (Deut 34).

See pg. 3 for this content in outline form.

The Israelites | Who Belongs?

Though both the Abrahamic and Sinaitic/Mosaic covenants focus on a particular nation (Abraham's offspring) among all the nations of the earth, the universal scope of God's redemptive purposes appears in both covenants. All along the LORD intends that his covenant family consist of people from all nations.

For example, when the LORD renames Abram to "Abraham," he explains, "... for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations" (Gen 17:5).

Moreover, when God renames Jacob to "Israel," God says to him, "A nation and company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body" (Gen 35:11).

As a final example, when the LORD brings his people out of Egypt, they are joined by "a mixed multitude" of people (Exod 12:38).

God's purposes to build a multi-national covenant family of believers—Abraham's *true* offspring—become more explicit and expansive in Scripture canonically subsequent to Deuteronomy. Ultimately, his purposes come to full expression in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal 3:7–14; citing Gen 12:3), who has made believing Jews and Gentiles one (Eph 2:14).

DO THE WORD

^{6:1}Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

6. Although the plains of Moab on which Israel is gathered is only an eleven-days' journey from Horeb (Mount Sinai), they are there in the fortieth year. They have wandered quite a bit! The next passage in Deuteronomy (Deut 1:6–2:1) explains why ...

Similar to the Israelites' journeying in the wilderness, sometimes our journeys in life do not unfold in a linear, "as the crow flies" kind of manner. And sometimes (*certainly* not always!) the non-linear nature of our path is a result of unwise decisions we have made. Perhaps these unwise decisions are rooted in fear, shame, or pride.

Though we know God works together all things for the good of those who love him, sometimes this kind of wandering can feel aimless and discouraging when we are in the thick of it.

- a. What was **an unwise decision** you made at some point, against the counsel of Scripture, that resulted in your "wandering in circles," so to speak? *Be specific.*
 - b. **What did God teach you** during that wandering season of your life? *Identify at least one thing God taught you.*
 - c. In **what kind of spiritual season** are you *now*? How would you describe your experience of your relationship with God this week?
7. Throughout Deuteronomy, Moses stresses the urgency for God's people of hearing, doing, and retelling God's Word.
- a. Reflect on the months ahead and your commitment to study and meditate on Deuteronomy. What sorts of **practical and spiritual challenges** do you anticipate facing that might make it difficult for you to stick with your commitment? *List a few of those challenges.*

- b. What **three steps you can take today to prepare for these upcoming challenges** in order to help you stay the course in meditating on Deuteronomy this semester and next? *Be specific and concrete.*

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TOOLBOX | Word-Filled Prayer, “Do the Word”

Worshiping God in response to his Word is the most important aspect of “doing the Word.” Meditating on God’s Word rightly leads us to respond to him by “praying the Word.” “Praying the Word” means using the passage’s words and themes as you communicate with God, so that your reading of Scripture becomes a personal dialogue: God is speaking personally and authoritatively to you by his Word, and so you respond by dialoguing with him in *Word-filled prayer* from your heart. Depending on the passage, your prayer might focus on praise and adoration, confession of your sin, petition, lament, or so on. Praying in Deut 1:1–5 might involve any number of these sorts of prayers.

To illustrate the process of Word-filled prayer, here is Deut 1:1–5 marked up, followed by a brief prayer that focuses on the marked words and concepts. These are simply examples, since multiple sorts of prayers could form legitimately from meditating on different aspects of this passage.

Marked-Up passage: ¹These are [the words that Moses spoke to all Israel] beyond the Jordan *in the wilderness*, in the Arabah opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab. ²It is *eleven days’ journey* from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir to Kadesh-barnea. ³*In the fortieth year*, on the first day of the eleventh month, [Moses spoke to the people of Israel according to all that the LORD had given him in commandment to them], ⁴*after he had defeated* Sihon the king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth and in Edrei. ⁵Beyond the Jordan, in the land of Moab, [Moses undertook to explain this law], [saying] ...

Example Word-filled prayer based on marked-up passage:

Father, thank you for speaking to all your people, including me. Without your initiative to reveal yourself to me, I would be utterly lost. Yet, no matter where I wander, you have not left me without a word. You speak to me in your inscripturated Word and in the Word-made-flesh, Jesus Christ. “... but in these last days he has spoken to us by the Son ...”

How astounding that you don’t just speak to me once and demand that I “get it” once for all, but instead you speak to me again and again. You sent your servant-prophets to reiterate your instructions and counsel. And every time I open your Word, you freshly appeal to me by your Spirit to trust you and delight in your righteous paths—to commune with and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh Father, how kind you are to remind me of your love! How good you are to show me your holiness, day by day! How patient you are with wayward wanderers like me! How faithful you are to re-articulate your promises to me and to prove your strength to save, despite my chronic hard-heartedness.

Who is a God like you? There is no one like you, who disciplines those you love that we might know you and become like you—and one day see you face to face in the ultimate promised land, the new heavens and new earth.

May it be that your words through Moses take root in my heart, conform me more into the image of Christ, and constrain me to glad obedience to your gracious instruction. All for your glory, Father. In the name and for the sake of Christ I pray.

RETELL THE WORD

^{6:7}You shall teach [the LORD's commandments] diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

8. The narrator writes in Deut 1:5 that “Moses undertook to explain this law.” So, Moses is a “biblical expositor” who aims to make plain the instruction that the LORD had given his people. More specifically, Moses is reiterating the commands that the LORD had originally spoken to his people at Horeb (Mount Sinai), and Moses is applying that original instruction to the fresh circumstances of a new generation who soon will experience a new context: living in Canaan.

While Moses plays a peculiar role in the history of salvation that we do *not* play, his example still challenges and teaches us in the roles that we *do* play. What can Moses teach Christians about **the task of making the Scriptures plain for the next generation**?
Make at least three observations.

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9. Think of a believer in a similar life stage as you who does a good job of wisely communicating God's truth to other people, whether to fellow believers or non-Christians.

a. **Who** is this person? _____

b. What **particularly stands out to you** about the way she or he shares God's truth with others that you would like to emulate?

Identify at least two aspects of wise truth-sharing that this believer models for you.

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c. What **practical steps might you take** to make progress in this same aspect of wise Scripture-use that your friend exemplifies? *Be specific.*

TOOLBOX: Word-Filled Prayer, “Retell the Word”

Before we speak the Word to someone else, we must begin by speaking the Word back to God in prayer: Word-filled prayer. Word-filled prayer can take multiple shapes, as illustrated in the previous section, “Do the Word.” For example, we rightly praise God in response to what he reveals of his character and ways in the specific passage we are studying.

Moreover, praying the Word **as we pray for another specific person** often helps prepare us to communicate that Word with that person (or with another who needs that same truth). We ask God to give us an opportunity to share the Word and to cause his Spirit to work in the hearts of those with whom we communicate his Word, even as his Spirit has worked that Word in our own heart and life.

May we never exhort someone else with a passage unless we have first worshiped God for who he reveals himself to be in that passage! Adoration of God must always precede and motivate admonition of others.

So, an important part of preparing to retell the Word to others is “praying in the Word” with those people in mind. Along the lines of the example Word-filled prayer in the previous section, below is the same marked-up version of Deut 1:1–5 followed by a corresponding example of Word-filled prayer focused on retelling truths of this passage to someone, whom we will call “Susan.”

Marked-up passage: ¹These are [the words that Moses spoke to all Israel] beyond the Jordan *in the wilderness*, in the Arabah opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab. ²It is *eleven days’ journey* from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir to Kadesh-barnea. ³*In the fortieth year*, on the first day of the eleventh month, [Moses spoke to the people of Israel according to all that the LORD had given him in commandment to them], ⁴*after he had defeated* Sihon the king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth and in Edrei. ⁵Beyond the Jordan, in the land of Moab, [Moses undertook to explain this law], saying
...

Example Word-filled prayer for Susan, based on marked-up passage:

Father, you were faithful to speak to all Israel through Moses, despite their chronic rebellion against you. Just as you haven’t left me without a word, you didn’t leave the Israelites without a word—without your personal, authoritative speech to instruct them, including about their desperate need for you. You have spoken. And you keep speaking by your Word.

Father, you know Susan better than I ever will. You know that she is presently living in rebellion against you. You know that she imagines that she doesn’t even need you. You know that she prefers everything else other than you. You know that she would rather keep wandering than be led by you to pleasures of righteousness in Christ.

Oh Father, just as you spoke to all Israel—some of whom were not trusting you and were living in open rebellion against you in their heart at the time Moses preached—please speak again to Susan. Pierce her heart with your Word. Only you can open the door of Susan’s heart to receive your Word: to listen so that she might live. Please open that door. Do whatever it takes to open that door, that Susan might come to trust and follow the Lord Jesus—to truly live for the first time. No one is too lost for you to find her. I am the prime evidence of that. You can conquer even the hardest of hearts.

If you would be pleased to use me with Susan, I am willing. Holy Spirit, help me discern opportunities to follow in Moses’s footsteps by humbly making plain the meaning of your Scriptures, including by articulating the essence of your grace to sinners like me. And help me lead a life in front of Susan that illustrates the power and beauty of that grace.

In Christ’s name and for his sake I pray.

Notes from Teaching

Small-Group Discussion

- Open in prayer.
- What is your current familiarity with the book of Deuteronomy? And to what are you most looking forward about studying Deuteronomy this year?
- Read the full passage.
- **Hear the Word** | Questions 1, 4, 5
- **Do the Word** | Questions 6, 7
- **Retell the Word** | Questions 8, 9
- Close in Word-filled prayer for one another.

***In your next small-group meeting, one person will be asked to share briefly about an opportunity she had to “do the Word” of Deuteronomy 1:1–5.**

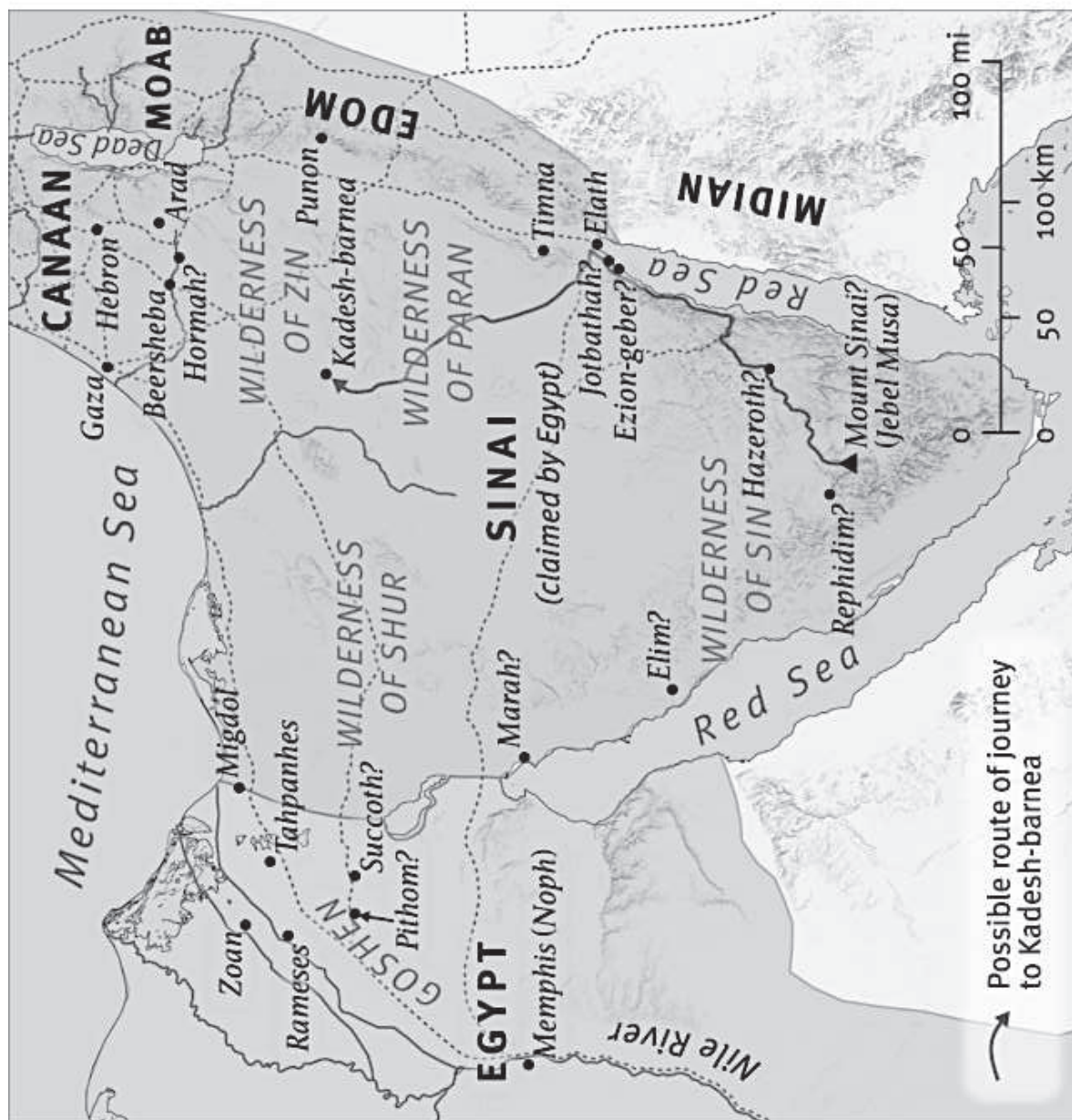
After this week, each small-group discussion will include an element of sharing with one another either about our experiences in doing the Word (application) or about our experiences in retelling the Word (communicating with others what God taught us).

Lord willing, these moments of honest and vulnerable sharing with one another about the joys and challenges we are facing in doing and retelling the Word will help hold us accountable to one another as well as encourage us, week by week.

Journeys in the Wilderness

c. 1446/1260 B.C.

The book of Numbers details the Israelites' experience in the wilderness as they journeyed from Mount Sinai to Canaan. As with the exodus, it is difficult to establish the exact route that the Israelites took, but it is generally believed that they headed east from Mount Sinai until they reached the Red Sea, where they turned northward to the top of the gulf and on to Kadesh-barnea.



God Reminds His People of Their Faithlessness at Kadesh-Barnea

Deuteronomy 1:6–46

Have you ever witnessed a farewell speech delivered by a dearly beloved man or woman? Perhaps you have been present for a trusted leader's final charge. That is the poignant relational context of Deuteronomy. In fact, the book represents a prophet's valedictory address of preached covenant instruction.

In decades prior to Deuteronomy's narrative time, God used Moses to redeem his people from slavery in Egypt, mediate the covenant he cut with them at Horeb (Mount Sinai), guide them in the wilderness for forty years, and bring them back to the edge of the Promised Land. Now Moses, who is one-hundred-and-twenty-years old, is delivering his final sermon series.

No doubt, those who truly loved Moses would be hanging on every word.

So, how does Moses begin his final sermon series? He begins with an historical review, in which he underscores the LORD's faithfulness toward his people and Israel's unfaithfulness to the LORD. Specifically in Deut 1, Moses reminds the Israelites of the previous generation's refusal to believe the LORD at Kadesh-barnea and the tragic consequences that ensued. Moses is aiming to warn *this* generation to trust God and not harden their heart against him. He is aiming to persuade them to take hold of God's promises of grace.

The generation who experienced the exodus yet refused to take possession of Canaan is known as the "**exodus generation.**"

Their children who hear Moses's preaching on the plains of Moab and receive a fresh opportunity to take possession of Canaan are known as the "**conquest generation.**"

How will the LORD's people respond? Will they listen to his voice in faith?

How will *you* respond to God's Word today?

Basic Preparation: Questions 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11

Five-Day Plan for Full Preparation

- **Day 1:** Read Deut 1:6–46; Questions 1–2
- **Day 2:** Read Deut 1:6–46; Num 13–14; Questions 3–7; Digging Deeper pg. 22
- **Day 3:** Read Deut 1:6–46; Questions 8–9
- **Day 4:** Read Deut 1:6–46; Question 10; Word-filled prayer
- **Day 5:** Read Deut 1:6–46; Question 11; Word-filled prayer

HEAR THE WORD

^{5:1}And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them.”

After **praying** that God will open your heart to listen to his Word in faith, **read** the full passage.

1. What is God, through his prophet Moses, commanding the exodus generation of Israelites to obey in Deut 1:8, 21? What **key action** is he urging them to take? *Be specific.*

2. Moses reviews elements of Israel’s history after God delivered them from slavery in Egypt. As you read Deut 1:6–46, note **every mention or indication** of God’s faithfulness and goodness, and every mention or indication of either Israel’s faithfulness or faithlessness.

Verse	<i>Expression of God’s faithfulness/goodness</i>	<i>Expression of Israel’s faith<u>ful</u>ness OR faith<u>less</u>ness</i>

3. Moses retells these same events from Deut 1:19–46 in Numbers 13–14. Read Numbers 13–14. Compare Moses’s two different accounts of the same events.
 - a. What **similar themes** emerge in Moses’s two retellings of the events at Kadesh?
Note three.

 - b. What stands out to you as **different** about the two ways that Moses tells the story?
Make two observations.

4. In Deut 1:9–18, Moses recounts his need to appoint judges because of the people’s magnitude. In what ways do this event and Moses’s retelling of it in Deut 1:9–18 point to God’s faithfulness? *For example, see Genesis 15:5.*

Among the twelve spies, only two (Caleb and Joshua) encourage the Israelites to obey God’s command to take possession of Canaan. The other ten discourage their fellow Israelites by focusing on the intimidating military obstacles they would have to face, such as “the sons of the Anakim” (1:28; compare 2:10–11, 21; 9:1–2).

The Anakim descend from a man named Anak, were known for their considerable height, and were related to those ancient warriors, the Nephilim (Num 13:33; for the Nephilim, see Gen 6:4).

5. Just as Adam and Eve were deceived in the garden of Eden and chose to believe lies about God’s character, so Israel was deceived in the wilderness.

- a. In Deut 1:20–33, what **truths about the LORD’s character** are conveyed?

- b. In Deut 1:26–33, what **lies about the LORD’s character** does Israel choose to believe instead?

Lies about God’s character pertaining to the *past*:

Lies about God’s character pertaining to the *present*:

Lies about God’s character pertaining to the *future*:

6. What does this passage **mainly reveal** about **the covenant community** (that is, the Israelites)? *Articulate your response in one sentence.*

7. What does this passage **mainly reveal** about our covenant-keeping **God**? *Articulate your response in one sentence. For help, see “Toolbox: Theme” to the right.*

TOOLBOX | Theme

Discerning a Passage’s Main Revelation about God

The Bible is a thoroughly God-centered book. It is theological literature. That is, Scripture mainly focuses on revealing who God is, how he acts (past, present, future), and how human beings can and must relate to him. **Preeminently, the Bible reveals God’s character and ways as displayed in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the gospel that proclaims him.**

Since every biblical author aims to reveal God’s person and work, believers who desire to *hear, do, and retell this Word* ought to focus on what every Bible passage tells us about God. We aim to make progress in seeing Scripture’s God-centeredness so that our hearing, doing, and retelling will likewise be God-centered.

TOOLBOX | Literary Context

The context of a book or passage is the **world** and **words** that surround it. Most of us are aware of the danger of taking words “out of context.” It is crucial to understand an author’s words in **historical, literary, and theological** context—from the words and worlds immediately surrounding a passage, all the way to those of the whole Bible.

For help in dealing with a passage’s literary context, consult your Study Bible’s *cross-references*. Cross-references are often located in your Bible’s central or lower margin. These references list passages that, according to the Study-Bible editor, are highly relevant to a particular theme, sentence, phrase, or word.

Good tools for whole-book and whole-Bible contexts include:

- Study-Bible cross-references;
- Online concordances (such as biblegateway.com) or special Bible apps, in which you can search a word or phrase in a particular English version and find all the occurrences of that word/phrase in a whole book or even in the whole Bible;
- Evangelical commentaries that aim to show the way all of Scripture testifies to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Whole-Book Literary Context | Every passage of Scripture unfolds in the context of the whole Bible, and so one vital question to ask of every passage is, “What is the whole-book context of this passage?” Another way to ask this question is: “How does this portion of the book contribute to our understanding of the whole book, and how does the whole book contribute to our understanding of this passage?”

Regarding this week’s passage: How does **Deut 1:6–46** fit into its whole-Deuteronomy context? How does this passage’s whole-Deuteronomy context affect your understanding of it?

Here is an example response to the above questions:

As Moses retells the tragic events at Kadesh-barnea in Deut 1:6–46, he highlights (1) God’s grace to provide everything his people need to trust him and enjoy his blessings and (2) his people’s unbelief that leads them to forfeit the enjoyment of his blessings. By recounting this history, Moses is urging his hearers *not to follow in the footsteps of their parents* but instead to embrace God’s promises by obeying his command to take possession of Canaan.

