



# COMMITTED

LIFEGROUP STUDIES

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# DEVOTIONS IN DEUTERONOMY

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Our world is changing. God does not change. Likewise His mission does not change, though His agents and their methods for making the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in the power of His Spirit change in context.

“Deuteronomy is a book for a people on the move; literally at first, spiritually and morally thereafter... [i]t presents, therefore, a God of sovereign worldwide purpose and a people with a sharp spiritual mandate and moral agenda.” (Wright 2012, loc. 360).

‘Deuteronomy’ may not be your first choice as a book to read from the Bible. Our hope is that as we prayerfully, carefully, explore these (nearly) seven chapters, we shall begin to see that it is rewarding, if not riveting, reading. The book does contain a lot of law! And yet, as George Athas describes in his excellent commentary, “I would go so far as to say that it is the theological backbone of the entire Old Testament.” (2016, p 96)

Reading ‘Deuteronomy’ or ‘Devarim’ devotionally depends upon reading the book in its context. For centuries, the Protestant and the Catholic Churches divided the Scriptures into a ‘Lectionary’ structure (from the Latin ‘legere’ meaning ‘to read’ and ‘to pick out’). Before this, Jewish readers of the Bible similarly divided the ‘Torah’ (or Law) into ‘portions’ or ‘parashot’ (plural) to be read weekly, alongside further ‘haftorah’ portions from the ‘Nevi’im’ (or Prophets) and ‘Ketuvim’ (or Writings).

Each ‘parashah’ (singular) is a portion of the Torah or ‘Pentateuch’ (meaning ‘five books’ in Greek) including Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Jewish people, Messianic Jews, and Christians still use this model, so it is not an unusual practice to read portions of the Torah within the ‘Tanakh’ (or Old Testament) within all the Bible.

Our hope is introduce or affirm your devotional time in Deuteronomy with these weekly LifeGroup Bible study portions.

## References

Athas, G. Deuteronomy: One Nation under God (Reading the Bible Today). Anglican Youthworks: Sydney (2016).

Wright, C.J.H. Deuteronomy (Understanding the Bible Commentary Series, Second Edition) Baker Books: MI (2012).

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# DEUTERONOMY AKA DEVARIM

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This final book of Moses in the Torah is called the Book of 'Deuteronomy' (meaning The Second [iteration of] Law). This is a phrase derived from the Greek translation of a phrase used in Deuteronomy 17:18 within chapters 12-26 which describe the collection of laws, some of which are new but mostly are repeated from the Exodus account (hence, the second iteration of Law).

In Hebrew the book is entitled 'Devarim' (meaning words) taken from the opening phrase "These are the words..." (Deut. 1:1). The book refers to the terms of the special covenant with God with Israel, His given Ten Commandments, and the requirements of Torah.

It is also Moses' valedictory speech to a new generation of Israel who have wandered for four decades and outlived their forebears. Moses reviews the history and laws given by the LORD to His people. He assures them that obedience to God's law will bring blessings, and disobedience will break them with bruising (literally 'curses').

The introduction to this book sets us up to hear Moses preaching, speaking out God's 'words' to the nation poised for entry into the Promised Land. There are four speeches in the book with Moses' farewell at the conclusion. Notice how it seems likely an editor writes to locate Deuteronomy geographically, historically, and theologically as a preface to the speech Moses then gives to Israel at the end.

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## THE STRUCTURE OF DEUTERONOMY

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After the introduction (1:1-5), he speaks to give context for the covenant (1:6-11). Moses closes the collection of laws by declaring God's blessings for obedience and bruising for disobedience (27:1-28:68), followed by an encouragement (29:1-30:20). Finally, Moses' makes his farewell speech (31:1-34:12) comprising a poem of bruising (chapter 32) and a poem of blessing (chapter 33). There is an editorial account of his death (chapter 34).

Moses' speech opens on the first day of the eleventh month 'Shevat' in the fortieth year since the Exodus from slavery in Egypt. Israel is in Moab, east of the river Jordan river, awaiting entry into the promised land. Moses was committed to making God's Torah concise and clear as they entered in.

**DEUTERONOMY SUMMARY VIDEO  
FROM THE BIBLE PROJECT**



[bibleproject.com/explore/video/deuteronomy](https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/deuteronomy)

# COMMITTED TO LOVE THE LORD

## PREACHING SERIES OVERVIEW

Our annual commitment series in 2024, Committed... to the Lord our God, is based on Deuteronomy 6:1-7. We reference the gospel accounts in which Jesus is described as directly relating back to these words and John's gospel which has drawn a thematic thread from the Deuteronomistic tapestry.

The structure of our series is as follows:

- 6 October  
**Love the Lord your God with all your Heart**  
(Deuteronomy 6:1-7, John 15:9-17)
- 13 October  
**Learn from the Lord your God with all your Mind**  
(Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Matt. 22:34-40)
- 20 October  
**Long for the Lord your God with all your Soul**  
(Deuteronomy 6:20-19, Mark 12:28-34)
- 27 October  
**Live through the Lord your God with all your Strength**  
(Deuteronomy 6:20-24, Luke 10:25-37)

### Here's some tips for studying Deuteronomy 1-7:11 with your LifeGroup:

- Our seven studies, which can be explored over seven weeks, will be looking at the first two parashot, namely Devarim (meaning 'words') and Vaetchanan (meaning, 'And I pleaded'), taking us to Deuteronomy 7:11.
- God speaks to His people Israel and to all who seek Him today through His word, the Bible, and through His Word, Jesus. Jesus simplifies this to 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, your mind, your soul, your strength', and 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. If you are left wondering about the relevance of a verse or passage in Deuteronomy, bring to mind the vertical relationship you and we have with God, and the horizontal relationship with have with one another as church and with our neighbours in community.
- Themes repeat across the Book of Deuteronomy, the Torah, the Old Testament, and the Bible. You may find that looking ahead to later studies will give some clues to questions arising in the current study.
- Each study is structured loosely on a SOAP model: Each begins with prayer, an icebreaker, an illustration, a brief Scripture summary, an opportunity for observations in the text, a point of application, and a prayer to finish. In the hope to add variety there are brief excurses and points of interest to explore on the journey.

**Let's pray and get into the word(s)!**

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# PART I: DEVARIM MEANING 'WORDS'

I:I-3:22

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The first parashah, or portion, is entitled Devarim, and it begins with Moses recalling Israel's journey with the LORD from Mount Sinai to the promised land. We are introduced to Moses, the main speaker, the nation of Israel, of whom Moses has been leader, and to God ('Yahweh' or 'Adonai') whom Moses represents to Israel. They are poised to enter the land Yahweh had promised them by their forefathers.

Moses explains the need to appoint judges to assist him in the administration of justice amongst the twelve tribes. He reminds them of the sin of the faithless spies and the rebellion of some in Israel at Kadesh Barnea. The consequences of these were that God would not allow Moses, or any of

this generation, to enter the promised land, with the exceptions of faithful Joshua and Caleb. He recalls how Israel were further disobedient in trying to enter the land in their own strength. The judgment for this Godless effort led to their crushing defeat by the Amorite nation.

Moses gave Israel a potted history of their exile from the Sea of Reeds to the desert which took them across many borders. During this time, they were trained by God for war and defeated Sihon king of the Amorites and Og the king of Bashan. The land they acquired was divided between the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh. Moses concludes this portion reminding Joshua it is the LORD who fights for Israel.

# STUDY I | TRUSTING THE LORD'S GUIDANCE

## DEUTERONOMY 1:1-46

**Pray:** Heavenly Father, as we open Your Word today, help us to learn from the experiences of Your people, Israel. Teach us to trust Your guidance, even when our hearts are gripped by fear. May we live by faith in Your promises and avoid the consequences of disobedience. Only in Jesus' name. Amen.

### Icebreaker:

Have you ever been tentative in taking a decision or step in life, even though you knew it was the right thing to do?

### Imagine...

...standing at the edge of a deep chasm with a bridge spanning out before you. The bridge is solid but you hesitate, gripped by fear. How often do we, in our spiritual lives, face moments where the bridge is God's sure presence and promise, but our fear keeps us from stepping out in faith?