So, Moses begins Deuteronomy by bringing into focus Israel’s core problem (unbelief that leads to forfeiture of God’s blessing) and this problem’s only solution (believing God’s promises and thereby obeying his commands). In Moses’s final sermon, he will reveal God’s breathtaking mercy even to provide the solution on Israel’s behalf: in the latter days, the LORD himself will change his people’s heart so that they will finally trust him as they should and so enjoy the blessed life that he has promised them (Deut 30:1–6).

Throughout Deuteronomy, Moses will return again and again to these themes of (1) God’s grace to provide everything his people need to trust him and (2) Israel’s urgent need to trust and obey God if they want to enjoy his promised blessing. They must choose life ... or else!

TOOLBOX: Literary Context (*continued*)

Whole-Bible Literary Context | Every passage of Scripture unfolds in the context of the whole Bible, and so one vital question to ask of every passage is, “What is the whole-Bible context of this passage?”

- Ask, “*At what point in God’s big story of redemption does the author write this book?*” This question helps determine the “redemptive-historical” context of the passage.
- Determine any instances in the passage in which the author is using antecedent Scripture, that is, Scripture that was written and disseminated prior to this author’s own composition. After identifying any antecedent Scripture that the author uses, examine the Scripture he uses (including its context) to understand why the author is appealing to this Scripture and how his appeal helps shape the meaning of his passage.
- Consider other Scripture passages by the same author that address aspects of this passage’s main themes. (Moses is responsible for the majority of Genesis—Deuteronomy, along with Psalm 90.)
- Consider a few other passages in the Bible that also deal with this passage’s main themes.
- Consider whether Jesus ever taught on the topics that the author addresses in this passage.
- Perhaps consider one or two major passages in the opposite testament (Old or New) relative to this passage that deal with one of this passage’s major themes.

After identifying and examining these additional passages for context: *How do these additional passages help you interpret, apply, and communicate the specific passage that you are analyzing?*

Throughout the Study Guide, you will find “Digging Deeper**” boxes that give the opportunity to do more work in the Word. Responding to these questions is *entirely optional*.

Digging Deeper | Hearing the Word

Deuteronomy 1:6–46 in its whole-Bible context?

LOOK BACK: *for example, how does Moses use antecedent Scripture (that is, Scripture recorded prior to Moses’s preaching in Deuteronomy)? More broadly, how does this Deuteronomy passage reflect certain historical events and literary themes of antecedent Scripture?*

Numbers 13–14

LOOK FORWARD: *for example, how does this passage anticipate historical events and literary themes that are recorded in subsequent Scripture?*

Psalm 95:6–11

**Exodus 17:1–7 describes Israel’s rejection of the LORD at Massah and Meribah which is not the same as their rebellion at Kadesh. But the psalmist in Ps 95 reflects on Israel’s various wilderness rebellions against the LORD. He sees them all as symptoms of the same root problem: unbelief . . . despite the abundant evidence of the LORD’s power.*

Hebrews 3:7—4:13

DO THE WORD

^{6:1}Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

8. The Israelites refused to believe God's promise and listen to his voice. Why? Because they were afraid of the Anakim. Facing the Anakim in battle certainly would have been daunting! By all accounts, they were ginormous! But the LORD's grandeur outstrips the Anakim's. Israel ought to have feared the LORD more than they feared any mere mortals.
 - a. Identify something in your life currently that feels **daunting**, perhaps involving obstacles that seem impossible to overcome. *Describe that daunting thing.*
 - b. When you feel intimidated about this thing, **what are two lies, especially about God and his promises to you**, that are you tempted to believe? *Be specific.*
 - *First lie about God and his promises:*
 - *Second lie about God and his promises:*
 - c. What are **two truths about God**, found in Deut 1, that address these specific lies and encourage you to trust God amid this obstacle that you are facing?
Describe each truth and in which verse(s) Deut 1 testifies to that truth.
 - *Truth about God relating to Deut 1 that addresses first lie:*
 - *Truth about God relating to Deut 1 that addresses second lie:*
9. If you more fully believed what this passage reveals about our covenant-keeping God, including the two truths you noted in Question 8, what is **one thing that would change** in your life? *This may be a change in attitude, practice, thought life, a relational pattern, or something else.*

And what **one practical step** will you take today toward more fully trusting God and making this change?

10. When Israel hears the report of the LORD's judgment against them (1:34–40), they respond unwisely (1:41–46). On the surface, Israel's actions to go up and fight may *look* like genuine repentance. But in reality, they are operating out of presumptuous pride. It may appear that they are seeking to honor God, but they are actually defying him by disobeying his Word.
- a. How can you tell **the difference** between true repentance and false repentance? *Describe the difference.*
 - b. What are **three specific areas of your life** in which you sometimes engage in false repentance, and what does this **false repentance look like in each area**? *Describe what false repentance in your life looks like in three different areas of your life.*
 - Area 1:
 - Area 2:
 - Area 3:
 - c. Pick one of these areas you listed (in which you sometimes engage in false repentance). What might it look like practically for you to engage in **true repentance** in this area? *Describe specifically what true repentance might look like for you in this area.*

Word-Filled Prayer | Respond to Deut 1:29–33 by writing a prayer to God.

For an example Word-filled prayer of this sort, see pg. 12.

Moses reminds the Israelites:

^{1:29}Then I said to you, “Do not be in dread or afraid of them. ³⁰The LORD your God who goes before you will himself fight for you, just as he did for you in Egypt before your eyes, ³¹and in the wilderness, where you have seen how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, all the way that you went until you came to this place.” ³²Yet in spite of this word you did not believe the LORD your God, ³³who went before you in the way to seek you out a place to pitch your tents, in fire by night and in the cloud by day, to show you by what way you should go.

RETELL THE WORD

^{6:7}You shall teach [the LORD's commandments] diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

11. As Moses recounts the tragedy at Kadesh, he condemns the Israelites' rebellious unbelief. Their rebellion includes their presumptuous response to the LORD's disclosure of consequences for their unbelief. In no way does Moses sugar-coat his family history. Why does he speak so candidly with the conquest generation? So that this new generation will not be destroyed by the same disobedience as the generation before them.

Authors in the New Testament also warn their hearers of the dangers of unbelief and its consequences. For example, in his letter to the Hebrews the pastor reminds his hearers of their ancestors' unbelieving rebellion in the wilderness. He especially does this in Heb 3:6–4:13. He pleads with his hearers, "Take care, brothers and sisters, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end" (Heb 3:12–14).

Like Moses, the pastor in Hebrews understands that the Israelites' wilderness failures ought to cause *each of us* to "take heed, lest we fall" (1 Cor 10:12) and "exhort one another everyday" *in the church* to keep trusting God's promises, lest any of us falls (Heb 3:13).

- a. Imagine a "typical" week for you during these coming months. In a typical week, **what regular opportunities** do you have to **exhort fellow believers** to keep enduring in the faith by trusting God's promises? *Write down each of these regular opportunities, including those encounters you have with people who live in your house.*

- b. Choose **one** of these regular opportunities that you listed. What is **one way** you could make progress in clearly and compassionately exhorting this fellow believer (or these fellow believers) to trust God? And what **one practical step** will you take to make that progress?

One area for progress in clear, compassionate exhortation of this believer/these believers:

One practical step toward making that progress:

12. In the context of our discipling relationships, we inevitably encounter specific areas and patterns of disobedience in the life of the believer we are discipling. (This is certainly the case for mothers as they disciple their believing children!) In those instances, we must ask God to help us discern more specifically how this younger believer's disobedience is an expression of unbelief. We want to understand how the disobedience in view is fueled by that person's failing to trust God's character or promises, so that we can encourage her/him more specifically to trust God in that area.

Discipleship and Disciple-Making

In simplest terms, "discipleship" refers to a **believer's personal resolve to follow Jesus**. Jesus calls all his would-be disciples to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him (Matt 16:24). And we know that "if we have been united with [Jesus] in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his (Rom 6:5).

The Lord Jesus commands his disciples follow him also in disciple-making. Before Jesus's ascension, he calls his followers to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Matt 28:19–20) So, when describing a relationship between two Christians, "discipleship" refers to a more mature-in-the-faith believer saying to a less mature-in-the-faith believer, "**Come follow me as I follow Christ.**" For example, Paul says to the Corinthians, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1).

As evident in Matt 28:18–20, the heart of discipleship involves bringing believers into local-church fellowship and guiding them in hearing, doing, and retelling the Scriptures.

Discipleship is more than Bible study, but it certainly is not *less* than Bible study. (Sometimes people call someone their "disciple" or "discipler" even though they do not search the Scriptures together; that is a mistake.)

- a. How might emphasizing disobedience's root as unbelief help **guard a discipler against seeking mere behavior modification** in a younger-in-the-faith believer? *Perhaps give an example.*
- b. Imagine a conversation with a specific person you disciple. Just as an example, imagine that conversation involves this person's acknowledging some type of sexual immorality in which she is actively involved; in response, you want to urge her not to keep disobeying God's commands regarding sex. How might you articulate to her **the relationship between her confessed sexual immorality and her unbelief?**

Word-Filled Prayer | Respond to Deut 1:29–33 (again) by writing a brief prayer for one of the people you mentioned in Question 11. *For an example Word-filled prayer of this sort, see pg. 14.*

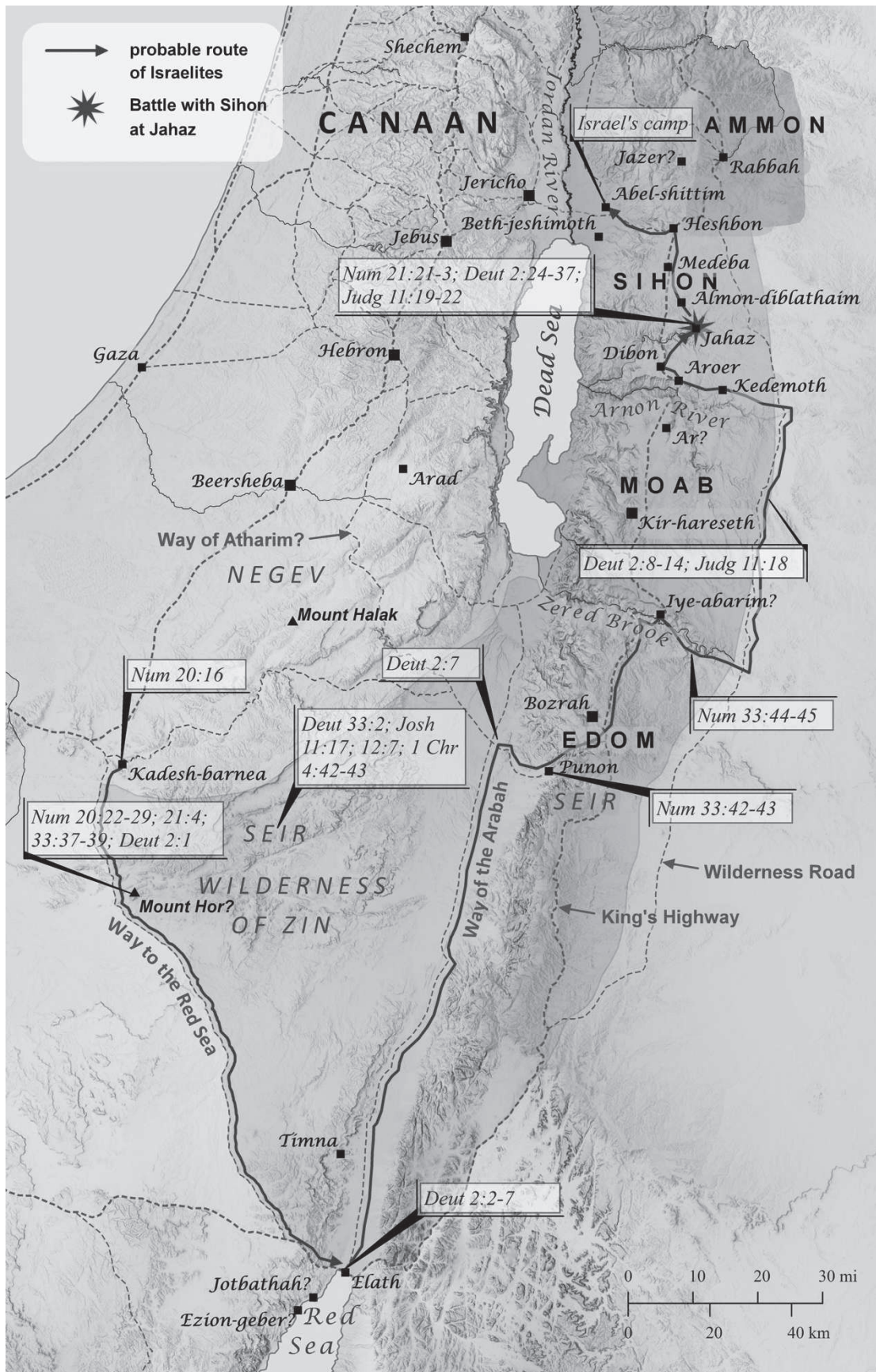
Notes from Teaching

Small-Group Discussion

- Open in prayer.
- Ask one person to share briefly about an opportunity she had to DO the previous passage in Deuteronomy.
- Read the full passage.
- **Hear the Word** | Questions 1, 5, 6, 7
- **Do the Word** | Questions 8, 9
- **Retell the Word** | Question 11
- Close in Word-filled prayer for one another.

Consider Memorizing Deut 1:29–31

²⁹ Then I said to you, “Do not be in dread or afraid of them. ³⁰ The LORD your God who goes before you will himself fight for you, just as he did for you in Egypt before your eyes, ³¹ and in the wilderness, where you have seen how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, all the way that you went until you came to this place.”



*This map and the one on the following page come from biblemapper.com. They aim to interpret various biblical texts (including Deut 2-3), though the Israelites' precise path cannot be known.

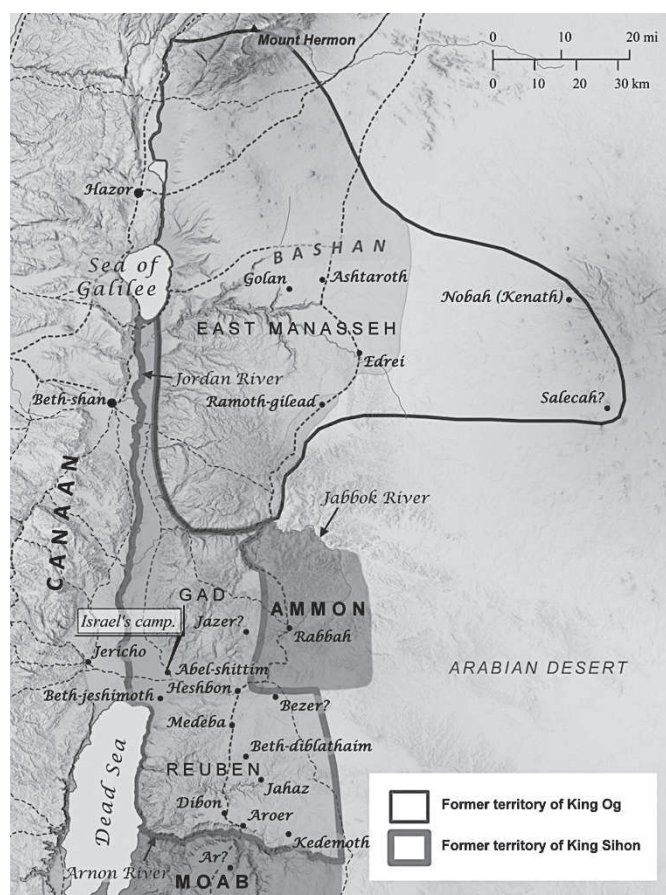
God Reminds His People of Their Battles in the Wilderness

Deuteronomy 2–3

If Deuteronomy were a book about Israel's intrinsic moral superiority, power, or rule-following—as is sometimes wrongly imagined—the storyline would come to a screeching halt at Kadesh. The Israelites failed to accomplish their fundamental mission, so God could have just cast them aside. Yet, in mercy, God refuses to do so. Israel's storyline keeps unfolding beyond the tragedy at Kadesh.

In Deut 2–3, Moses reviews God's faithfulness to Israel during their years wandering in the wilderness. As in Deut 1, Moses continues focusing on the Promised Land. He emphasizes the LORD's prerogative to give land, not least to give the land of Canaan to his covenant people. Despite his people's rebellious betrayal at Kadesh, God persevered in protecting and blessing his people as they prepare to possess Canaan. Moses pays particular attention to Israel's victories against two kings in the trans-Jordan region, King Sihon and King Og. These victories are cast as the firstfruits of Israel's imminent triumphs against the Canaanites, if Israel will simply rely on God's promises by going up and taking possession of the land.

By drawing attention to God's faithfulness in Israel's *past* and by setting before Israel God's promise of *future* fruitfulness in Canaan, Moses brings to a burning focus for God's people on the plains of Moab their *present* choice of life or death.



So also, as we meditate on Deuteronomy 2–3, we ought to consider how God's faithfulness in **our past** and his promises for **our future** bring into clear focus the momentousness of **our present decisions** regarding whether we will trust God.

Basic Preparation: Questions 1, 3, 7, 9, 11

Five-Day Plan for Full Preparation

- **Day 1:** Read Deuteronomy 2–3; Questions 1–4
- **Day 2:** Read Deuteronomy 2; Questions 5–7; Digging Deeper pg. 32
- **Day 3:** Read Deuteronomy 3; Questions 8–9; Word-filled prayer
- **Day 4:** Read Deuteronomy 2–3; Question 10; Digging Deeper pg. 35
- **Day 5:** Read Deuteronomy 2–3; Question 11; Word-filled prayer

HEAR THE WORD

^{5:1}And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them.”

After **praying** that God will open your heart to listen to his Word in faith, **read** the full passage.

1. In Deut 2–3, what are four instances in which Moses describes **God’s actions on behalf of his people** during their wilderness years? *Write down four chapter-and-verse references.*

-
-
-
-

2. Moses continues emphasizing the LORD’s gift of land to his covenant people (for example, see 2:24; 3:2–3). At various points in Deut 2–3, Moses also describes Israel’s God, “the LORD,” as working among other nations. Specifically, the LORD gives and takes away land relating to other nations; for example, see Deut 2:9, 12, 21–22.

For Your Consideration

If **(a)** the covenant God cut with Israel was somehow contingent on the nation’s obedience (see, for example, Exod 19:4–6) and **(b)** the LORD had been so angry with the rebellious Israelites that he even refused to listen to their voice (Deut 1:45), then **(c)** *on what basis can the storyline continue after Israel’s rebellion at Kadesh?*

What difference ought it make to the Israelites understanding of the LORD that he also acts for and against other nations (and not just Israel)? So what?

3. **Put in your own words** the relationship between the fact that the LORD has *given* land of Canaan to his people and that they must *take* that land.
4. In Deut 3:23–29, **why** does Moses relay the LORD’s refusal to bring him into the Promised Land with the new generation? Why might he include this information as he preaches?

5. Regarding whether the Israelites will be loyal to the LORD once they dwell in Canaan, do you consider Moses's outlook in Deut 1–3 **optimistic, pessimistic, or neutral**? How so? *Write down specific chapter-and-verse references as you explain your response.*

6. What are some of Moses's recurring **themes** and **patterns** as he preaches these words? *Note specific verses along with each theme/pattern you list.*

7. Deuteronomy 1–3 illustrates important truths about how God relates to his covenant people, including when they disobey him.
 - a. What does this passage mainly reveal about **the way God responds to his covenant people when they disobey him**? *Articulate your response in one sentence.*

 - b. In what ways is God's response to his disobedient people under the old covenant (the Israelites) **similar** to and **different** than his response to disobedient believers under the new covenant (Christians)?
 - *Similarities between God's response to disobedient Christians and disobedient Israelites:*

 - *Differences in God's response to disobedient Christians and disobedient Israelites:*

Digging Deeper | Hearing the Word

Considering all that you have observed about Deut 2–3, how would you summarize Moses's main **aim/purpose** in writing it? That is, what effect did Moses intend his words to have in his original audience? *Articulate Moses's aim in one sentence.*

TOOLBOX | Author's Aim

What evidence is there of the author's particular purpose in this specific passage? To help clarify an author's peculiar purpose in one passage within its whole-book context, ask:

If this passage were to drop out of the book, what would be missing?

DO THE WORD

^{6:1}Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

8. Through Moses, the LORD repeatedly exhorts his people not to fear their enemies but instead to trust that he is fighting on their behalf. New-covenant believers do not wrestle against human beings in the same manner that the Israelites battled against the Canaanites (Eph 6:12). Nor do we fight spiritual battles with physical weapons (Eph 6:11). But new-covenant believers still have enemies.

So, who are our enemies? The New Testament teaches that our enemies are the world (broken and sinful), the flesh (corrupt and sinful human nature), and the devil (Satan and his minions). For example, in Ephesians 2:2–3, Paul describes the nature of believers prior to their regeneration by the Spirit: “*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*” See also 1 John 2:15–17 and 4:1–4.

In what specific areas of your life are you currently wrestling against the world, the flesh, and/or the devil? More specifically, what are **three key enemies** that you are trusting God to fight and conquer on your behalf? *Be specific.*

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9. In Deut 2–3, Moses plainly reminds God’s people of the triumphs over enemy kings that he granted his people as “firstfruits” in preparation for taking full possession of Canaan. Those firstfruit experiences aim to help them not fear their enemies but to trust that “it is the LORD your God who fights for you” (Deut 3:22). Firstfruit experiences such as these reassure believers of God’s trustworthiness.

Similarly, when we recount specific triumphs that God has granted us personally and corporately in our local church, it can play a powerful role in our understanding of God, ourselves, and our congregation. Remembering past triumphs over our enemies—*the world, the flesh, and the devil*—also helps us no longer dread these enemies. Instead, we can trust that God in Christ is fighting for us, and his strength far surpasses that of our enemies.

- a. Reflecting on the past two years, name at least **five specific “triumphs”** that God secured for you over the world, the flesh, and/or the devil. *Be specific.*

For example, you might mention God’s enabling you to make progress in resisting a particular temptation or sin pattern, in loving someone you find difficult to love, or so on.

- *Triumph God secured for you:*
 - *Triumph God secured for you:*
 - *Triumph God secured for you:*
 - *Triumph God secured for you:*
 - *Triumph God secured for you:*
- b. In what specific ways are each of these five triumphs evidence of God's **mercy to you**, like the Israelites' triumphs in the wilderness following their failure at Kadesh were evidence of God's mercy to them?
- c. As a new-covenant believer, what **explicit assurances** do you have about God's commitment to defeat your enemies—assurances that old-covenant believers did not have with the same explicitness? *Be specific.*

Word-Filled Prayer | Respond to Deut 3:21–22 by writing out a prayer to God.
Allow the words and ideas of this passage to guide your heart's meditation. For an example, see pg. 12.

^{3:21}And I commanded Joshua at that time, "Your eyes have seen all that the LORD your God has done to these two kings. So will the LORD do to all the kingdoms into which you are crossing. ²²You shall not fear them, for it is the LORD your God who fights for you."

RETELL THE WORD

^{6:7}You shall teach [the LORD's commandments] diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

10. Sometimes when Christians talk about personal “triumphs” that they have experienced (akin to Israel’s triumphs against Sihon and Og), it seems as if they are aiming to credit *themselves* for these victories—at least in part. Sadly, “humble brags” are a real phenomenon. Christians often sprinkle a little “God is so good” and “I am so blessed” in our stories, when these stories are really about how good *we* are and what *we* have done to merit whatever blessing we are describing.

But consider the way Moses retells to the conquest generation the stories of these triumphs in the wilderness. What do you notice about how Moses avoids “humble bragging” and instead recounts the events in an entirely **God-centered manner**?

Make at least four observations about Moses’s God-centered method.

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Digging Deeper | Retelling the Word

Rewrite the most crucial elements of Deut 2–3 to articulate it **simply, clearly, and accessibly** for a non-Christian audience.

Feel free to use several sentences. Avoid using religious jargon that a non-Christian may not understand. Try to rephrase the passage’s main truth so that a ten-year-old child could grasp it.

11. Choose one of the “triumphs” you listed in Question 9. Imagine retelling the story of this triumph to one of your neighbors who is not actively following Christ. What **four aspects** of the situation/event might you mention in order to **exalt God** as the one who secured the victory on your behalf?

Specific triumph from Question 9: _____

Specific neighbor: _____

Four aspects of your storytelling that will exalt God as Champion:

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Word-Filled Prayer | Respond to God’s Word by writing a prayer for the neighbor whom you listed in Question 11. Consider applying Moses’s exhortation to Joshua in Deut 3:21–22 to your neighbor. Pray that God would open a door in this person’s heart for his Word and enable you to speak his Word clearly, wisely, and boldly. Pray that God’s Spirit would help you exalt the Lord Jesus as you retell the Word.

^{3:21}And I commanded Joshua at that time, “Your eyes have seen all that the LORD your God has done to these two kings. So will the LORD do to all the kingdoms into which you are crossing. ²²You shall not fear them, for it is the LORD your God who fights for you.”

Notes from Teaching

Small-Group Discussion

- Open in prayer.
- Ask one person to share briefly about an opportunity she had to RETELL the previous passage in Deuteronomy.
- Read the full passage.
- **Hear the Word** | Questions 1, 3, 7; if time, *For Your Consideration* pg. 31
- **Do the Word** | Question 9
- **Retell the Word** | Question 11; if time, *Digging Deeper* pg. 35
- Close in Word-filled prayer for one another.

Unfolding of Promise and Fulfillment, Failure and Success in Deuteronomy 1–3

- Introduction (1:1–5)
- Historical Review (1:6–3:29)
 - Progress towards the land (1:6–25)
 - God multiplied Israel: Need for leaders (1:9–18)
 - God’s explicit command to go and take possession (1:21)
 - Spies sent into land
 - Climax: Declaration by spies that God’s word about the land was true
 - This declaration confronts the people with a choice: *will they have faith and trust God’s promise?*
 - Regress from the land through disobedience (1:26–2:2)
 - Progress towards the land (2:3–3:22)
 - Messengers sent into land (2:26–29)
 - Explicit command to begin to take possession (2:24, 31; 3:2)
 - Obedience: further progress toward land (2:33–3:11)
 - Climax: Declaration by Moses that God’s word about the conquest is true (3:18–22)
 - This declaration confronts the people and Joshua with a choice: *will they have faith and trust God’s promise?*
 - Moses’s exclusion from land (3:23–29)
 - Moses’s sin recalled and judged
 - People remain opposite Beth-peor

God Speaks to His People Words They Must Keep About Worshiping Him Alone

Deuteronomy 4:1–43

Moses’s first sermon on the plains of Moab consists of two main movements: an historical review (Deut 1:6–3:29) and a direct appeal to the new generation (Deut 4:1–40).

Throughout the historical review (Deut 1–3), Moses underscores the LORD’s faithfulness to his covenant people, despite their tragic unfaithfulness. The LORD’s faithfulness in the past is the firm foundation on which his covenant people are called to trust him in the present and for the future. Moses mostly exhorts *implicitly* throughout Deut 1–3, not least by repeating the words with which he exhorted the exodus generation.

Now, in Deut 4:1, Moses turns to predominantly *explicit* exhortation. He commands the conquest generation to listen to the LORD’s instruction and take possession of the land of Canaan. More specifically, Moses directs their attention to the “statutes and rules” of the LORD’s whole commandment (4:1). Moses proceeds to summarize the essence of the people’s covenant obligations. He urges the people to respond to his preaching—ultimately, to the LORD—with obedience (4:1ff), diligence (4:9ff), vigilant loyalty (4:15ff), sobriety (4:25ff), and awe-struck humility (4:32ff).

Throughout his appeal, Moses stresses the *privilege* of receiving the LORD’s special revelation, his speaking to them out of the midst of the fire (at Mount Sinai). The LORD graciously has made known to his covenant people how they can please him and thus experience fullness of life. That is why, in Moses’s estimation, if the people squander this privilege of intimacy with the LORD by refusing to heed his voice, it would amount to spiritual adultery against the LORD and national self-destruction.

We said that the unifying theme of Moses’s sermons in Deuteronomy can be articulated as: “Covenant family, respond to the LORD’s redemptive grace by faith-fully listening to his instruction and choosing life, that you may enjoy (*and not forfeit*) his covenant blessing in the promised land he is giving you!”

As you read Deut 4:1–40, consider how closely aligned is this passage’s main message with the whole book’s main message.

After Moses finishes his first sermon, he sets apart three cities in the trans-Jordan area as “cities of refuge”: Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan (Deut 4:41–43; see map on pg. 30). This action of establishing cities of refuge presupposes that, although the Israelites will enjoy the LORD’s blessings in the land of Canaan if they trust him and take possession of it, brokenness and sin will continue to be part of their everyday experience.

Just as the Israelites’ whole-hearted devotion to God pleased him, so new-covenant believers’ whole-hearted devotion to God through Christ pleases him. What is the tell-tale evidence of such devotion? Our exclusive worship of the triune God and rejection of all other would-be gods. **He—and he alone—is worthy of your praise.**

Basic Preparation: Questions 2, 5, 6, 10, 11

Five-Day Plan for Full Preparation

- **Day 1:** Read Deut 4:1–8; Num 25:1–5; Psalm 111; Questions 1–2
- **Day 2:** Read Deut 4:9–43; Exod 19; Gen 1; Questions 3–4
- **Day 3:** Read Deut 4:1–43; Questions 5–8
- **Day 4:** Read Deut 4:1–43; Questions 9–10; Word-filled prayer
- **Day 5:** Read Deut 4:1–43; Question 11; Word-filled prayer

HEAR THE WORD

^{5:1}And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them.”

After **praying** that God will open your heart to listen to his Word in faith, **read** the full passage.

1. In Deut 4:1–8, Moses is exhorting the Israelites to listen to the LORD so that they will live and enjoy their inheritance in the land of Canaan. He stresses Israel’s awesome privilege of hearing the LORD’s instruction and being able to draw near to and please the LORD. Moses portrays obedience as *a choice between life or death* (see v. 1: “that you may live”).

In 4:3–4, Moses reminds the Israelites of the tragic events near Shittim (at Beth-peor/Baal-peor) that had occurred probably only weeks prior to this sermon. At Beth-peor (see Deut 3:29), a massive number of Israelites had offered sacrifices to the god of that territory, Baal of Peor. Read Numbers 25:1–9, which recounts Israel’s rebellion against the LORD at Beth-peor.

“Beth-peor” means “house [or temple] of Peor.

For help with chronology, see Num 25:1; 33:49 and Deut 4:46.

How does Moses’s recalling of Israel’s rebellion at Beth-peor in Deut 4:3–4 **support his main message in Deut 4:1–8**?

^{4:3}“Your eyes have seen what the LORD did at Baal-peor, for the LORD your God destroyed from among you all the men who followed the Baal of Peor. ⁴But you who held fast to the LORD your God are all alive today.”

2. Moses explains that Israel’s obedience to the LORD’s statutes will be her “wisdom and understanding in the sight of the peoples” (4:6).
 - a. Moses portrays the surrounding nations as drawing a specific conclusion if Israel were to keep their covenant obligations in faith (4:6). What **specific conclusion** would the surrounding nations draw were Israel to obey the LORD?
 - b. After stating the conclusion that surrounding nations would draw in the case of Israel’s full obedience (4:6), Moses aims to inspire the conquest generation to obey the LORD in the future. He motivates them by comparing the privileges they have as the LORD’s covenant people with what other nations have that are *not* the LORD’s covenant people (4:7–8). What **two specific points of comparison** does Moses make between Israel and the surrounding nations?
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 -
 - c. Read Psalm 111. What **overlapping ideas** do you notice between Deut 4:6–8 and Psalm 111? *Identify at least three ideas; write specific verse-references as you do.*

- Throughout Deuteronomy, including at the conclusion of his first sermon (4:1–40), Moses warns his audience against forgetfulness. To guard against forgetting the LORD and his statutes, Moses commands God’s covenant people to instruct future generations about the LORD’s historic salvation of them and the contents of the covenant he cut with them at Mount Sinai (which Moses calls “Horeb” in Deuteronomy).

Read **Exodus 19** for some important backdrop to Moses’s preaching in Deut 4.

Moses’s exhortation in Deut 4:9–40 draws heavily from Israel’s experiences at Horeb. In Exodus 19–Numbers 10, Moses records much of what the LORD commanded Israel during their time encamped at Horeb.

In the chart below, note **at least ten references in Deut 4:9–40 to Israel’s experience at Horeb** and **how Moses’s reference is functioning in his sermon** (that is, what is Moses’s purpose of referring to the Horeb experience here?). These can be explicit references (for example, when Moses mentions “Horeb” by name) or implicit references (for example, when Moses uses an image or metaphor that aims to cause his audience to recall an aspect of the Horeb experience).

Example	Verse in Deut 4	<i>Allusion to Horeb in Deut 4:9–40</i>	<i>How the allusion is functioning in Moses’s exhortation</i>
	4:13	<i>The LORD wrote the Ten Words on two stone tablets (Exod 31:18)</i>	<i>That the LORD writes down the commandments illustrates his intent that Israel obey them and teach future generations to obey them; so obey them!</i>

4. In Deut 4:15–24, Moses stresses the LORD’s prohibition of practicing idolatry. Specifically, Moses says that because they did not see the LORD in any material form at Horeb, they must not make any images/idols for worship anywhere else.

List **the forms in Deut 4:16–19** of which the Israelites are prohibited to make a carved image or figure, **in the same sequence** in which Moses mentions these forms.

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.
- f.
- g.
- h.

What do you notice about **the sequence** of the prohibited forms in Deut 4:16–19 **in relation to** the sequence of what God creates in **Genesis 1**?

What **might be the significance** of what you notice about the sequence of prohibited forms in Deut 4 to the sequence of what God creates in Gen 1?

5. What stands out to you in Deut 4:25–31 about the **consequences** that Israel will incur if they practice idolatry in the land of Canaan? *Make three observations.*

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6. As Moses concludes his first sermon in Deut 4:32–40, he stresses the LORD’s powerful mercy to redeem and discipline Israel, his special covenant people. It stands to reason, Moses argues, that Israel ought to respond to the LORD’s grace by keeping his statutes. After all, keeping the LORD’s commands will lead to fullness of life in the land of Canaan.
- a. **Put in your own words Moses’s claim in Deut 4:36a:** “*Out of heaven he let you hear his voice, that he might discipline you.*”
 - b. **In what sense** does God’s discipline of Israel express mercy and *not* cruelty?

7. In one sentence, what does this passage mainly reveal about **God**?
8. In one sentence, what is this passage's **unifying theme**? *Consult the "Toolbox" below.*

TOOLBOX | Unifying Theme

The unifying theme integrates several key themes in a book or passage. It is important to be able to articulate the central message of a passage in a succinct, clear statement, which is why we aim to develop a "unifying-theme statement" (just one sentence!). To understand, explain, and apply a passage, we are greatly helped by distilling a passage's truths into a succinct, simple statement.

Of course, no single sentence can exhaust a passage's meaning. The goal of writing a unifying-theme statement is not to capture all the rich details. Rather, we aim to capture the main idea in a simple statement that helps us "cut open" a text and see how the various details of the passage express a principal message.

What is the process of developing a unifying-theme statement of any given passage?

1. **Read! (and re-read!)**
Perhaps mix up how you "hear" the passage. For example, mark it up as you read, read it aloud, and/or listen to a recording of it.
2. **Notice repeated words, phrases, and ideas.**
Authors of Scripture didn't have highlighter pens. So how did they establish emphasis in their passage? Repetition! When an author repeats a word, phrase, or idea, he is emphasizing it.
3. **Work out the passage's structure.**
Structure is another of the author's mechanisms for establishing emphasis. For example, in New Testament epistles, the authors often include the book's key themes in the book's introduction and conclusion.
Understanding a book's/passage's structure is hard work! Usually, our initial thoughts about a passage's structure change as we spend more time in the passage. After reading the book or passage in full, take a stab at an initial, simple outline. But you'll probably want to tweak that outline a few more times in the process.
4. **List key themes and their relationship to one another.**
After reading the passage thoroughly, attending to repetitions, and making an initial outline, make a list of what seem to be the key themes. Once you have listed all the book's key themes, consider how these themes *relate to one another* and *integrate into one main idea*, or "unifying theme." For a book's unifying-theme statement, it's helpful to review again and again those passages that seemingly play a dominant role in clarifying the book's main idea.
5. **Identify the author's aim/purpose in composing this passage.**
6. **Articulate the passage's unifying theme in a resonant (with the text and the audience), simple, and clear sentence that has explanatory power for the whole text.**
 - To strengthen your statement's resonance with the text, use actual words from the passage. Some make a "non-negotiable list" in which they identify the two or three key words or themes that they think are vital to include in their unifying-theme statement.
 - In articulating the passage's unifying theme, be simple but *not* simplistic.
 - Regarding a unifying-theme statement's explanatory power for the whole passage: if there is an element of the passage that your statement doesn't help explain (in terms of why the author included that element in the passage), then your unifying-theme sentence might not be sufficiently *unifying*. That is, you might have articulated a key theme of the passage rather than its main theme.

DO THE WORD

^{6:1}Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

9. The LORD's redemptive actions for his covenant people unfolds on the platform of human history. Surrounding nations could see evidence of how the LORD worked in Israel's favor, including in the victories the LORD gave them over Sihon and Og. The public nature of the LORD's saving Israel has implications for how Israel ought to live. For example, in Deut 4:6–8, Moses notes that surrounding nations not only witness evidence of the LORD's actions, but they also witness how his people respond to his actions and his commands.

Israel's **obedience** would elicit questions from the surrounding nations: ^{4:6}“*Keep [the laws the LORD gives you] and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’*” Conversely, Israel's **disobedience** would elicit questions from the surrounding nations: when Israelites and visiting foreigners would observe the destruction that the LORD brought on his unfaithful people, they would ask what had caused such terror (29:24).

A key question for the conquest generation, then, is whether their response to the LORD's grace would lead surrounding nations to praise his wisdom or to shake their heads in dismay over the devastated condition of the LORD's people.

New-covenant Christians also live out our covenantal loyalty to God amid human history. Our obedience ought to stand out to our neighbor and elicit their questions about our source of wisdom and understanding. The sad reality, though, is that our conduct often neutralizes our Christian testimony among non-Christians. That is because we regularly fail to live as set apart from the world—as different.

What are **four major areas of conduct** that could elicit questions from a non-Christian friend were a believer faithfully to follow the Lord's instruction in the Bible? Articulate **one way that you would like to make progress** in obeying God in this area of conduct.

Example:

Area of conduct: whom we invite to eat meals with us in our home

One way to make progress: once a month, invite someone into our home that is not in our existing “friendship circle”

a. *Area of conduct:*

One way to make progress:

b. *Area of conduct:*

One way to make progress:

c. *Area of conduct:*

One way to make progress:

d. *Area of conduct:*

One way to make progress:

10. Moses utterly **rejects idolatry** as a legitimate part of Israel’s worship.

- a. What sorts of “**idols**” are **particularly tempting for you** to worship? *Give at least three specific examples.*

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When Moses refers to idols in Deut 4, he means literal images/figurines of deities for the purpose of worshipping them. In our contemporary context, most of us are usually not tempted to worship literal figurines or rely on them in our worship. But we certainly have an idolatry problem, in the abstract sense.

We can define an “idol” in our day as **those persons or things to whom we are tempted to ascribe worth or power that ought to be reserved for God alone**. Oftentimes these persons or things are God’s good gifts that we have perverted in our hearts and turn to as the source of our significance or protection. But God alone can give ultimate significance and protection.

In Deut 4, he gives several reasons why Israel must renounce all forms of idolatry. For example, Moses declares

Israel’s distinction from “all the peoples under the whole heaven”: ^{4:20} *“But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own inheritance, as you are this day.”* The LORD’s grace toward his people in redeeming them from Egypt ought to motivate them to worship him—and him alone.

How much more, then, ought God’s grace to new-covenant believers in redeeming us in Christ from sin and death motivate us to worship him alone?

A subtle yet powerful idea conveyed in Deut 4:20 is that in redeeming his people from Egypt, the LORD’s grace to them is **new-creational**. He brings them out of a fiery furnace like an artisan forges his art in the fire. The logic, then, goes something like this: Why would Israel worship an image/idol, when *they themselves* are the LORD’s precious new creation (image) as his covenant nation? Therefore, key to the Israelites’ faithfulness in exclusively worshiping God is that they embrace their redeemed, new-creational identity.

- b. For Christians: Give **three specific examples** of times over the past three months (or so) that your faithfulness to the Lord has faltered because you failed to embrace your redeemed, new-creational identity.

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Word-Filled Prayer | Respond to Deut 4:20 by writing a brief prayer of thanks to God.

^{4:20} *But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own inheritance, as you are this day.*

RETELL THE WORD

6:7 You shall teach [the LORD's commandments] diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

11. Think of a specific family member with whom you have somewhat regular interactions. Imagine retelling to her or him this passage's truths relating to Moses's prohibition of idolatry.

What **specific challenges might you face** in communicating to this family member the essence of Moses's commands along with the reasons he gives for obeying them? What might it look like for you on practical level to **rely on God** to help you courageously face these challenges in retelling the Word? And what truths might you communicate with this family member?

Specific family member: _____

- a. Challenges you might face in retelling truths from Deut 4 to this person:
- b. Practically, what reliance on God might look like in communicating truths with this person:
- c. Rewrite the most crucial elements of Deut 4:1–40 to articulate it **simply, clearly, and accessibly** for the family member you named above.