### The Story so far...

Moses recalls Israel's journey from Mount Horeb (aka Sinai) to the edge of the Promised Land and their refusal to enter for fear of the "giants" in the land, despite God's promises to provide and protect them as He has done. Their failure to trust God led to a generation wandering in the wilderness. In this passage we reflect on God's covenant faithfulness despite Israel's unfaithfulness. It reminds us how we, in the light of His promises fulfilled in Jesus, can trust and obey God's Word.

1. To whom did Moses deliver his speech? Where was he? Why did he do this?

Moses delivered his speech to all Israel. There were over 600,000 men over the age of 20 and their families. It is possible this was addressed only to the elders as representatives of the tribes within the nation of Israel. He made it east of the Jordan in the Aravah, a desert region north of the Dead Sea and also called the "plains of Moab."

"Moses undertook to explain the law." The verb translated 'explain' is used twice in the Torah (Deut. 1:5, 27:8). The root word means 'a well of water.' His speech was designed to 'draw water from the well' of his experience shared with God's people. Consider how Moses' words compare to other accounts in the Torah in which the expression 'and the LORD spoke to Moses' contrasts with 'the words Moses spoke.'

2. What is the significance of Moses recounting Israel's journey in verses 1-3, and how does this frame the context of Deuteronomy?

Moses retells their journey to remind the people of God's faithfulness and their failures. This retelling emphasizes the covenant relationship, framing Deuteronomy as a renewal of Israel's commitment. These things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our instruction, on whom the ends of the ages have come (1 Cor. 10:11).



# STUDY I | TRUSTING THE LORD'S GUIDANCE

## Fun Fact:

The Amorites and their kings (1:4) were the descendants of Noah's fourth son Ham (Genesis 10:16). In time they settled, having been nomadic in Mesopotamia, as Babylon. The Amorites are one of seven Canaanite nations earmarked for destruction under God's command (Exo. 34:11-12; Deut. 7:1, 20:17-18; Acts 13:17-19). King Sihon of Heshbon and king Og of Bashan were brothers who are described as Nephillim or 'giants'.

3. Did God originally intend to give all the land promised to Abraham?  
Why does Moses emphasize that the land was already promised to Israel (1:7-8)?

God had planned to give all the land "to the great river Euphrates" though after the sin of the spies, the land actually given only included the land of Canaan (cf. Gen. 15:18-21, 26:3; Exo.23:31; Num. 35:1-15; Deut. 1:6-8; Rom. 4:13).

The land was part of God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses reminds Israel that God's promises are trustworthy, and they simply need to trust and obey Him. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:29).

4. When Moses said the people were a burden for him, what did he do to lighten the load? (1:9-17, cf. Exo. 18:8-27)

Moses appointed judges to help him rule over God's people in groups of 1000's and 100's. Bear in mind the understanding and application of Torah was facilitated by oral tradition. He lightened the load of leadership

by sharing it with qualified others (consider also how Moses appointed judges with authority in Exo. 18:13-26 but also saw elders equipped with the Spirit in Num. 11:10-30). Lamenting over the heavy burden of leadership, Moses also rejoiced at the way God was fulfilling His promise to Abraham (1:9-11; cf. Gen. 15:5).

They must hear the cases between others and make a righteous judgement, not being corrupted by bribery or social status of men, rather reflecting the impartiality of God. They did have the option to escalate cases to Moses who would appeal to God himself.

As Moses appoints leaders to assist in his role of oversight, a further contemporary analog may relate to shared leadership in the church today (see 1 Tim. 3:1-7) where godly pastoral roles are essential.

5. God led the people directly from Sinai to Kadesh Barnea to take possession of the land, but what happened there (Read 1:19-40 then compare with Num. 13 cf. Num. 14:1-12, 20-35)?

Moses describes their journey from Sinai to Kadesh Barnea (1:19; cf. 1:2) and his own call to faith-based obedience (1:20-21 cf. Deut. 1:17, John 5:22, 27). He recounts how twelve spies are sent out, but the faithless majority of spies sinned, fearful of "giants" in the land. Some of the people of God rebelled against Him in their refusal to believe He would give the land over to them. A seemingly good plan for reconnaissance yields a seemingly good report (1:22-23), indeed Numbers 13:2-3 gives another description of these events where the people's faithless request is omitted but God's merciful permission is highlighted. However, Israel refuses to enter the land (1:26), and their fear outweighs their faith in God (cf. 2 Tim. 1:7).



# STUDY I | TRUSTING THE LORD'S GUIDANCE

6. What did Moses say to encourage Israel to keep faith in God? (1:29-31) How do the people respond (1:32-33)?

As usual, Moses pleads with the community to trust their covenant-keeping God. Moses told them that God would fight for them, just as He did in Egypt. He reminded them how the LORD carried His people "as a man carries his son." Unfortunately again, the plea falls on deaf ears (and hard hearts!).

7. Why did Moses say that God denied his request to enter the land as a result of the people's unbelief at Kadesh Barnea, when earlier we learn this decree came from striking the rock at Meribah? (Deut. 1:37 cf. Num. 20:2-12)

Moses continued to ask that God's judgment be rescinded but once the spies had sinned, Moses was included in the number of Israelites who would die in the desert. Leaders who had lapsed into faithlessness, and those who wilfully chose to follow, would suffer the consequences (1:34-35, 37; though cf. Heb. 11:24-28). Leaders who trusted God wholeheartedly would enjoy the fruits of their faith (1:36, 38). You may like to encourage LifeGroup members to consider in what ways do they need to confess and rejoice before the Lord?

8. What does the punishment of wandering in the wilderness for 40 years (v. 34-36) teach us about the consequences of unbelief (cf. Heb. 3:19)?

It shows that unbelief prevents us from entering into God's rest, a space in which it may go well, and blessing is abundant. Israel's punishment reflects how failing in faith can keep His people from experiencing the fullness of His promises.

By contrast, Caleb's faith (1:36) serves as an example. He trusted in God's promise despite the challenges and is commended as an example of how believers can confidently trust in God's power and faithfulness (cf. Matt. 17:20). In summary, God does grant that this generation's children will enter the Promised Land but that they must turn around and go the other way (Deut. 1:39-40)

9. What is the theological significance of Israel's presumption to fight the Amorites without God's blessing (1:41-44)? Why is Moses' reflection on Israel's defeat by the Amorites (1:44) included, and how does it serve as a warning (Rom. 15:4)?

The account shows how success in God's mission depends on obedience and God's presence. When Israel acts without God's guidance, they are bruised rather than blessed, serving as a warning to future generations about the consequences of disobedience. These stories are recorded for our instruction reminding us "whatever was written in the past was written for our instruction, so that we may have hope through endurance and through the encouragement from the Scriptures" and we can do nothing apart from Christ (John 15:5).

10. What is the significance of the people weeping after their defeat (1:45), and how does this illustrate the difference between godly repentance and worldly remorse (cf. 2 Cor. 7:10)?

Their weeping represents regret but not true repentance, "[f]or godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, but worldly grief produces death."

Even after a further attempt at correction, note how Israel does not 'shema' (hear

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# STUDY I | TRUSTING THE LORD'S GUIDANCE

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and heed) God's immediate instruction (1:41-43). The consequences are not only physical suffering (1:44) but spiritual strife (1:45). Eventually, Israel does follow God's instruction to turn and go but remained encamped in Kadesh Barnea as the site of their exile for thirty-eight years (1:46). Just as Israel was called to enter the Promised Land through faith unrestrained by fear, so Jesus calls His followers to enter the narrow gate of salvation in faith and obedience.

## **Application to Life:**

What areas in your life do you find yourself hesitating out of fear, and how can you move forward in faith, trusting in God's promises?

Jesus' devarim (words) are powerful and true because He speaks what He hears from His Father. In the same way, God's devarim are made available to us through His Holy Spirit (John 16:13) and can be understood as He opens the Scriptures.

In what way are you listening, hearing and responding in faith? What 'stops' your ears from hearing His voice? What is God leading you to do that you are not hearing and heeding at the moment? Share with one another to pray this through together.

## **Closing Prayer:**

Lord, help us to trust You in every aspect of our lives. Teach us to overcome fear with faith and to walk confidently in assurance, knowing You keep Your promises. May we learn from the past and seek to follow You wholeheartedly in future. In Jesus' name, Amen.