Feel free to use several sentences. Avoid using religious jargon that a non-Christian may not understand. Try to rephrase the passage's main truth so that a ten-year-old child could grasp it.

Word-Filled Prayer | Respond to God's Word by writing out a prayer for this family member you named in Question 11.

You may want to use words and ideas from the passage as you pray. Pray that God would open a door in their heart for his Word and enable you to speak his Word clearly, wisely, and boldly. Pray that God's Spirit would help you exalt the Lord Jesus in your retelling.

For an example Word-filled prayer of this sort, see pg. 14.

For Your Consideration

In Hebrews 12:1–29, consider the ways the writer of Hebrews follows Moses's lead in retelling the Word. Like Moses, the writer of Hebrews recasts Sinai/Horeb imagery, employs the language of discipline, and warns about forfeiting God's grace in order to exhort *his* audience to endure in faith.

Notes from Teaching

Small-Group Discussion

- Open in prayer.
- Ask one person to share briefly about an opportunity she had to DO the previous passage in Deuteronomy.
- Read the full passage.
- **Hear the Word** | Questions 2, 5, 6
- **Do the Word** | Question 10
- **Retell the Word** | Question 11
- Close in Word-filled prayer for one another.

Recap: Relating the Old and New Covenants

In the Bible, God addresses his people in the context of covenant relationship. The OT uses “covenant” to describe a variety of relational arrangements, and not all biblical covenants are the same in every way. Essentially, a biblical covenant between God and his image-bearer(s) binds the two parties together in a specific and solemn oath, though sometimes only God takes that oath. The heart of the covenant relationship is expressed in God’s promise, “I will be your God, and you will be my people” (for example, Exod 6:7; Jer 31:33; 1 Pet 2:9–10; Rev 21:7).

The Bible’s various covenants play different roles in the redemptive-historical storyline and relate to one another dynamically. For example, God’s promises to Abram (Gen 12:1–3) undergird God’s covenant with Israel at Sinai/Horeb (Exod 24) and its renewal on the plains of Moab (Deut 31). Moreover, this same Abrahamic promise anticipates the fullness of the new covenant in Christ (Gal 3:7–14).

The new covenant is superior to the old covenant and outstrips its glory (2 Cor 3). A redemptive covenant relationship with God *at any point in salvation history* ultimately is made possible through the new covenant in Jesus’s blood: his substitutionary atonement on behalf those who put their faith in God (Heb 8–10). That means that old-covenant saints receive by faith the promise of Christ’s future redemptive work, while new-covenant saints receive by faith his completion of it (Rom 4:13–25).

What Is “Redemptive History”?

The supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom all things hold together (Col 1:17), governs Scripture’s message and redemptive history’s shape. **Redemptive history** begins in the garden of Eden, advances through God’s promises to Abraham and through the story of Israel’s creation and exile, climaxes in the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, continues to unfold as the gospel bears fruit in the church of Christ, and will culminate in Christ’s ushering in the New Jerusalem at his second coming.

Once God has spoken his final word through his Son (Heb 1:1–2), his speech by the old-covenant prophets is now properly understood in light of his Son. The Scriptures make clear, for example, that Jesus fulfills OT Law (Matt 5:17–20) and indicate that all OT Law must now be interpreted in light of his person and work.

God Instructs His People for Life in Canaan: Introducing Moses's Second Sermon
Deuteronomy 4:44–49

Deuteronomy 4:44–49 is widely recognized as the introduction to Moses's second sermon. As such, it marks an important transition. The narrator summarizes the content (4:44–45a) and the redemptive-historical context (4:45b–49) of what follows in the second sermon (5:1–29:1).

In Moses's first sermon, he reminds Israel of the LORD's historic grace extended to them and to their parents, the exodus generation. He also calls them, in view of that grace, to listen to the LORD's instruction and worship him alone. Refusing to keep the LORD's commands would result in personal devastation and national disintegration, since "the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God" (4:24). In fact, due to Israel's rebellion against the LORD almost forty years prior, 120-year-old Moses is one of the few men remaining among his generation.

In Moses's second and longest sermon (Deut 5:1–29:1), he continues exhorting Israel to keep the statutes that the LORD spoke to them at Horeb. This second sermon:

- harkens back to their *past* covenant-making days with the LORD at Horeb,
- demands *present* faith as they prepare to take their inheritance land,
- and anticipates the *future* social and covenantal situation in the Promised Land.

Moses insists that the statutes and ordinances in his second sermon be understood in **the context of a covenant relationship**. For example, there are twenty-seven uses of "covenant" in Deuteronomy, thirteen of which are in Moses's second discourse. That includes the outer edges of the second sermon:

at the sermon's beginning the "covenant" at Horeb is mentioned (5:2, 3);

at the sermon's subscription (which is the narrator's summary immediately following the sermon) "the words of the covenant" the LORD made with Israel at Moab and the "covenant" at Horeb are mentioned (29:1).

The second sermon also highlights the covenantal context of the LORD's commands by explicit references to formal covenant ceremonies. For example, descriptions of covenant-renewal ceremonies at Gerizim and Ebal (11:29–30; 27) enclose the portion of Moses's second sermon often referred to as "the law code" (12–26).

Overall, Moses applies the Horeb statutes to the new generation's imminent situation in Canaan to show them in detail how they and their offspring can remain faithful in a new situation once they are living in Canaan. If Israel is to receive the LORD's full blessing and avoid incurring the LORD's curse, every aspect of their national and personal life in Canaan must be shaped by the LORD's instruction.

Similarly, believers in Christ can enjoy his gift of abundant life now as we allow his grace to shape the whole of our life.

Basic Preparation: Questions 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9

Five-Day Plan for Full Preparation

- **Day 1:** Read Deut 4:44–49; Questions 1–2
- **Day 2:** Read Deut 4:44–49; Heb 1:1–4; Matt 5:17–20; Questions 3–5; Digging Deeper pg. 56
- **Day 3:** Read Deut 4:44–49; Psalm 19; Question 6
- **Day 4:** Read Deut 4:44–49; Questions 7–8
- **Day 5:** Read Deut 4:44–49; Question 9; Word-filled prayer

HEAR THE WORD

^{5:1}And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them.”

After **praying** that God will open your heart to listen to his Word in faith, **read** the full passage.

1. The narrator identifies Moses’s second sermon as “the *law/instruction* that Moses set before the people of Israel” (4:44). In Deut 4:45, the narrator elaborates on the content of Moses’s second sermon by describing it as “the testimonies, the statutes, and the rules which Moses spoke to the people of Israel.”

The meaning of the word “law/instruction/guidance” used in Deut 4:44 can include the idea of “legislation” (the Hebrew word is transliterated “torah”); in fact, the Greek version of the Old Testament regularly uses the Greek word “law” to translate this Hebrew word. But often the word “torah” refers more generally to “instruction” or “teaching.” See, for example, how Proverbs 3:1 uses the same word: “My son, do not forget my *teaching*, but let your heart keep my commandments.”

Throughout the Psalter, Israel’s singers praised the LORD for his gracious “instruction” of his covenant people. They rejoice that God took initiative to reveal himself to his people through his law at Sinai, on the plains of Moab, and elsewhere. For example, in Psalm 25, David celebrates the LORD’s mercy to instruct sinners like him. Here is what he writes in Psalm 25:4–14:

- | | |
|----|--|
| 4 | Make me to know your ways, O LORD;
teach me your paths. |
| 5 | Lead me in your truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all the day long. |
| 6 | Remember your mercy, O LORD, and your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old. |
| 7 | Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me,
for the sake of your goodness, O LORD! |
| 8 | Good and upright is the LORD;
therefore he instructs sinners in the way. |
| 9 | He leads the humble in what is right,
and teaches the humble his way. |
| 10 | All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies. |
| 11 | For your name’s sake, O LORD,
pardon my guilt, for it is great. |
| 12 | Who is the man who fears the LORD?
Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose. |
| 13 | His soul shall abide in well-being,
and his offspring shall inherit the land. |
| 14 | The friendship (or “secret counsel”) of the LORD is for those who fear him,
and he makes known to them his covenant. |

- a. Based on Deut 4 and Ps 25:4–14, how do Moses and David **view** God’s instruction/law?
 - b. What stands out to you as **different** about the way David and Moses view God’s law in the Old Testament and **the way many people today**—including Christians—view God’s law in the Old Testament?
 - c. What sorts of thing **cause this difference** between Moses’s/David’s view and the common modern view of biblical law?
2. John Calvin articulates **three uses of biblical Law**: (1) “The law shows the righteousness of God, as a mirror discloses our sinfulness, leading us to implore divine help”; (2) “The law restrains malefactors and those who are not yet believers”; (3) “Principally it admonishes believers and urges them on in well-doing.”³

How do you see each of these uses at work in Deut 1:1–4:43? In other words, how does Deut 1:1–4:43 **show** God’s righteousness and human sinfulness, **restrain** sinners, and **admonish** and **exhort** believers toward good works? *Give an example of each use of the law.*

- *Example of how Deut 1:1–4:43 shows divine righteousness and human sinfulness*
 - *Example of how Deut 1:1–4:43 restrains sinners, including unbelievers*
 - *Example of how Deut 1:1–4:43 admonishes and exhorts believers to good works*
3. Verbs of speaking and hearing pervade Deuteronomy. At Horeb, the LORD *spoke* to his people out of the midst of the fire. Moses summons Israel and repeatedly cries out, “*Hear, O Israel!*” The Israelites are to *listen to the voice* of the LORD all the days of their life. So, the laws throughout Deuteronomy are not impersonal rules; rather, they express the personal will of the divine Sovereign.

The whole Bible is God speaking to his people. The Scriptures record God’s historic speech, by which he continues to speak. This everlasting Word of God is inspired, revelatory, authoritative, inerrant, infallible, and sufficient for guidance in faith and practice. By his Spirit, God inspired human servants, such as Moses, to write the Scriptures in confluence with him. And before Moses writes the words of Deuteronomy on the plains of Moab, he preaches them. He *speaks* this instruction to the people (Deut 4:45).

³Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:354, 1:358, 1:360, respectively.

Read Hebrews 1:1–4 and Matthew 5:17–20. What stands out to you in **Heb 1:1–4** and **Matt 5:17–20** about how new-covenant believers ought to interpret and apply Moses’s instruction in Deuteronomy? *Make two observations.*

- -
4. The narrator not only notes the content of Moses’s second sermon (4:44–45a), but also the redemptive-historical context (4:45b–49). (For a definition of “redemptive-historical context,” refer to pg. 22.) The sermon’s introduction gives the sermon’s setting, including important geographical, temporal, and covenantal information.

TOOLBOX | Literary Context

For more help, see “Toolbox” and “Digging Deeper” on pp 21–22.

How does this passage **relate to the words surrounding it**? And, so what?

A hallmark of expositional teaching is its aim to deal wisely with biblical texts in their various contexts. For help in dealing with a passage’s literary context, consult your Study Bible’s *cross-references*. Cross-references are often located in your Bible’s central or lower margin. These references list passages that, according to the Study-Bible editor, are highly relevant to a particular theme, sentence, phrase, or word.

Immediate Literary Context | To determine what portion of text constitutes your passage’s “immediate literary context,” identify the immediately preceding and following **thought unit**. (If your passage opens or concludes the book, then merely refer either to the following or preceding passage, respectively.) Thought units can vary in length, sometimes consisting of multiple paragraphs, sometimes sentences, and sometimes just one sentence.

After identifying which passages to examine as the main passage’s “immediate literary context,” consider: *How does the passage’s immediate literary context help establish the passage’s meaning and significance? What specific role does the main passage play in its immediate literary context?*

Whole-Book Literary Context | Every passage in a letter contributes somehow to the author’s main argument. Conversely, how we interpret a passage is controlled to a certain degree by the letter’s main argument. So, we must ask: *What role do this specific passage play in the whole book? And, conversely, what role does the whole book play in how we interpret and apply this specific passage?*

- Does the specific passage under analysis initiate, develop, or bring to a conclusion one of the book’s key themes? (Look for a word/phrase/image/idea that recurs throughout the book that also directly or indirectly appears in your passage.) If so, how does the whole-book development of this theme affect your interpretation of this specific passage and what the author intends to accomplish in this passage?
- In its context, does your passage represent a transition to a different aspect of the author’s main argument? If so, how does the main argument illuminate this specific aspect of it?

Whole-Bible Literary Context | Helpful tools for whole-Bible context include Study-Bible cross-references, online concordances (such as biblegateway.com, in which you can search a word or phrase in a particular English version), and commentaries.

Make **three observations about the redemptive-historical context** the narrator gives in Deut 4:45b–49 and **why this observation matters** for interpretation.

- *Geographical information (and why it matters)*
- *Temporal information (and why it matters)*
- *Covenantal information (and why it matters)*

5. What does this passage mainly reveal about **God's chosen means of instructing his people?** *Articulate your response in one sentence.*

Digging Deeper | Hearing the Word

For help with these questions, see pp. 21–22, 55.

Immediate Literary Context:

What is the relationship of Deut 4:44–49 to the passage immediately preceding it? So what?

What is the relationship of Deut 4:44–49 to the passage immediately following it? So what?

Whole-Book Literary Context:

What is the relationship of Deut 4:44–49 to the whole book? So what?

Whole-Bible Literary Context:

LOOK BACK: *for example, how does the Moses's narration relate to antecedent Scripture (that is, Scripture recorded prior to when Moses is preaching these words in Deuteronomy)? More broadly, how does this Deuteronomy passage reflect certain historical events and literary themes of antecedent Scripture?*

LOOK FORWARD: *for example, how does this passage anticipate historical events and literary themes that are recorded in subsequent Scripture (that is, Scripture recorded after Deuteronomy was written)?*

DO THE WORD

^{6:1}Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

6. Oftentimes we wrongly view God's law as burdensome and/or irrelevant. Our feelings about OT Law are sometimes inappropriately negative. One way to remember the enormous privilege of the LORD's instructing his people is to read the Bible's own assessment of the law.
- a. Read Psalm 19. Make **three observations** about the way David describes the LORD's instruction/law in Psalm 19:7–11 and how that corresponds to what you have seen thus far in Deuteronomy 1–4.

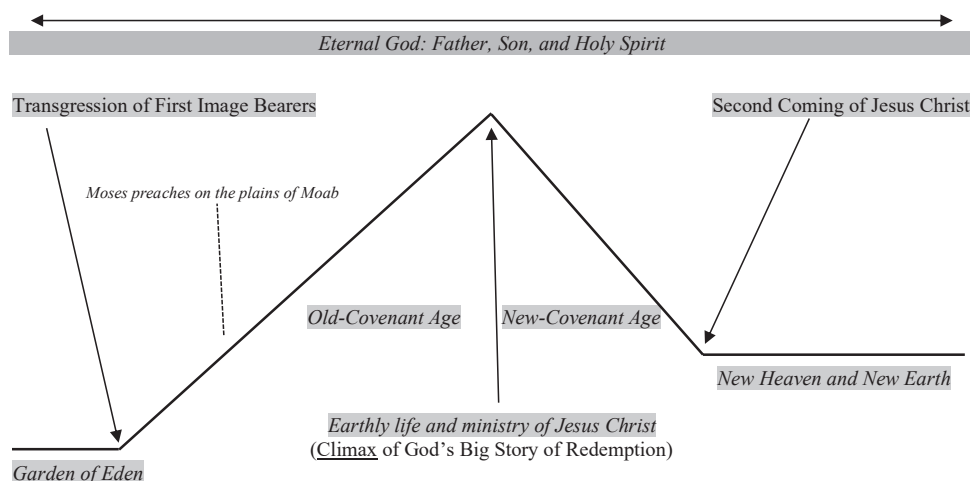
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- b. **Word-Filled Prayer** | Respond to God's Word by writing a prayer of thanks to him.

How can David's praises in Psalm 19 help shape your own praises to God for the gift of his instruction, including his instruction in Deuteronomy? **Take time to give thanks** for God's grace to instruct and guide you.

7. If you were to believe more fully what Deut 4:44–49 reveals about God's chosen means of instructing his people (see Question 5), what is **one thing that would change** in your life? *This may be a change in attitude, practice, thought life, a relational pattern, or something else.*
8. The introduction to Moses's second sermon reiterates the sermon's redemptive-historical context. (See pg. 51 for a description of "redemptive history.") This includes the LORD's redemption of his people out of Egypt, his preservation of his rebellious people in the wilderness, and his causing them to triumph militarily over their enemies in trans-Jordan as the firstfruits of their inheritance.

- a. What is ***your* redemptive-historical context** as a new-covenant Christian? That is, what are the key historical events relating to salvation that locate you on the Bible’s “storyline,” from creation to Jesus’s return at the end of the ages? *Along with writing a response, mark your redemptive-historical “location” on the chart below.*



- b. The narrator makes plain in the second sermon’s introduction (Deut 4:44–49) that Israel’s redemptive-historical context ought to shape how they hear and respond to the LORD’s instruction that will follow (Deut 5:1–29:1). Israel’s redemptive-historical context and Israel’s call to obey God’s Word are bound together.

This week, **what one step will you take to remind yourself** of *your* redemptive-historical context (see previous question) as you aim to obey God’s Word? *Identify one specific and practical step you will take, and share your plans with a Christian friend for encouragement and accountability.*

One practical step you will take to remind yourself of your redemptive-historical context as you aim to obey God’s Word:

An example: This week when I experience the temptation to _____, I will remind myself that God is at work conforming me to the image of Christ now, including as I resist this temptation, so that I will be ready to see him face to face when he returns. To help me resist this temptation, I will write 1 John 3:1–3 on an index card and tape it to my car dashboard to keep me mindful of this truth and help me live in its light.

One Christian friend with whom you will share your plan: _____

RETELL THE WORD

^{6:7}You shall teach [the LORD's commandments] diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

9. It can be a challenge to help people see that their life is unfolding in a larger context. So often we think only of our immediate needs and our little corner of the world and history. We easily can become “tunnel-vision.”

- a. What has helped you the most in understanding your place and role in the Bible's big story from creation to consummation? And how has your broadened understanding of your place in God's big story changed the way you live?

Theologians often refer to Christ's second coming and his work to usher in the new heaven and new earth as “consummation,” when Christ will bring to completion his purposes in creation.

- b. Think of a non-Christian friend of yours from your childhood or school age. What are **three specific obstacles** to that friend's accepting the reality of the Bible's storyline, from creation to consummation? And what are **two practical ways** you could try to help that friend get a sense for the larger context in which human beings live out our lives, according to the Bible?

Non-Christian childhood/school friend: _____

Three specific obstacles to her/his accepting the reality that human history is unfolding according to and in the context of God's redemptive plan:

-
-
-

Two practical ways to help her/him understand reality of redemptive history:

-
-

Word-Filled Prayer | Respond to God's Word by writing a prayer for this non-Christian friend (from Question 9). *Perhaps you want to ask God to grant you opportunities for communicating the joy of trusting his purposes in human history and therefore embracing his commandments by faith.*
For an example of this sort of Word-filled prayer, see pg. 14.

⁴⁴This is the law that Moses set before the people of Israel. ⁴⁵These are the testimonies, the statutes, and the rules, which Moses spoke to the people of Israel when they came out of Egypt, ⁴⁶beyond the Jordan in the valley opposite Beth-peor, in the land of Sihon the king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon, whom Moses and the people of Israel defeated when they came out of Egypt. ⁴⁷And they took possession of his land and the land of Og, the king of Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites, who lived to the east beyond the Jordan; ⁴⁸from Aroer, which is on the edge of the Valley of the Arnon, as far as Mount Sirion (that is, Hermon), ⁴⁹together with all the Arabah on the east side of the Jordan as far as the Sea of the Arabah, under the slopes of Pisgah.

Notes from Teaching

Small-Group Discussion

- Open in prayer.
- Ask one person to share briefly about an opportunity she had to DO the previous passage in Deuteronomy.
- Read the full passage.
- **Hear the Word** | Questions 1, 3, 5
- **Do the Word** | Questions 7, 8
- **Retell the Word** | Question 9
- Close in Word-filled prayer for one another.

How Does Old Testament Law Function?

Old Testament Law functions on multiple levels for its original audience, including:

- to **reveal God's character and will** to his covenant people and, through their obedience, to surrounding nations (Exod 19:4–6);
- to **sustain a relationship of faithfulness** with YHWH among the Israelites that would bring them blessing, including tenure in the land of Canaan (Deut 11:26–28) and his ongoing presence among them (Lev 26:11–12);
- to **establish a righteous society** under YHWH's rule (Deut 16:18–20), which involves restraining transgressors and protecting the innocent and vulnerable (Matt 19:8; 1 Tim 1:8–11);
- to **expose sin** and multiply transgression (Rom 4:15; 5:20; 7:7–13);⁴
- to **be a guardian** for God's people until the completion of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ (Gal 2:24–25; 4:1–2);
- to **point prophetically to the person and work of Jesus Christ** (Luke 24:27; John 1:45; 5:46; Acts 28:23).