# STUDY 2 | TRUSTING THE LORD'S SOVEREIGNTY

## DEUTERONOMY 2:1-25

**Pray:** Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your Word and the lessons You teach us about Your sovereignty and loving care. Enable us to see Your hand in history and in our lives, guiding and directing according to Your perfect plan and purposes. May we trust in Your sovereignty, recognising Your rule over all peoples. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

### Icebreaker:

Can you think of a time when you had to trust someone else's plan or guidance, especially if you didn't fully understand it? How did it go?

### Imagine...

...an elite architect overseeing the construction of a large, intricate building. The workers at ground level can only see a small part of the project. They do not always understand why decisions are made. However, the architect has the blueprint, knows the end result, and ensures every step leads toward the completion of the grand design. If God is the Grand Designer of history, guiding nations and individuals according to His sovereign purpose, we may not always understand His plans, but we can trust in His infinite wisdom and goodness.

### The Story so far...

Moses recounts Israel's disastrous attempt to enter the promised land without God! He makes it clear God must be with them and for them to achieve His will for them. He describes their journey through the wilderness and their encounters with nations enroute. This was now a new generation (2:8,14-15) and Moses is primed to warn His people.

The command comes with an injunction to

respect the boundaries of the land that God sovereignly promised Esau, Jacob's twin brother (2:4-8; cf. Gen. 36:8) as well as the two sons of Jacob's grandfather's (Abraham) nephew, Lot (Moab's portion in 2:9-15; Ben-Ammi's portion, 2:16-19; cf. Gen. 19:36-38 and 13:5-12).

There is to be no conflict with Edom, Moab, and Ammon because God has given these nations their lands. He is sovereign over all nations, not just Israel, and is faithful in fulfilling His promises. God is in control over history and His unfolding redemptive plan for both Israel and the nations will not be thwarted by any peoples.

1. When the camp of Israel began to move from Kadesh Barnea, why did God forbid them from attacking the kingdom of Edom? (2:1-7) How does this reflect His sovereignty over nations?

The Edomites were descendants of Israel's brother Esau. God instructs Israel to avoid conflict because the land surrounding Mount Seir had been given to Esau and his descendants by God as their inheritance. God provided for Israel and did not need Edom's help. God has sovereign control over the allocation of lands and nations, affirming His plan for all peoples (Acts 17:26). Israel's spiritual inheritance will extend through Jesus to all nations.

2. Why did God forbid war with the kingdom of Moab (2:8-9) and how does this reflect God's broader concern for the nations?

The Moabites were descendants of Lot's son Moab and are spared because God has given the land of Ar as their own inheritance. His sovereign plan includes different roles and

## STUDY 2 | TRUSTING THE LORD'S SOVEREIGNTY

inheritances for nations (cf. Matt. 5:45). This is also the nation from whom would come Ruth, great-grandmother of King David.

3. What is the significance of Israel purchasing food and water from Edom instead of taking it by force (2:6 cf. Rom. 12:18)?

God teaches Israel to respect the property and rights of other nations according to His purposes for peaceful relations with them. Likewise, in relationship with Jesus, we are encouraged "[i]f possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

4. What is the importance of the historical references to the Emim and Rephaim (2:10-11) in the context of trusting God's sovereignty today (cf. 1 Cor. 15:51-57)?

The Emim and Rephaim were a 'giant' people who once inhabited the land. Enemies which seem formidable from the perspective of the workers on the ground are nothing to the grand architect. If the Lord Jesus has defeated our greatest enemy, death, then any earthly or existential giants we face can be faced in prayerful faith and obedience.

5. What is significant about the "brook of Zered"? (2:13-16)

The brook symbolically divided the desert generation that had died out at Kadesh Barnea from the new generation that would take possession of the land. It functions as a line in the sand for judgment.

6. Why did God forbid war with the kingdom of Ammon (2:19-23)? How do we see God's grace similarly expressed in Acts 10:34-35?

We see God's defence of Jacob's relatives against previous 'giant' inhabitants of trans-Jordanian land continues in Deut. 2:20-23 (Edomites vs. Horites, Moabites vs. Emmites, and Ammonites vs. Zammzumites) and even against Israel herself (Israel vs. Edom, Moab, Ammon). This is intended to encourage the nation to trust God will defend them against the inhabitants of the promised land as well (Israelites vs. Canaanites).

The Ammonites were descendants of Lot's second son, from whom would come Na'ama, who married King Solomon and bore him his son, King Rehoboam. We can see God's preservation of line both for Israel and among the nations to achieve His sovereign purposes.

Through Jesus, His gracious inclusion will finally extend to the nations as shown to Peter in God's revelation to him, "Now I truly understand that God doesn't show favouritism, but in every nation the person who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him."

7. What does the reference to the Caphtorim (2:23) show us about the transient nature of nations and the permanence of God's plan?

The Caphtorim, who displaced the Avvites, reminds us how nations rise and fall, but God's kingdom endures. History is under God's sovereign control, and nations move according to His divine plan. God's kingdom as extended and fulfilled in Jesus is revealed as a kingdom "eternal and unshakable" (Heb. 12:28).

## STUDY 2 | TRUSTING THE LORD'S SOVEREIGNTY

8. Why did Moses offer terms of peace to king Sihon, when God instructed the Amorites to be removed from the land? (2:24-29 cf. Num. 21:21-30)

Moses continues the history lesson for God's people by describing the recent fulfillment of God's defending them against a "Pharaoh-like" hardened Amorite King, Sihon (cf. Exo. 10:1-2). Moses offered terms of peace, but God understood they would be rejected when Sihon's heart was hardened (2:30 cf. Pharaoh in Exo. 7:3).

God says He will put the fear of Israel into other nations to show His sovereignty over both external circumstances and the internal responses of individuals and nations, for God works within the hearts of people to fulfill His purposes (Phil. 2:13).

9. What happened to Sihon's kingdom? (2:30-35)

The populations of his cities and towns were placed under God's command for destruction (2:34). Only livestock and the spoils of war were spared. This land was finally given to the tribes of Reuben and Gad.

10. What role does obedience to God's specific commands regarding nations (2:5, 9, 19) play in Israel's success? How does this relate to our obedience today (Matt. 28:18-20, John 14:15)?

Israel's success is tied to their obedience to God's specific instructions. We are called to obey Jesus' commands, with the promise that obedience will lead to earthly blessing and fruitfulness for the kingdom of God. Jesus declares that all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Him reminding us that, as

God, sovereignty is His and as His children we can bear fruit of obedience for His kingdom.

### Application:

In what areas of your life do you struggle to trust God's sovereignty, especially when you do not understand His plan or purposes? How can you grow in faith to trust that God is in control, even in uncertain times or when things go in a direction other than what you pray for?

### Closing Prayer:

Sovereign Lord, thank You for reminding us that You are in control of all things, including all nations and the circumstances of our lives. Help us to trust Your plan, even when we do not fully understand it. Enable us to live in obedience and faith, trusting Your sovereign purposes are good, You work all things for Your glory and for the good of those called according to Your purpose. In Jesus' name, Amen.

# STUDY 3 | TRUSTING THE LORD'S POWER

## DEUTERONOMY 3:1-22

**Pray:** Heavenly Father, as we open Your Word today, we ask for understanding and wisdom to see how You act powerfully on behalf of Your people. Help us to trust in Your strength and to stand firm in faith, knowing that You are able to overcome every obstacle in our lives. May Your Spirit guide us in applying these truths to our hearts. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### Icebreaker:

Have you ever faced a situation that seemed impossible to overcome, only to see it resolved in a way that you could never have imagined? What did that experience teach you about trusting God?

### Imagine...

...a scrappy insurgency going up against a powerful, seemingly invincible opponent. Every strategic calculation concludes victory is impossible. However, this army has one advantage: the unshakable knowledge that they are backed by an Almighty God who guarantees their success.

This is what Israel experienced in Deuteronomy 3:1-22 as they faced King Og of Bashan. Their enemy appeared invincible, but God had already promised them victory. They had military success, but God's powerful love is available to win over heart, mind, soul, and strength.