Though law can never in and of itself transform the human heart (Gal 3:21), OT Law is an expression of and means of divine grace (Ps 19:7–11). Old Testament Law is given to God's people in the context of a covenant relationship in which *blessed fellowship with and devotion to God* is the goal. God is revealing the path of righteousness to his people and showing them how to enjoy his blessing.

Moses wrote down God's words to his old-covenant people on the plains of Moab (Deut 31:9, 24), but these words are written for the Israelites and for God's new-covenant people. That means that God continues to address his new-covenant people through the OT Scriptures, including through OT Law (for example, 1 Cor 9:8–10).


The Scriptures testify that Jesus fulfills OT Law (Matt 5:17–20) and indicate that all OT Law must now be interpreted in view of his person and work.⁵ Jesus said to the Jews who were scheming against him, *"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, ... Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me: for he wrote of me"* (John 5:39, 45–46).

⁴Hearing the law causes a person to see that she or he has fallen short of God's will for us. It shines the light on our heart's darkness. When a person discovers God's law and yet continues to disobey, her disobedience becomes explicit, self-conscious "transgression," since she now knows she is violating God's will.

⁵Scholars debate the meaning of "fulfill" in Matt 5:17. Carson writes of Matt 5:17–20 that "[h]ere Jesus presents himself as the eschatological goal of the OT and thereby its sole authoritative interpreter, the one through whom alone the OT finds its valid continuity and significance"; D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *Matthew and Mark*, vol. 9 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, eds. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 144.

God Defines His Relationship with His People: Speaking out of the Fire
Deuteronomy 5:1–6:3

Moses’s second sermon progresses in three major movements: Deut 5:1–11:32, 12:1–26:19, and 27:1–29:1. The first major unit (5:1–11:32) contains three minor movements, each beginning with the rhetorical marker “Hear, O Israel!” (5:1; 6:4; 9:1).

Moses’s Second Sermon (4:44–29:1)	4:44–49	Introduction	
	5–11	Covenant Obligations: General Exhortation	
	12–26	Covenant Obligations: Specific Laws	
	27:1–29:1	Covenant Blessings and Curses	

5:1 “Hear, O Israel!”
6:4 “Hear, O Israel!”
9:1 “Hear, O Israel!”

In the first minor movement (Deut 5:1–6:3), Moses begins his second sermon. He recounts how God appeared on Mount Sinai and spoke to his freshly redeemed people out of the midst of fire. Moses’s recollection showcases the glory of God. It also establishes fundamental elements of God’s covenant relationship with Israel, including his provision of a mediator. This moment at Horeb is pivotal in the history of God’s relationship with his people, and Moses stresses that it ought to inspire God’s people to obey him.

The same God who spoke out of the midst of the fire at Horeb speaks at Moab through his prophet, Moses, and Israel must hear the LORD and obey all his commandments (5:22–6:3). He is also the same God who is speaking today to us through these same prophetic words. And we, too, must hear him and obey all his commandments.

Will you listen and live?

Basic Preparation: Questions 1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 11

Five-Day Plan for Full Preparation

- **Day 1:** Read Deut 5:1–6:3; Heb 12:18–24; Questions 1–4
- **Day 2:** Read Deut 5:1–6:3; Questions 5–8
- **Day 3:** Read Deut 5:1–6:3; Digging Deeper pg 68
- **Day 4:** Read Deut 5:1–6:3; Ps 81; Matt 23:37–39; Questions 9–10; Word-filled prayer
- **Day 5:** Read Deut 5:1–6:3; Heb 12:18–24; Questions 11–12; Word-filled prayer

HEAR THE WORD

^{5:1}And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them.”

After **praying** that God will open your heart to listen to his Word in faith, **read** the full passage.

1. You may want to familiarize yourself with Exod 19–20, 24, which is Moses’s first account of these events at Horeb (Mount Sinai). As in Deut 4, Moses repeatedly uses the imagery of *fire* in Deut 5:1–6:3. At Horeb, Israel does not see God, only the manifestations of his presence. But they hear his voice with crystal clarity.
 - a. **Why** does Moses so often mention *fire* and use its imagery in Deut 5:1–6:3? What might he be trying to accomplish in his hearers? *For example, what kinds of ideas and feelings does fire imagery generally create, when referring to a dramatic experience like Horeb?*
 - b. Read Hebrews 12:18–24. What stands out to you about **how the author of Hebrews recounts** events at Horeb in Heb 12:18–21, in terms of how it resembles Moses’s retelling in Deut 5:1–6:3? What is similar?
2. What are **three major ways** that Deut 5:1–6:3 reveals God’s grace to his people?
Be specific, and note chapter-and-verse references with each way you list.
3. As we have seen, Deuteronomy’s form and substance resembles aspects of an ancient Near Eastern (aNE) treaty. Similarly, the Ten Commandments (or “Ten Words”) formally resemble this literary form. The LORD discloses his will in a literary form that the original audience would recognize. Moreover, they would recognize this form as highlighting that they are in covenant relationship with this God.
 - Deuteronomy 5:6 resembles an aNE treaty’s *preamble* and *historical prologue*; the LORD identifies himself and important elements of his (the “suzerain’s”) relationship with Israel (the “vassal”).
 - Deuteronomy 5:7–21 resembles an aNE treaty’s *stipulations*; the LORD articulates the specific obligations his people must obey.
 - Deuteronomy 5:33–6:3 resembles one element of an aNE treaty’s *sanctions*; the LORD states the blessings Israel will receive if they obey.
 - a. What strikes you as important about how **the LORD identifies himself** in Deut 5:6?

- b. Why does it matter that the LORD describes himself and his relationship with his people this way (in Deut 5:6) *before* he articulates his specific commands in Deut 5:7–21? What difference does **the logical sequence** make?

4. After the LORD identifies himself as Israel’s redeemer (5:6), his first two “words” of the covenant at Horeb prohibit Israel’s worshipping or crafting other gods (5:7–10). The LORD grounds this command in his own character, particularly his jealousy and his punishment of those who “hate” him and reward of those who “love” him (compare 4:24).
 - a. What does the LORD **mean** that he is a “jealous” God? *Put this into your own words.*

 - b. What does the LORD **not mean** by calling himself a “jealous” God? That is, what kind of jealousy does *not* characterize God?

5. Moses reminds the new generation that at Mount Sinai the exodus generation begged him to mediate on their behalf so that they would not die (5:23–27). What might be **Moses’s purpose** in including this part of the story?

6. In Deut 5:28–31, Moses relays the LORD’s words to Moses, after the LORD heard the people’s begging Moses to mediate on their behalf. The LORD says, “Oh that they had such a mind as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their descendants!” (5:29).

Based on this passage, what does it mean to **“fear” God**?

7. What does this passage reveal about **God’s people**?
Articulate your response in one sentence.

8. What does this passage mainly reveal about **God and his commandments**?
Articulate your response in one sentence.

TOOLBOX | Structure

Moses shapes Deuteronomy in a manner reflective of the customs of his day, although he freely adjusts his style and form to suit his purposes. In the broadest sense of structure, Hebrews consists of an introduction, the prophet's valedictory speeches, his concluding words and actions, and a report of his succession and death.

Here are a few pointers to help identify and follow a passage's structure:

- **Pay attention to shifts in topic, issue, or theme.**
- **Pay attention to verbs.** Verbs often “do the work” in a passage. Tracking the verbal sequence will help show how the author develops his argument, narrative, or poem.
- **Likewise, pay attention to the “mood” of the verbs.** In grammatical terms, the “indicative mood” of a verb is used to state a fact, while the “imperative mood” is used to express a command. In the Old Testament, authors aim to show what God has accomplished on behalf of his people (that is, the indicative) and how then his people must respond to what God has accomplished (that is, the imperative). The fundamental **gospel sequence** is either: “*indicative therefore imperative*” or “*imperative because of indicative*.”
- **Pay attention to linking words that establish a *logical relationship* between two clauses and/or thought units.**

There are many sorts of possible logical relationships between two clauses, including:

- **Purpose or Cause/Reason:** often signaled with *therefore/for/then/so that/that*
1 Thess 2:9 | ... that we might not be a burden to any of you ...
- **Result:** often signaled with *so that/that*
2 Thess 1:12 | ... so that the name of our Lord Jesus ...
- **Further Explanation:** often signaled with *for*
1 Thess 1:9 | For they themselves report concerning us ...
- **Grounds/Reason or Motivation:** often signaled with *since/because/for*
1 Thess 4:7 | For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.
- **Transition, Specification (general-to-specific), or Focusing:** often signaled with *now/then/so then/finally*
1 Thess 4:1 | Finally, then, brothers and sisters ...
2 Thess 2:1 | Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ ...
- **Summarizing or Concluding:** often signaled with *so/therefore*
1 Thess 4:17 | ... and so we will always be with the Lord.
- **Contrast:** often signaled with *but/rather/however*
2 Thess 2:13 | But we ought always to give thanks to God for you ...
- **Concession:** often signaled with *although/though/even*
1 Thess 2:6 | ... though we could have made demands ...
- **Amplification (development) or Sequence:** often signaled with *and/but*
1 Thess 2:13 | And we also thank God constantly for this ...
- **Comparison:** often signaled with *just as/so also*
1 Thess 5:11 | ... just as you are doing ...
- **Temporal Sequence:** often signaled with *when/before/now*
1 Thess 2:6 | But now that Timothy has come to us from you ...
- **Condition:** often signaled with *if... then*
2 Thess 3:10 | If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat ...

Digging Deeper | Hearing the Word

What are the distinct parts of Deut 5:1–6:3, and how do they hold together **structurally**?

Briefly outline, draw, or diagram the various units of the passage in whatever simple form you prefer.

DO THE WORD

^{6:1}Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

9. Imagine you are among the Israelite assembly gathered to hear Moses's final sermons on the plains of Moab. You were not physically present for the events Moses describes in Deut 5:1–6:3, but your parents were, and they had told you all about it. You belong to the generation after the exodus and have been wandering in the wilderness for several decades. That nomadic lifestyle is all you know.
 - a. As Moses preaches Deut 5:1–6:3 to you, what sorts of **doubts** might you be tempted to indulge **regarding the truths that Moses is declaring about God and his commandments**? Why? *Identify three specific truths you might be tempted to doubt.*
 -
 -
 -
 - b. In what ways are **you (the real you!)** tempted to doubt the same truths about God today? What makes these temptations to doubt so ... tempting? *Be specific.*
 - c. If you more fully believed what this passage reveals about God and his commandments (Question 8), what is **one specific way** this fuller belief would help you combat these temptations to doubt?
10. The LORD reveals his heart for his people when he expresses his desire for them to obey "that it might go well with them and their descendants forever!" (5:29). Read **Psalms 81**, in which Asaph reflects on the LORD's dealings with his people, including in these events at Horeb. Then, read **Matthew 23:37–39**, in which Jesus laments that Jerusalem's citizenry would not listen to him even though he desires to care tenderly for them.
 - a. How does Asaph's meditation (Psalm 81) shed light on the way **followers of Jesus ought to put into practice** the message of Deut 5:1–6:3?

- b. How does Jesus's lament (Matt 23:37) shed light on the way **followers of Jesus ought to put into practice** the message of Deut 5:1–6:3?
- c. What is **one area** of your life in which you are most hesitant to yield to God's commandments? And **why**, specifically, are you hesitant in this area?

Word-Filled Prayer | Respond to Deut 5:28–33 by writing a prayer to God.
Allow the words and ideas of this passage to guide your heart's meditation.
For an example Word-filled prayer of this sort, see pg. 12.

^{5:28}And the LORD heard your words, when you spoke to me. And the LORD said to me, "I have heard the words of this people, which they have spoken to you. They are right in all that they have spoken. ²⁹Oh that they had such a heart as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever! ³⁰Go and say to them, 'Return to your tents.' ³¹But you, stand here by me, and I will tell you the whole commandment and the statutes and the rules that you shall teach them, that they may do them in the land that I am giving them to possess."

³²You shall be careful therefore to do as the LORD your God has commanded you. You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. ³³You shall walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess.

RETELL THE WORD

^{6:7}You shall teach [the LORD's commandments] diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

11. Think of a specific believer in your stage of life whom you want to encourage with God's Word.

Specific believer in your life-stage to encourage: _____

Rewrite the most crucial elements of this passage to articulate it **simply, clearly, and accessibly** for this specific believer. *Feel free to use several sentences. Avoid using religious jargon that a non-Christian may not understand. Try to rephrase the passage's main truth so that a ten-year-old child could grasp it.*

12. Re-read Hebrews 12:18–24. How does this passage help shed light on **how new-covenant believers ought to retell** the truths of Deut 5:1–6:3 in view of Jesus's death and exaltation? *Make three observations.*

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Word-Filled Prayer | Respond to Deut 5:6–7 by writing a prayer for the believer you named in Question 11. *For an example Word-filled prayer of this sort, see pg. 14.*

Use words and ideas from the passage as you pray. Pray that God would open a door in her/his heart for his Word and enable you to speak his Word clearly, wisely, and boldly. Pray that God's Spirit would help you exalt the Lord Jesus in your retelling.

^{5:6}“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ⁷You shall have no other gods before me.”

Notes from Teaching

Small-Group Discussion

- Open in prayer.
- Ask one person to share briefly about an opportunity she had to RETELL the previous passage in Deuteronomy.
- Read the full passage.
- **Hear the Word** | Questions 1, 3, 5, 8
- **Do the Word** | Question 9
- **Retell the Word** | Question 11
- Close in Word-filled prayer for one another.

God Defines His Relationship with His People: Speaking the Ten Words

Deuteronomy 5:6–21

In the Ten Commandments (or “Ten Words”), the LORD reveals the essence of what it means for his covenant people to walk in his ways in the land of Canaan. In Deut 5:29, the LORD expresses his desire that Israel “fear” him and “keep” his commandments. Throughout Deuteronomy Moses links the command to fear the LORD with an explicit command to obey his stipulations, which confirms that obedience is at the heart of what Moses means by “fearing the LORD.”

The LORD reveals his will in a manner that resembles ancient Near Eastern treaty documents, in which a “suzerain” (mightier) king articulates the obligations of a “vassal” (lesser) kingdom to the suzerain. In particular:

- In Deut 5:6, similar to an aNE treaty’s *preamble* and *historical prologue*, the LORD identifies himself and important elements of his relationship with Israel.
- In Deut 5:7–21, similar to an aNE treaty’s *stipulations*, the LORD articulates the specific obligations/commands his people must obey.
- In Deut 5:33–6:3, similar to one element of an aNE treaty’s *sanctions*, the LORD states the blessings Israel will receive if they obey his commands.

The New Testament cites and alludes to the Ten Commandments a number of times. For example, Jesus summarizes old-covenant Law in a manner that features **love**. When one of the Pharisees tries to test Jesus by asking him which commandment in the Law is the greatest, Jesus replies to him (Matt 22:37–40):

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul similarly features love when he summarizes the Ten Words (and the whole of old-covenant Law). He writes in Romans 13:8–10:

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

When Jesus and Paul interpret the old-covenant Law (including the Ten Words) as having everything to do with love, they are not adding to what Moses preaches in Deut 5:1–21. They are not sugar-coating a harsh message. They are rightly interpreting what Moses preaches.

May we also rightly hear, do, and retell these Ten Words in light of the Lord Jesus’s fulfillment of them on our behalf.

Basic Preparation: Questions 1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13

Five-Day Plan for Full Preparation

- **Day 1:** Read Deut 5:6–21; Exod 20:8–11; Questions 1–5; Question 10
- **Day 2:** Read Deut 5:6–21; Matt 5:21–26; 1 John 4:7–12, 19–21; Questions 6–9, 10
- **Day 3:** Read Deut 5:6–21; Questions 10, 11; Word-filled prayer
- **Day 4:** Read Deut 5:6–21; Questions 10, 12
- **Day 5:** Read Deut 5:6–21; Questions 10, 13; Word-filled prayer

HEAR THE WORD

^{5:1}And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them.”

After **praying** that God will open your heart to listen to his Word in faith, **read** the full passage.

1. In Deut 5:6, the LORD identifies himself: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” Moses refers to Egypt as “the house of slavery” five other times in his second sermon: Deut 6:12; 7:8; 8:14; 13:5, 10. Read each of these instances in their respective paragraphs.

What is **Moses often aiming to accomplish** when he uses the expression “the house of slavery” in this sermon? Why does he not simply say “Egypt” without elaboration?

2. In Deut 5:8, the LORD prohibits his people from making any carved image or likeness for worship. He articulates three spheres of the created order relating to which they may not make any image for worship: they may not make a likeness resembling anything (1) in *heaven* above, (2) on the *earth* beneath, or (3) in the *water* under the earth. In Deut 5:9b–10, the LORD gives the reason his people must not bow down to any graven image.

Put in your own words the LORD’s reason for prohibiting idolatry in Deut 5:9b–10.

3. Among the Ten commandments, **which one have you perfectly kept?**
Just kidding; don’t answer that.
4. **Put Deut 5:11 in your own words.** What does the LORD mean by prohibiting his people from taking (or “bearing/carrying”) his name in vain (or “in an empty/false manner”)?

5. Moses first recounts these Ten Words that the LORD speaks at Horeb in Exod 20:1–17. Moses’s retellings in Exod 20 and Deut 5 are not identical. Specifically, the main reason given in Exod 20:8–11 for why the Israelites must observe the Sabbath day focuses on the LORD’s work in creation, whereas the main reason highlighted in Deut 5:12–15 focuses on the LORD’s work in redemption from Egypt.

How do you **make sense of this difference** between Exod 20:8–11 and Deut 5:12–15?

6. In Jesus's Sermon on the Mount, he explains to his disciples that he has not come to set aside the Old Testament but to fulfill it (Matt 5:17). He deals specifically with several commandments, including the commandment not to murder (Deut 5:17) and the consequences for deliberate murder in Matt 5:21–26.

What stands out to you in Jesus's commentary regarding murder (Matt 5:21–26), in terms of **its similarity and difference** to Deut 5:17? *Make at least three observations.*

7. Read 1 John 4:7–12, 19–21.

a. What is the **main idea** of 1 John 4:7–12, 19–21?

b. Make **three observations about thematic similarities** between this passage (1 John 4:7–12, 19–21) and the LORD's instruction in Deut 5:6–21.

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8. What does this passage mainly reveal about **God's purposes in redeeming his people**? *Articulate your response in one sentence.*

New Testament authors teach believers in Christ how we ought to interpret and apply these Ten Words in view of Christ's person and work. For example, Paul writes in Eph 6:1–4: *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother' (this is the first commandment with a promise), 'that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.' Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."*

DO THE WORD

^{6:1}Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

9. If you more fully believed what this passage reveals about God's purposes in redeeming his people (Question 8), what is **one thing that would change** in your life? *This may be a change in attitude, practice, thought life, a relational pattern, or something else.*
10. Over the next five days, take two commandments per day, and **meditate** on them. You may want to use Jesus's Sermon on the Mount in your meditation (Matthew 5:1–7:29). For each pair:
- **Thank God for his kindness to reveal** his will to you in the specific commandments.
 - **Ask him to reveal** the areas of your life in which you are not submitting your heart to him regarding the core principle of the two commandments in view.
 - **Identify what it would look like to make progress** in submitting to his will in what these two commandments teach.
 - God helping you, **resolve to make that progress** by taking concrete action steps.

As you do this exercise, **keep track** of the insights that the Lord gives you each day.

- Day 1: Deut 5:6–10
- Day 2: Deut 5:11–15
- Day 3: Deut 5:16–17
- Day 4: Deut 5:18–19
- Day 5: Deut 5:20–21

11. In Deut 5:21, the LORD prohibits his people from coveting their neighbor's spouse, house, field, servants, cattle, or anything else.

a. Generally speaking, what **fuels** covetousness? What sorts of attitudes and beliefs make covetousness fester and grow? *Be specific.*

b. What sorts of things or people do **you tend to covet**, and why?

Write at least two people or things you tend to covet and why coveting this person or thing is a particular temptation for you.

c. What does the Bible indicate as the **antidote** (remedy) to covetousness?

For guidance, consult 1 Timothy 6:6–12, 17–19.

d. What makes it **especially challenging for you** to embrace the Bible's antidote to covetousness, rather than to indulge in coveting the persons or things you named above? *Be specific.*

e. What **practical steps** will you take this week to embrace Scripture's teaching about covetousness, and which **fellow believer** will you ask to pray for you in this regard?

Practical steps:

Fellow believer to ask for prayer: _____

Word-Filled Prayer | Respond to Deut 5:21 by writing a prayer of confession and an appeal for God's help to resist the temptation to covet.

^{5:21} And you shall not covet your neighbor's wife. And you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, or his male servant, or his female servant, his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.