### The Story so far...

We encounter Israel's battle against King Og of Bashan, a fearsome ruler with a mighty army. God commands Israel to not be afraid, promising He will give Og and his land into their hands. This victory is significant as Og represents one of the last major hurdles

before Israel enters the promised land. Moses recounts the details of this victory to encourage the Israelites to trust in God's power as they face future challenges. In this passage, we see God's faithfulness in delivering His people and His assurance that nothing is too difficult for Him.

1. Why did the king of Bashan attack Israel? (3:1) Why is it significant God tells Moses, "Do not be afraid" (3:2)?

Og, the king of Bashan, was half-brother of Sihon, the king of the Amorites whom Israel had defeated. Fear could have paralysed Israel in the face of such a mighty enemy so God's command to not fear reminds them that He is their source of strength. God's faithfulness in empowering His people is evident through the Scriptures (Josh. 1:9; John 14:27) and reminds us how God's faithful love eclipses fear.

2. What does the reference to King Og's iron bed (2:11) tell us about the scale of the challenge Israel faced, and how does this magnify God's power?

King Og's iron bed measured over 13 feet long and emphasises his giant stature and strength, reminding the hearer of a seemingly impossible victory for Israel. The fact that God delivers Og into their hands showcases His power to overcome every enemy, no matter how formidable. God's power and strength is made perfect in Israel's weakness and also in our weakness today (cf. 2 Cor. 12:9-10).

3. How does this victory over Og connect to God's covenant promises to Israel?

The defeat of Og is part of God's fulfillment



## STUDY 3 | TRUSTING THE LORD'S POWER

of His promise to give Israel as Abraham's descendants the promised land (Gen. 15:18-21). This victory reaffirms God is faithful to His covenant and is actively working to bring His people into their inheritance. The idea of covenant fulfillment is fully realised in and through Jesus Christ, Who has secured our eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:15).

4. What role does obedience to God's commands play in Israel's victory over Bashan (3:6-7), and how does this parallel the call to obedience in the New Testament?

Israel's obedience to God's command to engage in battle is crucial to their success. Their trust in God's word leads to victory. In the New Testament, Jesus calls His followers to obedience, promising that those who keep His commands will experience His abiding presence and blessing (John 15:10).

Take a moment to reread 2:7 again and apply it to yourself. Encourage LifeGroup members to do likewise. Do you believe God has provided you all you need? We can mistake what we 'want' as 'need'. Yet all we need is only found in Jesus. What are you seeking? Pray together.

5. Why does Moses emphasize the division of the land (3:12-17), and how does this reflect God's faithfulness in providing for His people?

God's protection brings swift victory against King Sihon (2:31-37) as well as King Og (3:1-7). The land God had granted (2:8-11) is now divided according to a previous compromise that God allows (2:12-14; cf. Num. 32). The division of the conquered land among the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh underscores God's

provision for His people. Manasseh received the kingdom of Bashan with its sixty cities (3:13 cf. 3:4). God not only delivers them from their enemies but also ensures that they have a place to dwell, reflecting God's provision in Jesus for all His people's needs (cf. Matt. 6:33).

6. What is the significance of Moses reminding the Israelites of their past victories as they face future battles (3:21)?

Moses encourages Joshua and the people by recalling God's past faithfulness in delivering Og and Sihon into their hands. This pattern of looking back at God's faithfulness is a key biblical principle for building faith then and now. As Jesus' followers we are called to remember God's work in Him as a foundation for faith in future trials (Rom. 8:32).

7. What did Moses say to encourage Joshua regarding the future? (3:21-22) How does Moses' role as a leader and encourager in this passage point to Jesus Christ's role as the ultimate leader and encourager of His people?

Moses encourages Joshua, telling him not to fear because the Lord will fight for them. God would help him destroy the seven Canaanite nations just as He destroyed the Amorites. Moses encourages Joshua to lead the nation in trusting God's covenant faithfulness so that they will exercise faith-based obedience and receive their promised inheritance. This anticipates Jesus' role as Saviour and Lord, who both encourages us by example in the power of His Spirit and also leads us in victory over sin and death (Heb. 12:2; 1 Cor. 15:57).



## STUDY 3 | TRUSTING THE LORD'S POWER

8. As the boundaries and recipients of land east of the Jordan are described (3:15–17), what did Moses say to the tribes that settled east of the Jordan (3:18-20 cf. Heb. 4:9-11)?

Moses commanded the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh to join the remaining nine and a half tribes when they made their military incursions into the land of Canaan. The call for those who have received land to lead the fight on behalf of their brethren was part of the earlier compromise (3:20-21). No individual Israelite could “rest” until all were able to do so (3:20).

In the same way, we should never be complacent with our own salvation when others we know are perishing. What could it look like to heed Ephesians 4:15 today by speaking God’s words? Can you apply Hebrews 4:9-11 to your life to ‘be’ at rest while passionately and energetically pursuing ushering others into God’s rest?

9. How does God’s provision of land in this passage foreshadow the eternal inheritance promised to believers in Jesus Christ?

The division of the land foreshadows the theme of inheritance fulfilled. Just as Israel received their physical inheritance as promised that they may be indigenous in the land, believers in Jesus are promised an eternal inheritance, secured by Jesus’ incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and promise to return (1 Peter 1:3-4).

10. What does the repeated phrase “the Lord your God” (2:3, 18, 21) emphasize about the relationship between God and His people, and how is this relationship fulfilled in Jesus?

The phrase “the Lord your God” emphasizes the personal and covenantal relationship between God and Israel. This covenant relationship is fulfilled in Jesus, Who affirms His followers as children of God through faith in Him (cf. Gal. 3:26; Rom. 8:15).

### Application:

How does the victory over King Og encourage believers to trust God in the face of their own personal “giants” or challenges today? What are the “giants” in your life - challenges or fears that seem impossible to overcome? How can remembering God’s power at work in the past give you confidence in His ability to overcome those challenges? What might it mean if these challenges are greater than we are and overcome us?

Just as God overcame the mighty King Og for Israel, believers today can trust that God will fight their battles and overcome whatever challenges they face. Nothing is too difficult for a powerful God Who works all things for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28, Eph. 6:10-12).

### Closing Prayer:

Gracious God, we thank You for the example of Your power and faithfulness in delivering Your people from seemingly impossible situations. Help us to trust You in our own challenges, knowing that You are more than able to overcome every challenge we face. Strengthen our faith as we walk with You, and may we always remember the final victory belongs to You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

## PART II: VAETCHANAN MEANING 'AND I PLEADED...'

### 3:23-7:11

Vaetchanan begins by recalling how the Israelites are encamped near the land of Moab, east of the Jordan river, and waiting to enter the promised land. Moses' address gave a summary of their forty years wandering in the desert including their exile in Kadesh Barnea and their recent victories over the Amorite kings Sihon and Og.

Moses now recalls how he pleaded with God to allow him to enter the land, though God had forbidden Moses to enter due to his disobedience at Meribah. God keeps His promises, assuring Moses that he would die in the desert. It is Joshua who would take Israel into the land; however God did allow Moses to ascend the mountain to see the promised land from afar.

Moses experienced this bruising of God's righteous denial for his disobedience. So, he speaks to Israel to earnestly warn them to obey the laws God has given them, lest they experience bruising judgment. He warned them not to add to or take away from God's commands, specifically reminding them of the consequences for 24,000 of their number for their rebelliousness at Baal Peor.

Moses then shares how God delighted to choose Israel to be His light to the nations and how their obedience to Torah would commend them as a wise people. He wanted them to be careful, 'keeping their soul committed' in order to remember their extraordinary privilege as God's covenant people. He recalls their deliverance from Egypt, the giving of Torah at Mount Sinai, hearing the voice of God, warning them not to be drawn into idolatry or immortality even though He knows they will!

Moses is pointed in sharing the future hope of restoration after their exile and God's provision of sanctuary cities of refuge and for Torah learning among Israelite tribes. We read how '[t]his is the law Moses set before Israel: decrees, statutes, and laws as given...' underlined with a repeat of the Ten Commandments and then highlighted and amplified with the central commandment of Torah: the Shema:

"Hear and heed, O Israel. The Lord our God the Lord is One... teach your children these across the generations.' (6:4-7)

We also encounter a difficult command to hear in which Israel is to devote the Canaanite nations to destruction. This is explained in the context of the need for Israel to reflect the holiness of God and to flee idolatry and immorality. Israel is a people upon whom the Lord God graciously chose to set His gracious affection, "because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that He swore to your forefathers... know He is faithful and keeps His covenant and steadfast love with those who love Him and keep His commandments."

# STUDY 4 | TRUSTING THE LORD'S PLANS

## DEUTERONOMY 3:23-4:8

**Pray:** Gracious Father, as we turn to Your Word, we ask for wisdom and clarity to understand Your will. Help us to trust in Your plans and learn what it means to live as Your people in obedience to Your commands. Open our hearts to hear Your voice today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### Icebreaker:

Have you ever experienced a situation where you asked for something, but were denied? How did that impact your trust in the bigger picture?

### Imagine...

...an artist painting a masterpiece. Every stroke is intentional, though the observer might not always see the big picture until it's complete.

Moses similarly learns, though he cannot enter the Promised Land, he still plays an important role in God's plan. His personal disappointment gives way to God's grander design, reminding us that while we may not always receive what we ask for, God is working out His plans for the good of His people and the glory of His name.

### The Story so far...

Forbidden to cross the Jordan, Moses recounts his pleading with God to allow him personal entry into the Promised Land (3:23–29 cf. Num. 20:8–12). Instead, Moses is instructed to encourage and strengthen Joshua for the task ahead. Moses uses this moment to remind Israel of their unique relationship with God, emphasizing the greatness of God's laws and His closeness to His people. This passage reveals God's sovereignty, Moses' humility, and the central role of obedience in the life of God's people.

1. What does the word Vaetchanan mean (3:23)?

The word Vaetchanan means 'and I pleaded' which comes from the verb 'chanan' which means to beseech or implore from the root word 'chen' meaning 'grace'. Moses is still preaching to the new generation of Israelites camped just east of the Jordan River.

2. What was the substance of Moses' request to God (3:24-25)?

Moses said the Lord God had only begun to show His glorious and merciful hand and sought His grace to enter the land despite his sin at Meribah (Num. 20:2-20).

3. Why did God refuse Moses' plea (3:26 cf. Num. 27:12-17)? What concession did God make for Moses (3:27)?

Moses seemed to blame the people of God for his troubles (1:37, 3:26) though it is clear he was being judged for his sin at Meribah (Num. 20:2-20). This highlights that even great leaders like Moses are held accountable to God's standards. It demonstrates God's justice but also His mercy in allowing Moses to see the land. Moses was permitted to scale Mount Pisgah (also possibly known as Mount Nebo).

4. What does Moses' acceptance of God's decision teach us about humility and submission to God's will (cf. Matt. 26:39)?

Moses accepts God's decision and focuses on preparing Joshua for leadership. This reflects a humble submission to God's sovereign will.

## STUDY 4 | TRUSTING THE LORD'S PLANS

We see this humility exemplified fully and perfectly in Jesus' submission to the Father's will, e.g. in the Garden of Gethsemane.

5. What role was given to Joshua bin Nun (3:28 cf. Num. 13:30)?

How does Moses' encouragement of Joshua parallel God's call to us to encourage one another in leadership roles?

Joshua was to be appointed by God to lead the Israelites into the promised land. He joined Caleb in this privilege. Joshua and Caleb were the 'faithful spies.' Moses strengthens and encourages Joshua for the challenges ahead, emphasizing the importance of building up future leaders. This echoes Paul's exhortation to encourage one another and build each other up (1 Thess. 5:11).

### Excursus - Setting the Scene

Moses pleads directly with Israel, pleading for them to follow God and live in covenant faithfulness, trusting the promises of the covenant and obeying the obligations of the covenant. Moses pleads with Israel for fidelity to God based on:

- a. their recent past experience (4:1-4; cf. Num. 25)
- b. the resulting testimony of greatness that will glorify God (4:5-8)
- c. their distant past experience at Mount Horeb (4:9-24; knowing and following the one true God means fleeing idolatry)
- d. their future experience of grace (4:25-31)
- e. their unique relationship with God, whereby He freed them from slavery, covenanted with them at Sinai (also Horeb), and is now beginning to grant

access to the promised land (4:32-40; cf. Ps. 147:19-20).

6. What does the reference to God as "a great God" (3:24) reveal about Israel's view of God? How is this reflected in the New Testament (Heb. 12:28-29, Matt. 20:28, Phil. 2:5-11)?

The greatness of God in this passage emphasizes His sovereignty and power. This understanding of God's greatness is expanded, especially in the context of worship, where God is described as a consuming fire deserving reverence. Consider the humility of God's Son Jesus, worthy of all glory, honour and praise, taking on the nature of a servant for our salvation.

7. In 4:1, what does the word 'shema' mean? Why is Israel called to follow the statutes and rules (4:5)? How does this obedience set them apart from other nations?

'Shema' means to hear, but it cannot be understood as to hear only. To hear is to obey or to heed as the word heard is authoritative and binding. It is used in the great commandment (6:4-6) and confirmed by the Lord Jesus in the gospels. A 'statute' (chok) is an 'inscribed' decree from God whereas a 'rule' (mishpat) is a judgement determined by reason. The people were to obey Moses' teaching as the condition they may live and take possession of the Promised Land.

Israel's obedience to God's laws is also a testimony to other nations of their wisdom and closeness to God. Today we are called to live holy lives, demonstrating God's character to the world (1 Peter 2:9-12).

8. Why did Moses forbid changing even one word from his words (4:2)? Why must

# STUDY 4 | TRUSTING THE LORD'S PLANS

the Israelites keep the laws Moses taught them (4:5-8)?

Moses ensured the 'Book of the Law' remained uncompromised as the final completion and preservation of his teaching before his death. Moses had received these words from God and so to keep Moses' words was to keep God's words.

Keeping these laws would result in wisdom (chokmah) and understanding (binah) in the sight of the nations. Moses points out that Israel's laws are a gift from God, making them distinct among the nations. This uniqueness prefigures the church's calling to be a people set apart by the gospel (Titus 2:14). The obedience of the Israelites would ensure it goes well with them according to promise and testify to God's wisdom and give Him glory.

9. What was the incident at Baal Peor (4:3, cf. Num. 25)?

The people fell into idolatry under the influence of the prophet Balaam. Some of them were seduced by the Midianite women to worship an ancient and unclean god Baal Peor (possibly Beelzebub) and undertake practices that were contrary to God's word.

10. How does Moses' focus on God's law (4:8) emphasize the relationship between law and righteousness in the Old Testament, and how is this fulfilled in the New Testament (Rom. 8:3-4)?

Moses stresses the righteousness of God's law, which was meant to guide Israel in holiness. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ fulfils the perfect law and enables believers to live by the Spirit with the law written in our hearts with righteousness by grace through

faith in Him.

11. What does Moses' final plea teach us about intercessory prayer (4:23-25)? How is this idea addressed in the New Testament (Heb. 7:25, John 16:23-24)?

Moses' plea to God demonstrates the role of intercession. Today Jesus is the ultimate intercessor, Who is constantly pleading on behalf of believers. He gives us the privilege of prayer in His name (John 16:23-24) so that we too can pray in the role of an intercessor.

### Application:

When faced with disappointment or unmet expectations, how can we trust that God's plan is ultimately for our good, especially when we have asked for a completely different journey or outcome?

### Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for showing us through Moses and Jesus that Your plans are greater than our own. Help us to submit to Your will, trusting that You are working all things together for our good. Strengthen us to be faithful in our calling and help us to pray for and encourage others in their walk with You. In Jesus' name, Amen.



# STUDY 5 | TRUSTING THE LORD'S FAITHFULNESS

## DEUTERONOMY 4:9-42

**Pray:** Heavenly Father, we come before You with hearts ready to learn from Your Word. Open our minds to the depth of Your truth in Deuteronomy. Teach us to remember Your faithfulness and obey Your commands, living as a reflection of Your grace in the world. Guide us in understanding how this passage applies to our lives today. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

### Icebreaker:

Can you share a memory of a time when you were deeply aware of God's work in your life? How has time shaped your journey with Jesus?