RETELL THE WORD

^{6:7}You shall teach [the LORD's commandments] diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

12. So often when people—including *professing Christians*—think of old-covenant law, they imagine that God's laws are burdensome and unpleasant. Sometimes that is because professing Christians use God's revealed commandments legalistically, in that they treat the Bible's instruction as if a person has to follow the rules perfectly to achieve right standing with God.
- a. Who is a Christian who has helped you understand **the glad blessing of obedience** to God's commands, without making obedience seem like she or he is trying to "earn favor" with God through obedience? *Name someone.*
- b. **What can you learn from his or her example** about how you might retell the truths of Deut 5:6–21 in a manner that points to the Lord Jesus and demonstrates the joy of Christian growth in holiness? *Identify two ways you want to follow this person's example.*

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13. Who is **someone** with whom you want to retell the truths of this passage **this week**, especially its main theme and main revelation about God's purposes in redeeming his people (Question 8)—perhaps a coworker, friend, family member, or neighbor?

Specific person/group: _____

Specific truth to share: _____

Rewrite the most crucial elements of this passage in terms of its revelation about God's purposes in redeeming his people (Question 8) to articulate those truths **simply, clearly, and accessibly** for this specific person/group.

Possible occasion this week for sharing this truth: _____

Word-Filled Prayer | Respond to God's Word by writing a prayer for the person/group you named in Question 13. *For an example Word-filled prayer of this sort, see pg. 14.*

*You may want to use words and ideas from the passage as you pray. Pray that God would open a door in their heart for his Word and enable you to speak his Word clearly, wisely, and boldly.
Pray that God's Spirit would help you exalt the Lord Jesus in your retelling.*

^{5:6}I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

⁷You shall have no other gods before me.

⁸You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁹ You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ¹⁰ but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

¹¹You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

¹²Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. ¹⁵ You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

¹⁶Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

¹⁷You shall not murder.

¹⁸And you shall not commit adultery.

¹⁹And you shall not steal.

²⁰And you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

²¹And you shall not covet your neighbor's wife. And you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, or his male servant, or his female servant, his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.

Notes from Teaching

Small-Group Discussion

- Open in prayer.
- Ask one person to share briefly about an opportunity she had to DO the previous passage in Deuteronomy.
- Read the full passage.
- **Hear the Word** | Questions 1, 2, 4, 8
- **Do the Word** | Questions 9, 11
- **Retell the Word** | Questions 12, 13
- Close in Word-filled prayer for one another.

God Calls His Redeemed People to Observe the Greatest Commandment

Deuteronomy 6:4–25

In Deut 6, Moses calls the people to love the LORD with everything they are and to shape their whole life and all their relationships according to their love for the LORD.

Moses's application begins with a special focus on remembering the LORD's instruction and passing it down to the next generation. Throughout Deut 6:4–25, Moses roots his exhortations in the LORD's character and redemptive action on behalf of his people.

Why must Israel love the LORD their God with everything they are and everything they have? Because he first loved them and has promised to keep on loving them.

How will Israel demonstrate their love for the LORD? By walking in his ways, according to his commands.

The dominant themes in Deut 6:4–25 are also dominant themes in Moses's whole second sermon (Deut 5:1–29:1). Again and again in his second sermon, Moses shows the inextricable relationship between awe-struck reverence for YHWH and whole-hearted obedience to his statutes (for example, see 5:29; 10:12–13, 20–21). Moses wants the whole assembly to understand with crystal clarity that the LORD desires his people to live in exclusive allegiance to him; that is what it means to "love" him. That is, the Israelites will show their allegiance to this speaking God by carefully listening to his instruction and putting it into practice. The principal way they must do this is by worshipping the LORD alone, from the heart.

That obedience fundamentally expresses love is not an idea found exclusively in Deuteronomy. The Lord Jesus says to his disciples, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). He goes on to say, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me" (John 14:23–24). What is the point? Biblically speaking, if someone is not keeping the Lord Jesus's commandments, they cannot claim with integrity to love him. If they do claim to love Jesus but refuse to keep his commands, they are taking the Lord's name in vain, honoring him with their lips while their heart is far from him (Isa 29:13; Matt 15:7–9).

Of course, no believer this side of heaven keeps Jesus's commands *perfectly*; but, by the Spirit's help (see John 14:16–17, 25–26), we must do so *repentantly*. "Loving" the Lord is not abstract. It is imminently concrete. And God lavishes his grace on his beloved children to supply us all we need to follow his commands, including the very Spirit who searches and knows God!

To what extent are you taking seriously the call to love the Lord?

To what extent are you relying on the Spirit's help to keep making progress in practical holiness as you devote yourself to walking in the ways of the Lord Jesus?

Deuteronomy 6:4–25 invites you to listen to the living God that you might live fully in his abundant grace.

Basic Preparation: Questions 1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 11

Five-Day Plan for Full Preparation

- **Day 1:** Read Deut 6:4–25; Questions 1–4
- **Day 2:** Read Deut 6:4–25; Matt 4:1–11; Questions 6–9
- **Day 3:** Read Deut 6:4–25; Digging Deeper pg. 90
- **Day 4:** Read Deut 6:4–25; Question 10; Word-filled prayer
- **Day 5:** Read Deut 6:4–25; Questions 11–12; Word-filled prayer

HEAR THE WORD

^{5:1}And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them.”

After **praying** that God will open your heart to listen to his Word in faith, **read** the full passage.

1. Deuteronomy 6:4–5 is one of the Bible’s most famous passages. For example, Jesus cites Deut 6:4–5 in Mark 12:29–30 as “the most important” commandment. There is some debate about the best way to translate Deut 6:4 into English. In Hebrew, the words are: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God the LORD one/alone.” The original does not make explicit the relationship among the words in the second half of the verse. Among the proposals for English translations, two key ones are:

- (1) “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one [*adjective*].”
- (2) “Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone [*adverb*].”

The first proposal emphasizes the oneness and indivisibility of the LORD’s nature. The second proposal emphasizes the exclusivity of the LORD in Israel’s worship and loyalty. Both pertain to true Israel’s fundamental monotheism: they must worship one God alone.

- a. **List all the commands/imperatives** (that is, verbs such as “you shall ____” and “you shall not ____”) and **other key verbs** in Deut 6:5–9.

Orthodox Judaism has traditionally interpreted Deut 6:8 as prescribing religious physical aids, such as **phylacteries**. (See also Exod 13:9 and Deut 11:18–25.) Phylacteries are two small square leather boxes traditionally worn by adult males on the left arm and on the head during morning weekday prayers. These leather boxes contain inscriptions of these OT passages.

- b. What is the **main message** of Deut 6:5–9? *Put it into your own words, in one sentence.*

The expression “*a land flowing with milk and honey*” in reference to Canaan occurs in Deut 6:3; 11:9; 26:15; 27:3; 31:20.

2. Throughout the book of Deuteronomy, there are seven explicit references to Abraham: Deut 1:8; **6:10**; 9:5, 27; 29:12; 30:20; 34:4. There are also fifty-six references to “your fathers,” which often brought to mind Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; four of these “your fathers” references are found in Deut 6.

If the covenant the LORD cut with the Israelites at Horeb (Exod 24) is *not identical* with the covenant he cut with Abraham (Gen 15), then **why** does Moses refer so often to the LORD’s covenant with Abraham, passed down through Israel’s “fathers”? *Consider what role that the Abrahamic covenant plays in the Sinaitic/Mosaic covenant.*

3. Moses commands total obedience from the heart to the LORD's instruction. He also issues two urgent warnings, the first in Deut 6:10–15 and the second in Deut 6:16. What are these **two warnings**?

Warning 1:

Warning 2:

4. In Deut 6:4–25, Moses again aims to motivate Israel to obey the LORD's instruction by highlighting the LORD's grace to them.
- List **the content** of each instance in Deut 6:4–25 in which Moses draws attention to the LORD's grace in order to motivate obedience. *Put the verse reference beside each instance.*
 - Taking each of these instances together, what stands out to you as a **common theme** among Moses's motivational comments?
5. In Deut 6:20–25, Moses envisions the inevitable future situation when an Israelite child will ask a parent about all this instruction from the LORD that he or she must follow.
- What sorts of real-life **situations generally elicit questions** from children, such as the question posed in 6:20? *Give some examples from your own experience.*
 - In Deut 6:21–25, what are the **key components of a father's response** to his son when his son asks about the meaning of the commands?
 - What is similar in Deut 6:21–25 to the key components of how a **Christ-follower ought to respond** to a similar question (as Deut 6:20) from a younger-in-the-faith believer about why Christians must obey Christ's teaching?
 - Put **in your own words** the father's instruction to his son in Deut 6:25. *For example, what sort of "righteousness" is in view?*

Notice what a parent's proper response to a child's questions about obedience is NOT:

- *"It does not matter why you should follow them. Just do it because I told you to!"*
- *"You should follow these commandments because our family is a good and moral family, and you must be too. We have a reputation to uphold. You don't want people to start talking, do you?"*
- *"You should follow these commandments because God won't love you if you don't."*

6. At the start of the Lord Jesus's public ministry, the Holy Spirit leads him into the wilderness to endure temptation by the devil. The evangelists record three instances in the wilderness in which Satan tempts Jesus. In two of those instances, Jesus cites a portion of Deuteronomy 6 in his resistance against the devil.

- a. Read Matthew 4:1–11. **Which** of the devil's temptations prompt Jesus to cite parts of Deuteronomy 6, and **which specific verse** does Jesus cite?

Specific of Jesus's temptations and specific verse from Deut 6 that he cited:

Specific of Jesus's temptation and specific verse from Deut 6 that he cited:

- b. How does Jesus's use of these verses shed light on how new-covenant believers ought to **understand and apply** them today?

7. What does this passage mainly reveal about **what it means to follow God**?
Articulate your response in one sentence.

8. What does this passage mainly reveal about **who God is and what delights him**?
Articulate your response in one sentence.

Digging Deeper | Hearing the Word

What are the distinct parts of Deut 6:4–25, and how do they hold together **structurally**?

Briefly outline, draw, or diagram the passage in whatever form you prefer. Feel free to consult the “Toolbox” on pg. 67.

DO THE WORD

^{6:1}Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

9. John writes, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).
- In what specific area of your life are you **most challenged** by the call to follow Jesus with whole-hearted, exclusive loyalty (along the lines of Deut 6:4–25)? How so?
Describe.
 - If you were to trust more fully what this passage reveals about who God is and what delights him (Question 8), what is **one thing that would change** in your life?
This may be a change in attitude, practice, thought life, a relational pattern, or something else.
10. Moses urges the LORD’s covenant people to be diligent about reminding themselves and other covenant family members of the LORD’s instruction—especially those covenant family members who live with us in our home. Moses knows that we sinful human beings are prone to wander. More specifically, he realizes that when the Israelites receive wealth and privilege in Canaan, they will be tempted to forget the LORD by forsaking their exclusive loyalty to him.

In what **practical, concrete ways** are you currently making a habit of reminding yourself and other believers in your home or workplace about who God is and what delights him?

List two specific ways each.

Habitually reminding yourself who God is and what delights him:

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*Habitually reminding believers **in your home/workplace** who God is and what delights him:*

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Word-Filled Prayer | Respond to Deut 6:4–9 by writing a prayer of commitment to the Lord. *Allow the words and ideas of this passage to guide your heart's meditation.*
For an example Word-filled prayer of this sort, see pg. 12.

^{6,7}Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

RETELL THE WORD

^{6:7}You shall teach [the LORD's commandments] diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

11. Imagine that a professing believer tells you that, in her view, all that matters is that a person believes in Jesus—and that whether she “follows the rules” in the Bible **does not matter**.

a. How might you **respond** to her, using language and concepts from Deut 6:4–25?
Write a response.

b. What might be a good **illustration** to expose the folly in that line of thinking this professing believer articulates.

c. In your experience, **what tends to lead professing believers to embrace** that sort of unbiblical nonsense that separates “believing in Jesus” from “obeying his commands”?

12. Rewrite the most crucial elements of Deut 6:2–25 to articulate it **simply, clearly, and accessibly** to share those truths with a non-Christian neighbor.

Word-Filled Prayer | Respond to Deut 6:20–25 by writing a prayer for a specific younger-in-the-faith believer whom you are currently seeking to encourage and/or disciple.

For an example Word-filled prayer of this sort, see pg. 14.

^{6:20}When your son asks you in time to come, “What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the LORD our God has commanded you?”

²¹then you shall say to your son, “We were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt. And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ²²And the LORD showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes. ²³And he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land that he swore to give to our fathers. ²⁴And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day. ²⁵And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us.”

Specific younger-in-the-faith Christian: _____

Notes from Teaching

Small-Group Discussion

- Open in prayer.
- Ask one person to share briefly about an opportunity she had to RETELL the previous passage in Deuteronomy.
- Read the full passage.
- **Hear the Word** | Questions 1, 3, 5, 8
- **Do the Word** | Question 9
- **Retell the Word** | Question 11
- Close in Word-filled prayer for one another.

God Calls His Chosen People to Devote His Enemies to Destruction

Deuteronomy 7

Having demonstrated the essence of Israel's covenant loyalty to the LORD in Deut 6, Moses now turns in Deut 7 to instruct the Israelites regarding how they must respond to what threatens their covenant loyalty to the LORD. Deuteronomy 7 includes commands that are difficult for many of us to understand: the LORD's covenant people must annihilate all idolaters and instruments of idolatrous worship in the land of Canaan.

The command often translated in this context as “devote to destruction” is specialized religious terminology (see, for example, Deut 7:2). It basically means “utterly consecrate” something to the deity, such that you cannot withhold any element of it.

Sometimes the same word is used in contexts of appropriate worship. For example, in Leviticus 27:28, Moses instructs the Israelites that if they “devote” something to the LORD, they may not afterwards sell it or buy it back. Since that Israelite set apart something in worship so that it was wholly consecrated to the LORD, neither the worshipper nor anyone else could reclaim it. It is transferred to the realm of the sacred, entirely reserved for the LORD. In other words, it belongs to the LORD alone.

That Moses employs this specialized terminology shows the religious nature of the Israelites' renunciation of idolatrous Canaanites and their religious paraphernalia and sites.

After Moses issues the command to destroy the seven idolatrous Canaanite nations (7:1–5), he articulates the rationale for their obedience to this command. In Deut 7:6, Moses explains the relationship of the LORD's election of Israel and Israel's status as holy: “For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.” Israel's unique relationship with the LORD is most fundamentally a result of the LORD's gracious election of Israel (7:6–8), according to his faithfulness to his promises to Abraham (9:5).

As we meditate on Deut 7, it is imperative that we seek to understand how this Scripture points to the LORD Jesus and how new-covenant believers ought to apply this Scripture today.

We must discern how Deut 7 plays its part in God's righteous Word about which the psalmist sings, “Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart” (Ps 119:111).

Basic Preparation: Questions 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10

Five-Day Plan for Full Preparation

- **Day 1:** Read Deut 7; Gen 15; Exod 34:11–16; 1 Cor 1:26–31; Questions 1–2
- **Day 2:** Read Deut 7; 1 Cor 1:26–31; Questions 3–6
- **Day 3:** Read Deut 7; Eph 6:10–20; Question 7
- **Day 4:** Read Deut 7; Question 8
- **Day 5:** Read Deut 7; Questions 9–10; Word-filled prayer; Digging Deeper

HEAR THE WORD

^{5:1}And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them.”

After **praying** that God will open your heart to listen to his Word in faith, **read** the full passage.

1. When the LORD cuts the covenant with Abram (Genesis 15), the LORD reveals that he will give Abraham’s offspring the land of Canaan *by dispossessing the peoples who currently reside there*. The LORD explains further in Exod 34:11–16 why his covenant people must destroy the idolatrous paraphernalia of the Canaanite nations.

Along the lines of this earlier revelation from God, Moses charges the Israelites in Deut 7:1–5 to devote to destruction the idolatrous nations residing in Canaan once the Israelites come to take possession of the land.

- a. Read Gen 15. How does **the LORD’s promise to Abram** in Gen 15:13–16 shed light on how we ought to understand the commands of Deut 7:1–5? *See also Deut 9:4–5.*
- b. Read Exod 34:11–16. How does **the LORD’s warning to the exodus generation** in Exod 34:11–16 shed light on how we ought to understand Deut 7:1–5, 16, 25–26?

What Moses commands in Deut 7 is not what we know in today’s terms as “ethnic cleansing.” The charge in Deut 7 is predominantly about *covenant loyalty*, not ethnic background. The rest of Deuteronomy and the Old Testament illustrate this distinction in various ways.

For example, when Rahab, who is a Canaanite prostitute, confesses faith in the LORD and enters into covenant with his people, she ceases to be “Canaanite” in covenantal terms (Joshua 2; James 2:25). Because Rahab demonstrates her covenant loyalty as a follower of the LORD, her life is spared. Moreover, she is incorporated fully into the covenant family, even becoming an ancestress of the Lord Jesus (Matt 1:5)!

As another example from the opposite perspective, when a person belonging to the Israelite community forsakes the LORD by practicing idolatry, that person comes under the same judgment as do idolatrous Canaanites (Deut 13:12–18). So, in covenantal terms, Israelite idolaters “Canaanize” themselves and thereby revoke their covenant status: see Deut 7:26!

Remember, too, that Israel is warned that if as a nation they abandon the LORD through idolatry, they will perish (Deut 11:16–17) and incur curses on themselves, including being kicked out of the land of Canaan (Deut 28:58–63). So, in covenantal terms, Israel as a nation also could “Canaanize” themselves.

2. Moses does not just tell the Israelites to annihilate Canaanite idolaters and their instruments of idolatrous worship. He gives them the reason they must do so. In Deut 7:6, Moses says, “For you are a people holy the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.”

In Deut 7:6, Moses is alluding to the LORD's words that he spoke to the exodus generation at Horeb prior to cutting the covenant with them. The LORD said to them, "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod 19:4–6a).

- a. According to Deut 7, **what are *not* the reasons** that the LORD has chosen Israel?
 - b. According to Deut 7, **what *are* the reasons** that the LORD has chosen Israel?
 - c. Read 1 Corinthians 1:26–31. In what way is Moses's explanation about the LORD's election of Israel **similar to** Paul's explanation of God's election of believers in Christ?
3. In Deut 7, Moses motivates obedience among the Israelites partly by reminding them of the blessings they will receive from the LORD if they obey him and the curses they will incur from the LORD if they disobey him. List **every covenant blessing and curse** explicitly mentioned in Deut 7. *Include the verse reference(s) for each item you list.*

Covenant blessings mentioned

Covenant curses mentioned

4. Moses anticipates that the Israelites will feel dread about obeying the LORD's command to dispossess the Canaanites (Deut 7:17; remember Deut 1!). He charges them not to be afraid and gives them reasons why they should not be afraid of battle with the Canaanites (Deut 7:18–24). Name **three reasons** why they should not fear from Deut 7:18–24.
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5. What does this passage mainly reveal about **the nature of God's holiness**? *Articulate your response in one sentence.*

DO THE WORD

⁶*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

6. If you more fully believed what this passage reveals about the nature of God's holiness (Question 5), what is **one thing that would change** in your life? *This may be a change in attitude, practice, thought life, a relational pattern, or something else.*

7. Professing Christians are just as prone as the Israelites to being ensnared by idols: devoting themselves to other people and things beside God. So, new-covenant Christians similarly must wage war. But what kind of war, and against what? New-covenant Christians do *not* wage physical war in the same manner that God commanded of Israel. Paul says that believers in Christ "do not wrestle against flesh and blood" (Eph 6:12).
 - a. Read Paul's charge to the saints in Ephesus in **Eph 6:10–20**. What is **similar** in the commanded warfare in Deut 7 and in Eph 6? *Make three observations.*
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 - b. In what **specific area of your life are you being particularly enticed** to give yourself to something or someone else other than God?
 - c. In **what practical ways** today are you actively standing against the devil's schemes in this area of your life and aiming to put to death your sin? *Be specific.*
 - d. Which **fellow Christ-follower** will you ask to pray with and for you that in this area you will resist sin and stand firm? *Write a name, and then reach out to this believer.*

Fellow believer: _____

Yes, I have reached out to this believer for encouragement: _____

8. Moses knows that many Israelites would experience wearying dread regarding the LORD's command in Deut 7 to wage war against idolatry and idolaters. So also new-covenant Christians often experience wearying dread when it comes to following Jesus in this broken and sinful world, perhaps especially regarding our battle against our own idolatry.

Reflect on Moses's charge in Deut 7:17–19, which he preaches to encourage weak and weary pilgrims.

^{7:17}“If you say in your heart, ‘These nations are greater than I. How can I dispossess them?’ ¹⁸you shall not be afraid of them but you shall remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt, ¹⁹the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, the wonders, the mighty hand, and the outstretched arm, by which the LORD your God brought you out. So will the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid.

Bearing in mind some specific challenges you are facing today in following Jesus, **respond to God's Word in prayer.**

Word-Filled Prayer | Respond to Deut 7:17–19 by writing out a prayer to God.
For an example Word-filled prayer of this sort, see pg. 12. Allow the words and ideas of this passage to guide your heart's meditation.

RETELL THE WORD

^{6:7}You shall teach [the LORD's commandments] diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

9. **Why** is the reality of God's holiness and his demand for ethical holiness on the part of his image-bearers **particularly offensive** to so many people in your particular social context?
10. Certainly, biblical passages such as Deut 7 that deal with painful matters relating to warfare must be handled with care. We want to communicate God's Word truthfully and wisely. And we want to show how all OT instruction, including Deut 7, points to the Lord Jesus.

Sometimes when we are asked questions about passages like Deut 7, we feel embarrassed of the Bible—of God. Perhaps that is especially the case when we know the person asking the question is angry about the Bible passage in view. In response to an antagonistic question, we might be tempted to say something like, "In the Old Testament God is harsh and punishes people, but in the New Testament Jesus comes and God is merciful."

- a. Biblically speaking, what is wrong with such a statement that we might be tempted to make?
- b. Sometimes we have the privilege of fielding difficult questions from people about challenging Bible passages. When someone objects to a challenging passage and you are unsure how to answer their objection, what are some strategies you have used for responding wisely? *List four strategies involved in wisely responding in such a situation.*

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- c. In your experience, **which are the specific questions** that people are asking these days about the Bible **and issues** they are raising that you find most difficult to address? Why? *Name three specific hot-topic questions/issues about the Bible to which you find particularly challenging to respond.*

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Word-Filled Prayer | Respond to Deut 7:6–11 by writing a prayer for a specific person in your life who has articulated some antagonistic questions/frustrations about God and the Bible.

For an example Word-filled prayer of this sort, see pg. 14. You inevitably will pray differently for a professing believer than you will someone for who is not a professing believer.

^{7:6}For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, ¹⁰and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face. ¹¹You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment and the statutes and the rules that I command you today.

Digging Deeper | Retelling the Word

Rewrite the most crucial elements of this passage to articulate it **simply, clearly, and accessibly** for this specific person who has expressed some antagonism about God and the Bible.

Feel free to use several sentences. Avoid using religious jargon that a non-Christian may not understand. Try to rephrase the passage's main truth so that a ten-year-old child could grasp it.

Notes from Teaching

Small-Group Discussion

- Open in prayer.
- Ask one person to share briefly about an opportunity she had to DO the previous passage in Deuteronomy.
- Read the full passage.
- **Hear the Word** | Questions 1, 2, 5
- **Do the Word** | Questions 6, 7
- **Retell the Word** | Questions 9, 10
- Close in Word-filled prayer for one another.

God Calls His Children to Remember His Gracious Discipline, Lest They Forget

Deuteronomy 8

In Deut 8, Moses charges the Israelites to remember the lessons that the LORD taught them in the wilderness. Vital to Israel's success against the challenges they will face in the land of Canaan is remembering the LORD and his actions of their behalf (8:2, 18). They must not forget the LORD by not keeping his commandments (8:11, 14, 19). The LORD promises that he will not forget his covenant that he made with their fathers (4:31).

In the wilderness, they experienced the LORD's provision of manna when they were hungry and his protection from the wilderness conditions (8:1–6). Their past experiences of the

LORD's provision have prepared them to enjoy the abundance that the LORD will give them when he brings them into a "good land" (8:7, 10), where they will "eat and be full" and bless the LORD because of his goodness to them (8:7–10). Moses continues to saturate his preaching with positive descriptions of the land of Canaan to motivate the Israelites towards obedience.

Many of Deut 8's key themes appear throughout the New Testament. For example, the author of Hebrews exhorts believers to keep persevering in their faith, partly by addressing God's resolve to discipline his covenant people (see Deut 8:5). He writes: *"It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it"* (Heb 12:7–11).

How the Israelites respond to the wealth that the LORD will give them in Canaan will reveal the content of their heart. **The same is true today about the wealth and provisions that God grants us. How we steward what God gives us reveals the true condition of our heart. It reveals who and what we *truly* love.**

Moses warns the Israelites that forgetting the LORD by worshipping other gods will result in the Israelites' destruction, just like the imminent destruction of the Canaanites (8:19–20). In other words, though the LORD is giving Israel this land, he will revoke his gift if the Israelites choose to violate their covenant with him. The LORD is granting Israel these glorious material and relational privileges because he is faithful to his covenant promises to their fathers—and *not* because Israel is intrinsically strong, great, or "righteous" (7:6–8; 9:5). The Israelites must keep the obligations of the Sinaitic covenant to continue enjoying these privileges in the land of Canaan. The Israelites' tenure in Canaan depends on their response to the stipulations of the LORD, who remains sovereign over the land of Canaan at all times (see Lev 25:23).

Basic Preparation: Questions 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10

Five-Day Plan for Full Preparation

- **Day 1:** Read Deut 8; Questions 1–2
- **Day 2:** Read Deut 8; Exod 16; Num 11:4–35; Luke 4:1–4; Questions 3–4
- **Day 3:** Read Deut 8; Questions 5–7; Digging Deeper pg. 110
- **Day 4:** Read Deut 8; Question 8
- **Day 5:** Read Deut 8; Questions 9–10; Word-filled prayer

HEAR THE WORD

^{5:1}And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them.”

After **praying** that God will open your heart to listen to his Word in faith, **read** the full passage.

1. Moses makes plain what is at stake for the Israelites in their choice to obey or not to obey—that is, their choice to remember the LORD and his covenant or to forget him.
 - a. According to Deut 8:1, **why** must the Israelites be careful to do the whole commandment that the LORD (through his prophet Moses) is instructing them to do?
 - b. According to Deut 8:19–20, **what will happen** should Israel choose to forget the LORD?
2. The verb “remember” occurs fourteen times in Moses’s second sermon: see Deut 5:15; 7:18(x2); **8:2, 18**; 9:7, 27; 15:15; 16:3, 12; 24:9, 18, 22; 25:17. In seven of these occurrences, Moses exhorts the people to remember their experience in Egypt, in particular. Relatedly, in Moses’s second sermon, he repeatedly enjoins the Israelites not to “forget”: see Deut 6:12; 8:11, 14, 19; 9:7; 25:19; 26:13 (compare with Deut 4:9, 23).

In Deut 6–8, **what situations** does Moses mention that might especially lead to covenant forgetfulness on Israel’s part? *Be specific.*

- Deut 6:10–13
- Deut 7:17–19
- Deut 8:11–20

Give **two recent examples from your life** in which you have been tempted in similar sorts of situations as described in Deut 6–8 to forget God and his call that believers in Christ take up our cross, deny ourselves, and follow Christ? *Be specific.*

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3. Moses explains to Israel that the LORD “humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that not by bread alone does man live, but by all that comes from the mouth of the LORD does man live” (Deut 8:3). The LORD faithfully provides his people with manna until they partake of Canaan’s agricultural yield (see Joshua 5:12).

- a. Read **Exodus 16**, in which Moses recounts the first instance of the LORD's providing the exodus generation with manna. According to Exod 16:31–36, **what function** among current and future generations of Israelites does **the manna in the jar** serve, and how does this function **correspond to** what Moses says in Deut 8:3?

Function of the manna in the jar among the Israelites:

How that function of the manna in the jar corresponds to Deut 8:3:

- b. Read **Numbers 11:4–35**, in which Moses recounts the tragedy at “Graves of Craving” when the people (and Moses!) grumbled against the LORD regarding the manna he was providing them for food. Make **three observations** about this episode in Israel's wilderness experience and how it corresponds to the message of Deuteronomy 8.

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4. When the devil tempts the Lord Jesus in the wilderness, he begins by trying to take advantage of Jesus's physical hunger and the profound emotional strain that hunger brings. Jesus's fasting from food for forty days and forty nights intentionally recalls the Israelites' forty-year wilderness experience. Where Israel failed amid their trials and temptations to remember God and trust his faithfulness, the Lord Jesus succeeds.

Read Luke 4:1–4, in which Jesus cites Deut 8:3 in his resistance against the devil's temptation. **Put in your own words** what Jesus is saying to the devil when he quotes, “Man shall not live by bread alone.”

5. What are some recurring **themes** and **patterns** in Deut 8? *Note specific verses.*

6. What does this passage mainly reveal about **God's word** (what comes from his mouth)?
Articulate your response in one sentence.

Digging Deeper | Hearing the Word

How might you articulate in one sentence Moses's **aim** in preaching/writing this passage?
For help, see pg. 32.

DO THE WORD

⁶*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

7. Moses plainly articulates the consequences the Israelites will experience if they forget the LORD and his commands by not obeying them.
 - a. What **consequences do new-covenant believers** experience when they forget God and his commands? What is **similar** and what is **different** between the consequences for disobedience that the Israelites experience and the consequences that new-covenant believers experience?
 - *Similar*
 - *Different*
 - b. To what extent does understanding these consequences of disobedience for new-covenant believers **help motivate you to obey God**? Why?
 - c. In what **area of your life** do you most need to ask God to help you obey him? *Identify one specific area in which you are especially experiencing your need for God's equipping power.*
8. The Bible consistently warns God's people about the spiritual liabilities of having material wealth and social prestige. The insidiousness of greed is not merely an issue in old-covenant days. Greed continues to wreak havoc today, including among us.
 - a. Listed below are select passages that relate to the exhortation of Deut 8. **Choose four** of these passages.

Passages: Proverbs 3:9–12; 22:1–2; 23:4; Ecclesiastes 5:19; Amos 6:4–8; Matthew 16:24–28; Mark 10:17–31; 1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–18; Hebrews 13:5–6; James 2:1–7

Now, **make one observation per passage** about how that passage corresponds to the message of Deut 8.

- (1) *One correspondence of _____ to exhortation in Deut 8:*
- (2) *One correspondence of _____ to exhortation in Deut 8:*

- (3) One correspondence of _____ to exhortation in Deut 8:
 - (4) One correspondence of _____ to exhortation in Deut 8:
- b. What is **one, concrete way this week** that you will put into practice the warning in Deut 8 about not forgetting God's word amid your material and social prosperity?
Be specific.

Word-Filled Prayer | Respond to Deut 8:11–20 by writing a prayer to God.
For an example Word-filled prayer of this sort, see pg. 12. Allow the words and ideas of this passage to guide your heart's meditation. Let the passage shape your praise and petitions.

^{8:11}Take care lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, ¹²lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, ¹³and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, ¹⁴then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, ¹⁵who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, ¹⁶who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end.

¹⁷Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' ¹⁸You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

¹⁹And if you forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. ²⁰Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God.

RETELL THE WORD

^{6:7}You shall teach [the LORD's commandments] diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

9. Moses articulates the reality that human beings do not truly “live” by what they put in their mouths (food), but rather by what comes out of God’s mouth (his Word). **How ought this reality influence** the extent to which and the manner in which you are actively retelling the Word? *Make three observations about how Deut 8:3 ought to shape your retelling of God’s Word.*

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And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth,
for my hope is in your rules.
Ps 119:43

10. Give **an example of how, in the course of everyday life, you might have an opportunity** to verbalize to one of your neighbors the *freedom* that believers experience in not being defined by their transitory material or social possessions but instead by their everlasting spiritual possessions in Christ?

Be specific in describing the possible context for this conversation, and what you might say to one of your neighbors to convey your experience of freedom in Christ in this area.

This week, with which neighbor will you seek you articulate this freedom of being possessed by and possessing Christ?

Your Neighbor: _____

Word-Filled Prayer | Respond to Deut 8:11–20 by writing out a prayer for the specific neighbor you named in Question 10. *For an example Word-filled prayer of this sort, see pg. 14. You may want to use words and ideas from Deut 8 as you pray. Pray that God would open a door in your neighbor's heart for his Word and enable you to speak his Word clearly, wisely, and boldly.*

^{8:11}Take care lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, ¹²lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, ¹³and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, ¹⁴then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, ¹⁵who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, ¹⁶who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end.

¹⁷Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' ¹⁸You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

¹⁹And if you forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. ²⁰Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God.

Notes from Teaching

Small-Group Discussion

- Open in prayer.
- Ask one person to share briefly about an opportunity she had to RETELL the previous passage in Deuteronomy.
- Read the full passage.
- **Hear the Word** | Questions 2, 3, 6
- **Do the Word** | Questions 7, 8
- **Retell the Word** | Question 10
- Close in Word-filled prayer for one another.

God Reminds His Rebellious People That He Spared Them for Relationship

Deuteronomy 9–10

Throughout Deuteronomy, Moses gives several historical recollections that illustrate the character of the LORD and his people. These historical “retellings” also clarify the LORD’s agenda for his people. On the whole, Deuteronomy’s historical retellings highlight the LORD’s faithfulness and Israel’s unfaithfulness.

In Deut 9–10, Moses portrays the LORD and Israel in a provocative manner. Similar to Deut 1:6–46, the character contrast could not be more striking. Whereas the LORD is supremely faithful to the covenant, Israel is corrupt and obstinate. In fact, Moses claims that the Israelites are a “stubborn people” and “have been rebellious against the LORD” from the very start of their redemption from slavery in Egypt—and even before that (9:6–7, 24)!

As evidence of their chronic stubbornness, Moses reminds them of the first time they broke the covenant at Horeb and how the LORD responded (9:6–10:11). After the people begged Moses to mediate on their behalf (see Deut 5:24–27), Moses ascends the mountain to mediate for them for forty days and nights. But while Moses is interceding at the summit, the people are rebelling against the LORD at the foot of the mountain by making a metal image as an object of worship. The LORD instructs Moses to return to the foot of the mountain and confront the people. The LORD’s anger burns hot against the people, such that Moses must return to the summit to plead with the LORD to pardon their iniquity and renew the covenant. Ultimately, the LORD shows mercy despite their transgression.

After Moses retells the golden-calf fiasco, he declares the LORD’s righteousness and calls

Israel to respond in kind (10:12–22). Many of Deuteronomy’s core themes are packed into these few verses. For example, in Deut 10:22 Moses uses the language of Gen 15:5 (see also Gen 22:17; 26:4) to confirm the LORD’s fulfillment of his promises to Abram: “*As seventy persons*

Deuteronomy 10:12–22 plays a foundational role in the book’s ethical vision. Moses exhorts the Israelites to *fear* the LORD, *walk* in his ways, *love* him, *serve* him, and *keep* his commandments—all as a response to his mighty works performed on their behalf (10:12–13). And it is not insignificant that Moses reminds the Israelites of their chronic covenant infidelity immediately before he articulates in more detail the covenant obligations they must keep, which he does in Deut 12–26. Nor is it insignificant that Moses reminds the Israelites of the LORD’s integrity and righteousness at this point in his second sermon, prior to specifying how the Israelites must walk in integrity and righteousness in Canaan.

your fathers went down to Egypt, but now the LORD your God has made you like the stars of heaven for multitude.” Moses stresses this promise-fulfillment theme throughout the book (see, for example, Deut 1:10; 26:5; 28:62).

In view of the LORD’s faithful fulfillment of his ancient vows, the Israelites should fulfill their vows to him. This is precisely what they did *not* do at Horeb when they bowed down to a golden calf. **Ultimately, the mercy the LORD extends to his rebellious people can only be explained by peering forward to see Christ and his substitutionary sacrifice on behalf of any sinner who calls on him in faith.**

Basic Preparation: Questions 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10

Five-Day Plan for Full Preparation

- **Day 1:** Read Deut 9–10; Questions 1–3
- **Day 2:** Read Deut 9–10; Gen 17:1–14; Questions 4–5
- **Day 3:** Read Deut 9–10; Questions 6–7; Digging Deeper pg. 121
- **Day 4:** Read Deut 9–10; Questions 8–9
- **Day 5:** Read Deut 9–10; Questions 10–11; Digging Deeper pg. 126

HEAR THE WORD

^{5:1}And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them.”

After **praying** that God will open your heart to listen to his Word in faith, **read** the full passage.

1. As you read Deut 9–10, note **each reference** to the LORD’s faithfulness/mercy and Israel’s unfaithfulness/stubbornness. *Include specific chapter-and-verse references.*

- References to the LORD’s faithfulness:

Three movements in 5:1–11:32

5:1 “Hear, O Israel!”

6:4 “Hear, O Israel!”

9:1 “Hear, O Israel!”

- References to Israel’s unfaithfulness:

2. If Moses aims to motivate the conquest generation to obey, **why** would he catalogue so many of their tragic failures: the golden-calf fiasco, along with those at Taberah, Massah, Kibroth-Hattaavah, and Kadesh-barnea? What is **Moses’s objective** in retelling this grisly history? (And how might this information help motivate his hearers to respond wisely?)
3. Make **five observations** about Moses’s mediatorial/intercessory ministry, as he describes it in Deut 9–10. (Feel free to compare this account with Moses’s account in Exodus 32–34.)

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Deuteronomy 10:6–9 reinforces and develops the argument of its surrounding context. It continues to illustrate the LORD’s pardon of the Israelites’ rebellion—pardon secured through Moses’s intercession (10:1–5; compare 9:18–20, 25–29; 10:10–11).

Deuteronomy 10:6–9 not only recounts the Israelites’ preservation and their subsequent journey to “a land with brooks of water” (10:7; compare 10:6), but also the LORD’s arranging for the ministry of the priests and Levites among the Israelites (10:6, 8). This priestly ministry aims to preserve and promote the covenant relationship. (The initial temporal indicator “at that time” in Deut 10:8 probably refers to the narrative time of 10:1–5 rather than that of 10:6–7.)

That the envisioned ministry in Deut 10:6, 8 includes the priests’ intercessory ministry is clear in its mention of the outcome of effective intercession, namely, the LORD’s blessing and ongoing presence amid his people. Deuteronomy 10:6–9 thus elaborates on the LORD’s gracious provision for his rebellious people to renew the relationship and to provide for its future maintenance.

4. After reminding the conquest/new generation of the LORD’s transcendent holiness and merciful love for his covenant people, Moses appeals to them, “Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn” (Deut 10:16).
 - a. Read **Genesis 17:1–14**, where Moses recounts the covenant of circumcision that the LORD cut with Abraham. Beginning with this encounter, the LORD applied the widely practiced rite of circumcision in the aNE and reformed its meaning as a sign for his covenant family. According to Gen 17, **what is the meaning** of the sign of circumcision for Abraham and his offspring?
 - b. **Put in your own words** what Moses means in Deut 10:16 by calling the Israelites to “circumcise the foreskin of their heart, and be no longer stubborn”?

In Acts 7, Stephen speaks before the high priest, who is accusing him. What Stephen says contributes to his being stoned to death because he indicts the covenant people of God. As he concludes his speech, he says to those listening, “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you” (Acts 7:51).

5. Identify each element of Moses’s exhortation in Deut 10:14–22 that relates to **the LORD’s justice**.

6. What are some of Moses's recurring **themes** and **patterns** as he preaches this passage?
Note specific verses along with each theme/pattern you list.

7. In one sentence, what does this passage mainly reveal about **God's chosen covenant mediator**? *For example, consider how this passage establishes the necessity of a mediator in the Israelites' relationship with God and why that matters.*

Digging Deeper | Hearing the Word

How might you articulate Moses's **aim/purpose** in preaching/writing this passage, in one sentence? That is, what effect did Moses intend his words to have in his original audience? *Articulate Moses's aim in one sentence. For help, consult "Toolbox: Author's Aim" on pg. 32.*

TOOLBOX | Application

Putting God's Word into practice (including by sharing that Word with others) requires careful listening. Faithfully "doing" and "retelling" the Word depends on humbly "hearing" that Word. Here are a few tips for discerning a main application for a biblical passage:

1. Prioritize the author's main/unifying theme in this passage.

Usually, one passage can legitimately inspire several helpful application points. But rather than noting all the many ways these ancient words apply to a contemporary audience, it is best to focus on the author's principal idea so that the passage's thematic emphasis gives rise to your applicational emphasis.

2. Adopt the author's original aim in writing the passage as your aim in applying it.

For example, in Deut 1:6–46, Moses is WARNING the new generation about the dangers of forfeiting the fullness of the LORD's blessing through unbelief. That is why he begins his final sermon series by reminding the new generation of their parents' failure at Kadesh. He wants the new generation to believe the LORD's promises and so take possession of the land of Canaan, just as the LORD has commanded. That means that applying Deut 1:6–46 to a contemporary audience will involve embracing Moses's aim/purpose to **warn** about not trusting God's promises and **call to the obedience of faith**.

So, pointed application of Deut 1:6–46 will involve considering specific, searching questions such as:

Are my hearers currently believers in Christ or not?

Among my hearers, which temptations are they facing to doubt God's promises that resemble the temptations the Israelites faced at Kadesh (and at Moab)? What lies might they be believing out of fear?

If my hearers are believers, what dreadful fears threaten to discourage my hearers and take their eyes off God's powerful presence among them? And in what ways are they engaged in false repentance over their destructive unbelief?

Having identified these threats, then, applying the passage will involve **exposing** these specific fears and lies, **declaring** the truth of God's promises relevant to these temptations, **portraying** the destructive consequences of not believing God's promises in view, and **calling** to faith and obedience in view of God's goodness and power.