### Imagine...

...a family that has passed down a treasured heirloom for generations - a priceless artifact that tells the story of their origins and the struggles they endured to preserve their heritage. Each generation has the responsibility to remember and uphold the legacy. The importance of the heirloom will fade as newer stories eventuate until, eventually, the artifact can be lost, and with it, the story of the family's past.

Moses urges Israel not to forget their spiritual heritage. God's mighty deliverance and His covenantal law. Remembering God's past actions is not merely about history but about shaping our ongoing relationship with Him. If Israel forgets His gracious interventions, they lose their identity as God's people. Today, if we forget God's work in and through Jesus in our lives, we can lose our foundational identity in the gospel.

### The Story so far...

Moses warns Israel not to forget the things their eyes have seen, namely God's mighty acts of deliverance and His giving of law at Sinai. Moses tells Israel that their future depends on their obedience to God's commands, the rejection of idolatry, and their covenant loyalty.

He warns of the dire consequences of idolatry and forgetting God's statute. He also reminds them of God's mercy if they turn back to Him. This passage is foundational to understanding Israel's unique relationship with God, how Jesus redeems their failings as a nation, and how we may live as faithful followers of faithful Jesus today.

1. Why does Moses stress the need to "watch yourselves closely" and not forget what they have seen (4:9)?

God's people are to intentionally remember what God has done for them. This is to include teaching (chinuch) and educating their descendant children in the truth. Moses emphasizes the human tendency to forget God's faithfulness, especially in moments of complacency. He urges the Israelites to actively remember God's past deeds, like their deliverance from Egypt and the giving of the law at Sinai. This remembrance is key to remaining faithful. Ways in which we can remember God's faithfulness to us in Jesus include the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19).

2. What is the significance of passing down God's commands to future generations (4:9-10)? How does this relate to us today?

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Moses wants the parents to ensure their children remember the Sinai experience as a vivid memory with images of people at the foot of the mountain burning with fire 'to the heart of heaven' and remember the Voice of God speaking out of the fire. The passing down of God's law is vital for sustaining Israel's covenantal relationship with God. Parents are charged with teaching their children so the nation remains faithful.

We are to make disciples of Jesus and teach them to observe all His commands (Matt. 28:19-20; 2 Tim. 2:2).

3. How does the recounting of the Sinai experience (4:11-12) emphasise God's transcendence and immanence?

At Sinai, as in the answer to Q2, God revealed Himself through fire, showing His transcendence and holiness. He also spoke directly to the people, revealing His immanence. It is in Jesus Christ today where God's holiness is made manifest, for He dwelt among us (John 1:14) and continues to do so (Heb. 12:18-24).

4. What did the Voice say out of the fire to the people and Moses (4:13-14)?

The Ten Commandments, namely His Covenant, which he later wrote on the stone tablets. God gave Moses His further statutes and rules to be observed in the land of Israel.

5. What does the warning against idolatry (4:15-19 cf. Ezek. 6:1-7) reveal about God's nature and Israel's temptation? How might this impact us today?

Moses warns against making any carved image or idol in the form of any figure, human, or creature, or to engage in any astrology or

'star-gazing'. (In 4:19 there is a provision for these given to the nations. It seems unlikely these practices were prohibited to the extent they included astronomy or sunbathing.) God's essence is beyond representation. Idolatry distorts who God is. Today, we seek to avoid material or spiritual idolatry, indeed anything that takes God's place in our hearts (Col. 3:5). Idolatry remains a key concern for believers, just as it was for Israel.

6. Why was God angry at Moses and what was his punishment (4:21-22)? Why does Moses call God a 'consuming fire' and 'jealous God' (4:23-24)?

Moses' sin at Meribah was when he stuck the rock in frustration (Num. 20:10-13 cf. Deut. 3:23-28) and for this reason Moses was not permitted to enter the land. These images convey God's passionate love for His people (Heb. 12:28-29) and His desire to see all thing consumed by fire that do not meet His standard of holiness (Rev. 20:14).

7. What punishment will come to Israel if they forsake the Lord and what promise did God give to His people for their future days (4:25-29)?

Israel will be punished, exiled from the land, and scattered diaspora to the nations. Even in the times of most profound tribulation, if His people seek the Lord God 'with all their heart and their soul' He would allow them to find Him. This scattering refers to Israel's future exile due to their disobedience, which came to pass during the Babylonian captivity. God's ongoing loving discipline for disobedience (Heb. 12:5-11), reminds us to remain faithful to God's commands.



## STUDY 5 | TRUSTING THE LORD'S FAITHFULNESS

8. What does Moses mean when he says, "The Lord your God is a merciful God" (4:31)? How is God's mercy highlighted in Jesus' time?

Despite the severity of the consequences for idolatry, Moses assures Israel that if they repent, God will show mercy. Mercy is choosing not to give a person or nation what they rightly deserve. God is shown as compassionate and forgiving. In the New Testament, God's mercy is fully revealed in Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice. Repentance and faith lead to forgiveness for our sins (1 John 1:9 cf. Eph 2:4-5).

This precious covenant finds its fulfillment through Jesus Christ, though Whom God promises both forgiveness and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to all who believe (Heb. 8:6-13).

9. What rhetorical question did God want His people to ask (4:32-34) and why did He deliver them from slavery (4:35)?

The rhetorical question is "Which other nation has been rescued from slavery by great signs and wonders in order to hear the Voice of God?"

God delivered the Jewish people from Egypt that they may know the Lord is God and there is no other beside Him. God did this because He loved the patriarchs of Israel and chose them as His own (4:27).

10. Why are the Jews called God's 'chosen people' (4:37-38)? Why does Moses stress that obedience to God's commands brings "life" (4:39-40), and how is this concept reflected in Jesus' teachings?

God is described in this verse as having loved their fathers and chosen their offspring

after them to bring them out of Egypt with His own presence and by His mighty power. God gives assurance for the preservation of the Jewish people. God will NEVER renege or rescind His covenant sworn to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This refers to His covenant with Abraham and not His covenant at Sinai. Israel's status as God's irrevocable covenant people is guaranteed by His promise to the patriarchs. "Am Israel Chai" means "The People of Israel Live!"

Obedience to God's law was linked to life, prosperity, and long days in the land for Israel. Jesus, Who fulfilled the law, similarly teaches that those who follow His commandments will experience abundant life now (John 10:10) and eternal life (John 14:21).

### Application:

In what ways are you tempted to forget God's faithfulness or become distracted by other things in your life? How can you actively remember and prioritize God's commands, especially when the pressures of life draw your attention elsewhere? What do you plead with God for in prayer (James 4:3)? How faithfully are you pleading with those with whom you live and work to know and follow God in covenant fidelity?

### Closing Prayer:

Lord, we thank You for Your faithfulness throughout the ages and for Your warnings to keep us from falling into idolatry and forgetfulness. Help us to remember Your great works, to meditate on Your Word, and to teach the next generation the truths of Your gospel. Strengthen us in our daily walk to live lives that honour You in faithfulness, knowing You are a merciful and loving God. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

# STUDY 6 | TRUSTING THE LORD'S COMMANDMENTS

## DEUTERONOMY 4:43–5:33

**Pray:** Heavenly Father, as we open Your Word, we ask for wisdom and understanding. Help us to see the grandeur and the truth of Your commandments and how You intend them to shape our lives. Teach us, through Your Spirit, how to live in light of Your commands and to reflect You in all we pray, say and do. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

### Icebreaker

What are some rules or principles with which you grew up that helped shape your understanding of right and wrong? How do they compare to the moral guidance in the Ten Commandments?

### Imagine...

...a ship navigating stormy waters. The captain has been given a map and a compass, essential tools to avoid the rocks and make it to the safety of the harbour. Without these essential tools, the ship would be left at the mercy of the waves, tossed around with no clear direction.

The Ten Commandments are like the compass and map that God gave to Israel and, through Jesus, the true North, to all His people. They guide us through the moral and spiritual storms of life, showing us how to respond to Jesus, live in a way that honours His heavenly Father and loves others. These commands are not arbitrary rules but reflect God's character and are the foundation for His covenant relationships with His people calling us to live as His image-bearers.