Such an approach brings the author's aim/purpose for his original audience to bear on you and your modern-day audience.

3. Call for a specific response. Ask: *What does God require from me in response to the truths revealed in this passage? And in what specific area of my life does he require this of me?*

Let the passage's unifying theme guide you and focus your application. Getting *specific* and *concrete* in applying a passage helps us put that Word into practice.

4. Avoid moralism. Ask: *Why must I do what God requires of me in this passage?*

"Moralism" falsely teaches that Christianity is mainly about being a good, moral person. Moralism emphasizes human performance rather than God's performance. But we must never apply a passage in a manner that unhinges it from its gospel context. We must explicitly root a passage's "call to action" in *God's prior action on our behalf*.

5. Don't be superficial or naïve. Ask: *Why is it difficult for me to do what God requires?*

This question helps us apply the Word to broken, fallen sinners with sober-mindedness, compassion, and urgency. It helps us attend to the tension we sinner-saints experience in our daily struggle against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

6. Don't leave listeners hanging. Ask: *How can I do what God requires of me?*

The message of Christianity is decidedly NOT "God helps those who help themselves." Here again, we must closely examine the passage and its unifying theme. The passage itself usually indicates, either explicitly or implicitly, how God empowers his people to obey him. **Just as God motivates his people by his grace, so he empowers us to obey him by his grace.** So, in giving the passage's call to action, highlight God's provisions of grace to enable sinners to respond to his Word in faith and repentance.

Four of these above questions come from Bryan Chapell's *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (2nd ed; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 214–22.

DO THE WORD

^{6:1}Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

8. In Deut 9–10, Moses describes his grueling intercessory ministry on behalf of the stiff-necked Israelites who sinned against the LORD by worshipping the golden calf. The LORD allows Moses’s covenant mediation to effect covenant renewal. The LORD renews the covenant with Israel despite their transgression.

Along with Moses, God called many others to ministry of mediation on behalf of his people. Most importantly, the evangelists in the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) all describe the Lord Jesus’s grueling intercessory ministry on behalf of all those believers who sin against God and thus need to be reconciled with God. For example, **Mark 14–15** narrates the series of events immediately preceding Jesus’s crucifixion and the events of his death and burial. This vivid account helps us experience aspects of the agony of Jesus’s voluntary suffering on behalf of his beloved people.

- a. If you more fully believed what Deut 9–10 reveals about God’s chosen covenant mediator (Question 7), who ultimately is the Lord Jesus Christ, what is **one thing that would change** in your life? *This may be a change in attitude, practice, thought life, a relational pattern, or something else.*

- b. **Word-Filled Prayer:** If you are a believer in Christ, what words will you use to thank the Lord Jesus for his willingness to endure a grueling intercessory ministry on your behalf, for your pardon and salvation?

Moses to Israelites: ^{9:24}You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you.

²⁵So I lay prostrate before the LORD for these forty days and forty nights, because the LORD had said he would destroy you. ²⁶And I prayed to the LORD, “O Lord GOD, do not destroy your people and your heritage, whom you have redeemed through your greatness, whom you have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ²⁷Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Do not regard the stubbornness of this people, or their wickedness or their sin, ²⁸lest the land from which you brought us say, ‘Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land that he promised them, and because he hated them, he has brought them out to put them to death in the wilderness.’ ²⁹For they are your people and your heritage, whom you brought out by your great power and by your outstretched arm.”

^{10:1}At that time the LORD said to me, “Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to me on the mountain and make an ark of wood. ²And I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets that you broke, and you shall put them in the ark.”

Write a prayer of thanksgiving in response to Deut 9:24–10:2.

9. In response to the LORD's character and ways, Moses exhorts the LORD's people to follow the LORD's pattern in his love for vulnerable persons. Moses preaches, "Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt." The fact that "sojourners" (or "resident aliens") are often listed in Deuteronomy alongside the fatherless and widow suggests that they are a particularly vulnerable group and must depend on regular material provisions from Israelites with inheritance rights to the land.

What **one action this week** will you take to help meet the material needs of **a vulnerable person in your local church**?

Vulnerable person in your local church: _____

Specific action to help meet his or her material needs:

The noun "sojourner, resident alien" appears twenty-two times in Deuteronomy, and the verb "sojourn" appears twice. David L. Baker contends that "[t]here is no single word in English that adequately covers the semantic range of this Hebrew word ("resident alien") ... To use current terminology, these people might be described as 'ethnic minorities,' who have distinctive racial or cultural traditions and are vulnerable to exploitation or discrimination by dominant groups in the population."** The resident alien is classified as a non-Israelite, but his or her ethnic identity is not specified.

A "resident alien" in this context is not identical with any immigrant. The law distinguishes between a resident alien and a "foreigner." The law also distinguishes between an Israelite and a resident alien regarding certain ethical matters (for example, Deut 14:21). Resident aliens must observe certain elements of covenant law, including the Sabbath (5:14; compare Exod 20:10; 23:12), and they are included in covenant festivals (Deut 16:11, 14).

**Baker, *Tight Fists or Open Hands?*, 181–82.

RETELL THE WORD

^{6:7}You shall teach [the LORD's commandments] diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

10. In Deut 9:6–10:11, Moses retells the events of the golden-calf fiasco at Horeb. His first written retelling of that event is recorded in Exodus 32–34. As he recounts the crisis, he draws attention to his own intercessory ministry, including the grueling process of mediating between the LORD and Israel and the intensity of his pleading with the LORD.

Ultimately Moses's mediating ministry points to the Lord Jesus. But there are elements of Moses's ministry that we can emulate in our discipling and evangelistic relationships.

What are **two aspects of Moses's ministry in Deut 9:6–10:11** from which believers can learn as we aim to care for and minister to fellow sinners whom we love?

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11. In Deut 9–10, Moses reminds the Israelites of various ways that the LORD has shown them grace, including by pardoning their sins. Moses is aiming to motivate them to obey the LORD's commands. Although Moses is candid about Israel's failure and objective guilt, he does not "guilt-manipulate" them. Rather, he exposes the extent of their darkness in service of persuading them to celebrate and respond to the radiance of the LORD's mercy.

- a. In general, **what is the difference** between "guilt manipulation" and instruction like Moses's in Deut 9–10? How can you discern that difference?
- b. For example, what is **some specific evidence** that Moses's exhortation in Deut 10:12–13 is shaped by grace rather than legalism or moralism? *Give three pieces of evidence. Deuteronomy 10:12–22 is reproduced at the bottom of pg. 126.*

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Legalism says, "A Christian is someone who secures God's favor by keeping his rules."

Moralism says, "A Christian is someone who is a good, moral person."

Word-Filled Prayer | Respond to Deut 9:26–29 by writing an intercessory prayer for someone you love, possibly the same vulnerable person in your congregation from Question 9.

For an example Word-filled prayer of this sort, see pg. 14.

Moses pleads with the LORD on Israel's behalf:

^{9:26}And I prayed to the LORD, "O Lord GOD, do not destroy your people and your heritage, whom you have redeemed through your greatness, whom you have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ²⁷Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Do not regard the stubbornness of this people, or their wickedness or their sin, ²⁸lest the land from which you brought us say, 'Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land that he promised them, and because he hated them, he has brought them out to put them to death in the wilderness.' ²⁹For they are your people and your heritage, whom you brought out by your great power and by your outstretched arm."

Specific person for whom you are praying: _____

^{10:12}And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good? ¹⁴Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. ¹⁵Yet the LORD set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day. ¹⁶Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn. ¹⁷For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. ¹⁸He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. ¹⁹Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. ²⁰You shall fear the LORD your God. You shall serve him and hold fast to him, and by his name you shall swear. ²¹He is your praise. He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen. ²²Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven.

Notes from Teaching

Small-Group Discussion

- Open in prayer.
- Ask one person to share briefly about an opportunity she had to DO the previous passage in Deuteronomy.
- Read the full passage.
- **Hear the Word** | Questions 1, 3, 4, 7
- **Do the Word** | Questions 8, 9
- **Retell the Word** | Question 10
- Close in Word-filled prayer for one another.

Walking in the Way of the LORD

Deuteronomy regularly employs the expression “walking in the way of the LORD” to signify covenant faithfulness. Walking in “the way of the LORD” means both following the covenant Sovereign’s instructions and following his own example—all by faith and active dependence on him. The LORD has shown his people the essence of ethical holiness, righteousness, and love.

After calling on the Israelites to circumcise their hearts in Deut 10:16, for example, Moses proclaims the LORD’s majestic integrity in Deut 10:17–18. Though the LORD possesses supreme authority, he does not exploit his power. The LORD will not show partiality to anyone, including to unfaithful Israelites (for example, Deut 7:26). The LORD brings “justice” to the “fatherless” and “widow,” and he loves the “resident alien,” “giving him food and clothing” (see Psalm 146:7).

For the expression “walking in the way of the LORD,” see Deut 5:33; 8:6; 10:12; 11:22; 13:4–5; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9; 30:16.

Significantly, the verb “to walk” is also used in the expression “to go/walk after other gods”: Deut 6:14; 8:19; 11:28; 13:2, 6, 13; 17:3; 28:14. For related phrases, see Deut 11:28; 29:18–19, 26.

The LORD, the highest and most powerful being in the universe, focuses special care on lowly and vulnerable persons. By employing his power in service of the needy, the LORD demonstrates how he desires his people to exercise their covenant privileges. The LORD’s integrity is such that he does not stipulate what he himself is unwilling to do. Deuteronomy 10:19 clearly shows the imitative dimension of Israelite ethics, since the Israelites must love the resident alien *after the pattern that the LORD set*. After all, the Israelites themselves were weak and vulnerable resident aliens in the land of Egypt when the LORD demonstrated covenant love toward them (compare Deut 26:5; Exod 23:9). Thus, the LORD’s character and action on behalf of his people issue into specific ethical imperatives that become defining marks of covenant faithfulness throughout Deuteronomy.

Consider how Deut 10:12–22 comes to climactic fulfillment in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ!

God Calls His People to Consider Their Experience of Him, Lest They Be Deceived

Deuteronomy 11

Moses opens his second sermon with Deut 5–11, which functions as a preaching prologue to the specific statutes that Moses will articulate in Deut 12–26.

Moses concludes his exhortational prologue with Deut 11. He reminds the Israelites of the LORD's past faithfulness that they have witnessed, calls them in response to obey his whole commandment, reiterates the consequences of their obedient or disobedient response, and instructs them regarding a future renewal ceremony once they cross the Jordan River. Throughout Deut 11, Moses repeats key themes he has been developing throughout his sermons thus far, including his stern warnings that they not allow their hearts to be deceived to turn aside to worship other gods besides the LORD.

In Deut 11:26–32, Moses commands the Israelites to assemble in the future for a covenant-renewal ceremony on Mounts Gerizim and Ebal. This future ceremony will occur where Abram first constructed an altar to the LORD after the LORD appeared to him (that is, “the place of Shechem”; Gen 12:6). The proceedings will feature rehearsals of the blessing from Mount Gerizim and the curse from Mount Ebal.

Immediately following the specific stipulations of Deut 12–26, Moses further instructs the Israelites regarding this future ceremony at Shechem. Here, in Deut 27–28, he elaborates on the *covenant sanctions*: the blessing and curse. (The threat of covenant curse plays a much larger role in Deut 27–28 than the prospect of covenant blessing.)

Since Moses describes the ceremony at Shechem featuring the blessing or curse in Deut 11:26–32 and again in Deut 27, that means the concrete-specific commandments of Deut 12–26 are enclosed by instructions regarding this future covenant-renewal ceremony. This literary shape underscores **just how weighty is the matter of obedience**.

In Deut 11:26–30, Moses sets before the Israelites a choice: blessing or curse (compare Deut 30:1, 19). The noun “curse” occurs eleven times in Deuteronomy, where it is often contrasted with “blessing,” which occurs twelve times. At these pivotal moments of decision, Moses refers to the *ultimate* blessing or curse the LORD will enact in the case of Israel's covenantal faithfulness or unfaithfulness, respectively.

Though Moses's appeal to the new generation is genuine, his retelling of the golden calf incident at Horeb and his emphasis on Israel's stiff-necked rebellion (Deut 9:6–10:5) do not suggest that Moses is altogether optimistic about Israel's future faithfulness to the covenant.

Moses also stresses the weightiness of obedience by reiterating (again and again!) the beautiful bounty of the land of Canaan. He aims to whet the wilderness Israelites' appetite for the LORD's future blessing in Canaan, which is both spiritual and physical in character.

Basic Preparation: Questions 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 10

Five-Day Plan for Full Preparation

- **Day 1:** Read Deut 11; Num 16; Questions 1–2
- **Day 2:** Read Deut 11; Luke 10:1–24; Questions 3–6; Digging Deeper pg. 132
- **Day 3:** Read Deut 11; Questions 7–8; Word-filled prayer pg. 134
- **Day 4:** Read Deut 11; Questions 9–10
- **Day 5:** Read Deut 11; Word-filled prayer pg. 136

HEAR THE WORD

^{5:1}And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them.”

After **praying** that God will open your heart to listen to his Word in faith, **read** the full passage.

1. What **themes** do you notice in Deut 11 that Moses has been developing throughout Deut 1–10? *Write down specific verse references as you respond. You might want to consult your running list of themes in Appendix A.*

2. Moses wants the conquest generation to remember “what [the LORD] did to Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, son of Reuben, how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households, their tents, and every living thing that followed them, in the midst of all Israel” (Deut 11:6). Read Numbers 16, where Moses narrates these events. Of all the various sorts of wilderness events that Moses could have mentioned here in Deut 11, **why might he choose to highlight this specific event** at this moment? *For example, consider what this event reveals about God.*

3. Moses describes Canaan as “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Deut 11:9; compare Deut 6:3; 26:9, 15; 27:3). Canaan is portrayed in contrast to the land of Egypt, where the Israelites had to toil to keep it irrigated. The language of “a land flowing with milk and honey” stresses the LORD’s attentive providence and protection of his people in their land. The land of Canaan is “a land for which the LORD your God cares,” and “always the eyes of the LORD your God [are] on it” (11:12).
 - a. What is Moses’s **purpose** in Deut 11:8–12 in describing Canaan along these lines? That is, what is he trying to accomplish among his original audience?

 - b. What **effect** will Israel’s obedience or disobedience have on the physical land of Canaan, according to Deut 11:13–17?

4. Similar to what Moses does in Deut 6:4–9, he charges the Israelites in Deut 11:18–20 to prioritize their own instruction in the LORD’s commandments as well as the instruction of their children. He then reinforces his charge by stressing the reward for obedience (Deut 11:21–25). Moses describes how the LORD will drive out mightier nations before the Israelites: “Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours. ... No one shall be able to stand against you. The LORD your God will lay the fear of you and the dread of you on all the land that you shall tread, as he promised you” (Deut 11:24–25).
- a. Read Luke 10:1–24, in which the evangelist describes Jesus’s sending out of the seventy-two. What stands out to you as **different and similar** about God’s promises to the Israelites in Deut 11:24–25 and what you read in Luke 10 about those Jesus sent out? *Be specific and write down verse references as you respond.*

Different:

Similar:

- b. How do these differences and similarities **help illustrate the relationship** between the old and new covenants? *Be specific.*
5. What does this passage mainly reveal about **God’s purposes for his redeemed people**? *Articulate your response in one sentence.*

Digging Deeper | Hearing the Word

In one sentence, how might you articulate this passage’s unifying theme? *For help, consult pg. 44.*

DO THE WORD

^{6:1}Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

6. If you more fully believed what this passage reveals about God's purposes for his redeemed people (Question 5), what is **one thing that would change** in your life? *This may be a change in attitude, practice, thought life, a relational pattern, or something else.*
7. Moses preaches candidly about what is at stake should the Israelites choose to obey the LORD and should they choose to rebel against him. As you read Deut 11:18–32, pay attention to what is happening to you internally. What sorts of thoughts, questions, emotions are you experiencing when you are confronted with the black-and-white sanctions of the old covenant?

Make **three observations** about your internal processing as you read Deut 11:18–32.

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8. The Bible describes the new heavens and new earth, which God will establish at the Lord Jesus's second coming. All those who believe in the Lord Jesus and have their names written in the Book of Life will enter this glorious paradise where God will dwell with his people "face to face." For one example of a biblical text describing the new heavens and new earth, read Revelation 21:22–22:5.
- a. To what extent do the **Bible's descriptions of the future new heavens and new earth** help motivate you toward obedience in the here and now? Why?
- b. What might it look like for you to make progress in **keeping the reward in full view** as you "run the race marked out for [you]" of following the Lord Jesus (Heb 12)? Practically speaking, what are **one or two ways** that you could be more intentionally future-reward oriented in following Christ?

Word-Filled Prayer | Respond to Deut 11:8–12 by writing a prayer to God that focuses on the present and future inheritance that God promises followers of Jesus, of which the Holy Spirit is the down payment (Eph 1:13–14).
For an example Word-filled prayer of this sort, see pg. 12.

Moses exhorts the Israelites:

^{11:8}You shall therefore keep the whole commandment that I command you today, that you may be strong, and go in and take possession of the land that you are going over to possess, ⁹and that you may live long in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers to give to them and to their offspring, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰For the land that you are entering to take possession of it is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and irrigated it, like a garden of vegetables. ¹¹But the land that you are going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water by the rain from heaven, ¹²a land that the LORD your God cares for. The eyes of the LORD your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

RETELL THE WORD

^{6,7}You shall teach [the LORD's commandments] diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

9. What **sorts of opportunities** will you have for retelling God's Word over Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas, and New Year's? And what is **one truth about God** from Deut 1–11 that you want to be sure to share with your friends and/or family over the holidays?

Potential opportunities at Thanksgiving:

Potential opportunities during advent and Christmas:

Potential opportunities during New Year's:

***One truth about God from Deut 1–11 to be sure to share over the holidays:*

10. The blessing and curse that Moses sets before the Israelites points to the **ultimate blessing or curse** that a person experiences based on whether she trusts Jesus to save her from her sins. Sometimes professing believers are prone to minimize the life-and-death momentousness of faith in Christ because we dread offending anyone. In those instances, we care more about our reputation than we do about the person who needs to hear the clear call of God's Word. Moses refused to fall into that people-pleasing error. Instead, he preached soberly and urgently about God's offer of life to rebels who simply take him at his word in faith.

The Lord Jesus preaches about the dangers and terrors of hell more than anyone else in the Bible. Why? Because the Lord Jesus loves sinners more than any other human being in the Bible and came to seek and to save lost people like us. He aims to woo us home.

When appropriate, we too must speak candidly and urgently about the ultimate curse that unrepentant sinners will incur apart from Christ: everlasting separation from God.

- a. **Describe a specific experience** you had in which you conversed with a non-Christian about ultimate realities relating to heaven and hell. How did your conversation go?

- b. What is **one thing** you can learn from that specific conversation to prepare for a similar conversation in the future, either something to avoid, repeat, or tweak?

- c. **Give an example paragraph** of how you might urge a non-Christian to trust Christ for salvation, including by showing the life-or-death nature of a relationship with Christ. Seek to persuade this non-Christian in *grace-driven and sober manner* rather than by fearmongering. Feel free to think of someone specific.

Word-Filled Prayer | Respond to Deut 11:26–28 by writing a prayer for a specific person you plan to encounter over these upcoming holiday seasons (Question 9).

For an example Word-filled prayer of this sort, see pg. 14.

Moses pleads with the Israelites on Moab's plains:

^{11:26}See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: ²⁷the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, ²⁸and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way that I am commanding you today, to go after other gods that you have not known.

Specific person you plan to encounter these upcoming months: _____

Notes from Teaching

^{Galatian 3:7}Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. ⁸And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” ⁹So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

¹⁰For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” ¹¹Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” ¹²But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” ¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—¹⁴so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

Small-Group Discussion

- Open in prayer.
- Ask one person to share briefly about an opportunity she had to RETELL the previous passage in Deuteronomy.
- What is your main takeaway from your study of Deuteronomy 1–11 this semester?
- Read the full passage.
- **Hear the Word** | Questions 1, 2, 5
- **Do the Word** | Questions 6, 8
- **Retell the Word** | Question 10
- Ask everyone to share their plan for continuing to make progress in hearing, doing, and retelling the Word until we regather in January 2023 to study Deut 12–34.
- Close in Word-filled prayer for one another.

We will regather on **Wednesday, January 11** to study Deuteronomy 12. You will receive an email regarding where to pick up your Study Guide for Deut 12–34 so you can come prepared on January 11.

You can find the schedule for our Winter/Spring Deuteronomy Gatherings on pg. 1.

May God richly bless your Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas, and New Year's celebrations!

APPENDIX A | Themes in Deuteronomy 1–11

[illegible]

Appendix B | God's Attributes Highlighted in Deuteronomy 1–11

Who is God? What is he like (character)? What kind of God is he (character and ways)?

God's Attribute	Key Passages in Deut 1–11 That Develop This Attribute

God's Attribute	Key Passages in Deut 1–11 That Develop This Attribute