### The Story so far...

Moses recounts the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, the foundational role they play in Israel's covenant relationship with God, a historical framework for understanding the commandments, and a reminder to Israel of their obligation to obey as part of their covenant with God. The passage culminates in the recitation of the Ten Commandments (5:6-21), setting out God's moral expectations, and concluding with a reaffirmation of Israel's responsibility to follow God's laws as they prepare to enter the land He promised them.

Israel is shown to have a unique relationship with God and a crucial responsibility to live out their calling by hearing and heeding to His law. In the New Testament, Jesus confirms His unique role in fulfilling the perfect law, reaffirms and deepens the moral essence of the commandments, and calls His followers to a life of holiness that fulfills the heart of the law (Matt. 5:17-20) empowered now by His Spirit.

1. Why are the cities of refuge mentioned in 4:43, and how do they relate to the context of the Ten Commandments?

The cities of refuge, mentioned in 4:43, were places where someone who had accidentally killed another person could flee to avoid revenge. There were three cities set apart as sanctuary for those guilty of manslaughter, unintentionally spill their neighbour's blood (cf. Genesis 9:6). This system supports establishing true justice in the land by limiting unjust bloodshed by relatives seeking revenge for the unintentional death of their loved one (Num. 35:9-12, Deut. 19:1-14, Josh. 20:1-9).

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The cities demonstrate God's concern for justice and mercy. The provision of refuge ties into the broader theme of justice in the Ten Commandments, particularly the sixth commandment: "You shall not murder." Jesus embodies this balance of justice and mercy, offering Himself as a refuge for sinners (Heb. 6:18).

2. Why do you think Moses gives a brief historical review of recent events with reference to Torah (Deut. 4:44-49)?

The word Torah means 'law' or 'instruction'. It implies a dynamic of teaching and encompasses 'testimonies' (edot), 'statutes' (chukim), and rules (mishpatim). Moses gives a brief historical review of recent events to give context for His pleading with Israel to trust God's covenant faithfulness and obey His law for their own good (4:44-49).

3. What is the significance of Moses' reminder in 5:1-5 about hearing the law directly from God?

The Sinai covenant was made 'not with our fathers' so it is not the same as the Abrahamic covenant but made rather with the Exodus remnant generation. Moses emphasises that Israel heard God's voice directly at Mount Sinai. Their direct encounter with God reinforces the holiness of His law and Israel's serious responsibility to obey it. It also highlights the personal nature of God's relationship with His people. In Jesus God's Word comes to humanity directly through His Son (John 1:14, Heb. 1:1-2) to today we are called to listen to and obey Him.

4. Why does Moses begin reciting the Ten Commandments in 5:6 with a reminder of God's deliverance from Egypt (cf. Eph. 2:8-10)?

Moses gives Israel a reminder of how God's deliverance from Egypt precedes the giving of the law. This underlines that obedience to law is a response to grace. The commandments are not a means of earning God's favour but a grateful response to His saving work. Today, our obedience to God's word is in response to His grace of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8-10, Titus 2:11-14).

God's intention was to instil in His people a holy fear that would serve as the foundation upon which He could build a long-term loving covenant relationship (Prov. 1:7a). This relationship was to be nurtured through God's chosen and appointed mediator (Deut. 18:15-18, Acts 3:22; 7:7:37).

### Excursis - The Ten Commandments

Read Deuteronomy 5:1-21. The Ten Commandments (in relation to God 5:6-15, in relation to neighbour 5:16-21, cf. Exo. 20:1-17) are given context here to show how God's obligations are part of His covenant (5:1-21). These obligations, however, are only dead works of the flesh for us today if not fuelled by faith (Rom. 14:23). The Lord Jesus spoke of these very same obligations with His followers with the same goal as Moses: calling people to covenant fidelity and instructing them in how to do that in relationship with a holy God (Matt. 5:17-48).

5. What is the importance of the first commandment (5:7), "You shall have no other gods before me"? How does this apply to us today?

The first commandment sets the foundation for Israel's exclusive relationship with God, prohibiting idolatry and consequent immorality. This commandment is about fidelity to God. Jesus reaffirms this by declaring the

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greatest commandment is: to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind (Matt. 22:37). Anything in God's place in our lives becomes an idol. We are called to forsake all idols (1 John 5:21).

6. How might the third commandment, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain" (5:11) reach beyond speech to lifestyle?

Taking God's name in vain is not simply about dishonouring His name verbally but extends to all behaviour dishonoring God or misrepresenting His character. Today we are called to live lives that reflect God's holiness (1 Pet. 1:15-16). As bearers of Christ's name, we are called to honour Him in all we say AND do (Col. 3:17).

7. Why is the Sabbath command (5:12-15) linked to both creation and the deliverance from Egypt? How does Sabbath rest apply to us now?

The Sabbath command connects Israel to creation, on which God rested on the seventh day, and redemption, recalling their rest from slavery in Egypt. Sabbath rest is fully and finally met in Jesus. He alone offers rest for our souls (Matt. 11:28-30, Heb. 4:9-10). The Sabbath points to both physical and spiritual rest found in Jesus forever (Rev. 21).

8. How may the command to honour parents (5:16) reflect Israel's and our broader social responsibilities?

Parents are provided for children by God to lovingly disciple and discipline them in all wisdom. Honouring parents is foundational for family and social stability in Israel. It is tied to the promise of long life and prosperity in the land and reaffirmed (Eph. 6:1-3) with

an eternal perspective. More broadly, it may extend to respecting other elders in the church community and political authority (Rom. 13:7).

9. What do commands against murder, adultery, theft, and bearing false witness (5:17-20) reveal about God's concern for relationships?

These commands protect the integrity of God-given gifts of life, marriage, property, and truth consistent with His character and desire for justice and righteousness in the community. God's purpose is to establish an eternal family in which His children treat one another with dignity and respect. Jesus fulfils, exemplifies and expands these commands, teaching that righteousness outward obedience pleasing to God comes from the heart not for showiness (Matt. 5:21-28).

10. What is the deeper meaning behind the command, "You shall not covet" (5:21)? How may this apply for Christian discipleship?

The command against coveting addresses the inner desire that dances with temptation and concedes leading to sinful actions. Coveting reveals discontentment in the heart and lack of trust in God's provision and seeks to take from others what God has given. Followers of Jesus are called to find contentment in Him and flee greed which can enslave the heart (Phil. 4:11-13, 1 Tim. 6:6-10).

### Application

How do you see the relevance of the Ten Commandments in your daily life? In what ways are you challenged to live more faithfully in response to God's grace and covenant with you through Christ? Which one of the Ten is the most difficult for you?

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## STUDY 6 | TRUSTING THE LORD'S COMMANDMENTS

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Talk to one another and Jesus about it in prayer, following Him and His example in pursuing God's obligations, trusting Him and bringing Him glory in every way at all times.

### **Closing Prayer:**

Lord, we thank You for Your Word and the commands You have given us. Help us to live in obedience to Your law, not as a means of earning Your favour, but in thankful response to Your grace in our lives. May we reflect Your character in our relationships, our work, and our worship. Guide us by Your Spirit to live in a way that honours You, in Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

# STUDY 7 | TRUSTING THE LORD'S LOVE

## DEUTERONOMY 6:1–7:11

**Pray:** Gracious God and our Loving Heavenly Father. We come before You, seeking to understand Your Word and Your love more deeply. Open our hearts to hear the command to love You with all that we are and to live in faithful obedience. May we be transformed by Your grace and led by Your Spirit. Teach us what it means to honour You as our Lord, that we may love you with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### Icebreaker:

What is something you learned by heart as a child, perhaps a song, a prayer, or a lesson from your parents, that still shapes you today?

### Imagine...

...a wedding ceremony where the couple exchanges vows. They commit to love, to honour, and to be faithful to one another, not just in words, but in actions for the rest of their lives. These vows become the foundation for their relationship. God similarly calls Israel to a special covenantal love relationship with Him, where love for God is not only expressed in devotion but in the obedience of their everyday lives.

This covenant relationship between Israel and God is rooted in God's grace. The commands that follow, especially the Shema (Deut. 6:4-5), are a call to a holistic love for God that shapes all aspects of life.

Jesus reaffirms the centrality of this love when He teaches how the greatest commandment is to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:30-31 cf. Matt. 22, Luke 10). May we be shaped by His love this final Bible study. Only by His grace!

### The Story so far...

God's call is for Israel to love Him with undivided loyalty. The Shema ("Listen," 6:4) and Vahavta ("and You shall love," 6:5-9) continue to call God's people to exclusive covenant fidelity and steadfast love (6:10-15). Shema is His call to Listen, where God commands Israel to love Him with all their heart, soul, and "muchness".

Moses emphasises the importance of teaching this love to future generations of Israel and warns against the dangers of forgetting their God amidst prosperity. Chapter 7 transitions into God's promise to drive out the nations before Israel and outlines Israel's obligation to remain faithful to God, rejecting idolatry and immorality, rather embracing His covenant commands.

In the New Testament these themes echo in fulfillment, particularly through Jesus' teachings on love and obedience. He longs for His followers to love God in enriching fullness and keeping His commands as evidence of this love (John 14:15, 1 John 5:3).

1. What is the significance of Moses' introduction in 6:1-3, where he connects obedience to the commandments with possessing the land?

Moses highlights the connection between obedience and blessing. By keeping God's commands, Israel would flourish in the Promised Land because, put simply, God does know best. The covenantal principle that God's blessings follow faithfulness is in evidence. Jesus likewise teaches how obedience leads to fruitfulness (John 15:5-10) for eternal life in God's kingdom.



## STUDY 7 | TRUSTING THE LORD'S LOVE

2. Why is the proposition in 6:4, "The LORD our God, the LORD is one," central to Israel's faith? How does it relate to Christian theology?

The Shema declares God's absolute oneness and uniqueness. This statement forms the foundation for our trinitarian, monotheistic faith.

For Israel, the Shema affirmed God's exclusive right to their worship. In Christian theology, this oneness is held in perfect tension with the revealed triune nature of God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). We worship the one true God and reject idolatry in all its forms.

3. What does it mean to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength" (6:5)? How does Jesus expand this teaching?

Loving God with all heart, [mind,] soul, and strength means loving Him with the entirety of one's being - emotionally, [mentally,] spiritually, and physically. This love is not sentimental but transformative, leading to exclusive devotion and obedience. Jesus reinforces this command as the greatest commandment and expands it to include loving others as ourselves (Matt. 22:37-40) in fulfilment of the Ten Commandments and clearly stating that love for God must be reflected in how we love others.

4. Why must God's commandments be taught to the next generation (6:6-9)?

Teaching future generations ensures that Israel knows God, His character, His testimony, and His faithfulness. It spurs them on to remain faithful to God and avoid spiritual decline. God's law is to permeate

daily life, from family discussions to public witness.

For followers of Jesus, the apostle Paul encourages parents to bring up their children "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4), highlighting the ongoing priority for passing on faith.

5. What warning does Moses give in 6:10-12 about forgetting God in times of prosperity? How may his warning impact us today?

Moses warns how material prosperity can lead to spiritual complacency and forgetfulness toward God. When life is comfortable, it is easy to rely on material wealth instead of God's provision.

Jesus similarly warns about the deceitfulness of riches (Matt. 6:19-21, Luke 12:15) and how we too must guard against placing our functional security in worldly means for success rather than in God.

6. How does the command to fear the LORD and serve Him only (6:13) connect to Jesus' response to Satan during His temptation in the wilderness?

In response to Satan's temptation to worship him, Jesus quotes this verse in Deuteronomy 6:13 (Matt. 4:10) to affirm only God Himself is worthy of worship and service, teaching us to resist any temptation to give ultimate allegiance to anyone or anything other than God.



## STUDY 7 | TRUSTING THE LORD'S LOVE

7. Why is Israel warned against testing God (6:16), and how does Jesus apply this teaching during His temptation?

Testing God implies doubting His provision or presence and demands He prove Himself. Israel tested God at Massah by questioning whether He was with them. Jesus also quotes this passage when Satan tempts Him to take a "leap of faith" at the temple [or in a vision], and "trust" God to save Him from harm (Matt. 4:7). Jesus' followers are called to faith in God without demanding signs or testing His patience.

8. What is the connection between obeying God's commands and Israel's witness to the nations (6:24-25)?

Israel's obedience to God was their response to His grace and also designed to demonstrate His wisdom and righteousness to the nations. Living in covenant faithfulness would enable Israel to fulfil their vocation and serve as a light to others (Deut. 4:6). As followers of Jesus, we are called to live in obedience Him so that we may be like Him, "Light of the World," being "the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14-16), reflecting His glory in what we pray, say and do.

9. What does it mean that Israel is "a holy people" chosen by God (7:6). How is this concept applied to Jesus' people today?

Israel is described as God's special possession, chosen not because of their merit but because of His love and faithfulness. Israel belongs to God, not because of anything in Israel, but because of God's covenant faithfulness and love (7:6-8) as expressed to the patriarchs (26:18-19). Israel is warned about idolatry and intermarriage and how these practices would

inevitably lead Israel astray into false worship, and were unacceptable (7:1-5 cf. 20:16-18).

God's character of faithfulness and love is now for all people who are covenanted with God through His chosen and appointed mediator, Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5). This echoes Peter's description of Jesus' church as "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (Peter 2:9). Just as Israel was set apart for God's purposes, we too are now called to be "set apart" for Jesus, living in joyful holiness and obedience.

10. Why does God command Israel to completely destroy the nations in 7:1-2? How may this relate to teaching on spiritual warfare now?

The command to destroy the nations was about preventing Israel from being led into idolatry and immorality unfitting for God's people. Idolatry and intermarriage would inevitably lead Israel astray (see the answer to Q9). Whilst this is still a challenge for followers of Jesus today, the arena has shifted from physical warfare to spiritual warfare. We are called to put to death the remnant sinful nature and resist spiritual forces of evil (Eph. 6:10-18, Col. 3:5). The principle of love for followers of Jesus is to remove anything leading us or others away from faithful worship and obedience to God, indeed, to love Him is to flee and keep from idols (1 Cor. 10:14, 1 John 5:21).

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## STUDY 7 | TRUSTING THE LORD'S LOVE

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**Application:**

In what areas of your life do you need to deepen your love for God and express that love through greater obedience to His Word? How can you ensure your love for God shapes your actions, thoughts, and relationships? God's call to know Him personally and obey Him faithfully is the consistent appeal throughout the ages. How is God leading you to more faithfully hear and heed this call? How is God leading you to more faithfully proclaim His love and live His love out?

**Closing Prayer:**

Lord, we thank You for Your commands and the call to love You with all our heart, soul, and strength and love our neighbour. Help us to live out this love in every aspect of our lives. Strengthen our commitment to You and lead us to obey You in everything we do. May we be faithful witnesses of Your love and truth in the world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

# RESOURCES

## These are the commentaries used (and recommended\*) in preparing these studies:

Arnold, B.T. The Book of Deuteronomy: Chapters 1-11 (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament). Eerdmans: MI (2022).

\*Athas, G. Deuteronomy: One Nation under God (Reading the Bible Today). Anglican Youthworks: Sydney (2016).

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Craigie, P. C. The Book of Deuteronomy (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament). Eerdmans: MI (1976).

Driver, S.R. et al. Deuteronomy (The International Critical Commentary, Fifth Edition). T&T Clark: Edinburgh (1960).

Grisanti, M.A. Deuteronomy (The Expositors Bible Commentary, Revised Edition). Zondervan: MI (2012).

\*Miller, P.D. Deuteronomy: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Second Edition). John Knox Press: KY (2012)

Sacks, J. Covenant & Conversation: A Weekly Reading of the Jewish Bible. Maggid Books: CT (2019).

\*Wright, C.J.H. Deuteronomy (Understanding the Bible Commentary Series, Second Edition) Baker Books: MI (2012).

## These are the online resources used in developing these studies:

[BibleProject.com](https://www.bibleproject.com)

[Hebrew4Christians.com](https://www.hebrew4christians.com)

[ParashahProject.com](https://www.parashahproject.com)

[Wikipedia.com](https://www.wikipedia.com)

[MacGPT.com](https://www.macgpt.com)

## These are the resources used as translation guides:

[HebrewGreekBible.online](https://www.hebrewgreekbible.online)

[BibleHub.com](https://www.biblehub.com)

[BibleGateway.com](https://www.biblegateway.com)



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