

DEUTERONOMY
RULES FOR LIFE



SERMON STUDY GUIDE
FALL 2023



These are the words Moses spoke to all Israel...
-Deuteronomy 1:1

“I have set before you life and death,
the blessing and the curse.
So choose life in order that you may live,
you and your descendants,
by loving the Lord your God,
by obeying His voice, and
by holding fast to Him;
for this is your life and the length of your days.
-Deuteronomy 30:19-20

Growing in grace is our true life's work.
-J.I. Packer

At Ebenezer Baptist Church we believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ changes everything. The gospel comes to us as a gift of grace which means there is nothing, we can do to earn forgiveness and new life in Christ.

As forgiven people, what should our lives look like now? This fall we will be studying how the gospel changes us by studying the book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy literally means “second law”. It is called this because a large part of this book is Moses repeating things that he has already taught the nation of Israel.

Deuteronomy is a collection of 3 sermons and a song from Moses. It is delivered just before Israel will take the promised land. 400 years of Egyptian enslavement followed by 40 years of wilderness wanderings are about to come to an end. God’s long-awaited promise of new life in a new land awaits. But before entering, Moses wanted to ensure that the Jewish nation would not forget all that Yahweh had done for them and taught them. The result are these 3 sermons and a song.

As we study this book, we will also begin to see how Deuteronomy is also pointing towards another law giver, prophet and leader who has the power to lead us to the true promised land. There are glimmers and pointers towards Jesus throughout the book.

Please use this study guide to follow along as we study this fascinating book together.

DEUTERONOMY FAST FACTS

AUTHOR – MOSES

THEMES

- Monotheism – there is only one God: Yahweh
- Covenant
- Love of God
- Sovereignty of God
- Sanctuary worship
- Justice
- Blessings for obedience / curses for disobedience
- Law of God

PURPOSE

The book of Deuteronomy was written to guide the life and conduct of Israel after they have entered the Promised Land. Yahweh is their God, and he has given them laws to live under.

INTRODUCTION

Deuteronomy is the 5th book of the Bible. It is the final book of what is known as the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch simply refers to Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. These are also known as “the books of Moses”.

The Pentateuch is found in all three of the holy books of the 3 major monotheistic religions. It is in the Muslim Quran, the Jewish Torah and the Christian Bible. These books are foundational books for most people living in the world.

This is the most important book in the Old Testament in terms of giving us a clear idea of the character of God and what he desires from his creation. J. Gordon McConville calls it, “one of the great theological documents of the Bible, or of any time.”

Old Testament scholar Dr. Bruce Waltke boldly states that “Deuteronomy has had greater consequences for human history than any other single book”. For the first time in human history, universal education and health care and a welfare system are provided.

Jesus quotes Deuteronomy more than any other book of the Bible. Study and meditation of Deuteronomy shaped Jesus’ worldview. Jesus used Deuteronomy when battling Satan in the wilderness. When asked what the greatest commandment is, Jesus quotes Deuteronomy.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

This guide was written to correspond with the 2023 fall series of sermons at Ebenezer Baptist Church. It can be used individually or in a small group study. Families or married couples could use it together. You will get the most benefit in doing it with others in community.

The guide presents the passage of that week’s sermon and a few questions and a place for sermon notes. You will find it helpful to pray before and after your time of study, simply asking God to open your heart and mind to the truth that is in his word for you that day.

SEPTEMBER 10
BREAK CAMP AND GO
DEUTERONOMY 1:1-8

These opening verses very quickly and succinctly summarize what is going to happen in this book:

“these are the words Moses spoke to all Israel in the wilderness” – v.1

“Moses proclaimed to the Israelites all that the Lord had commanded him concerning them” – v.3

“Moses began to expound this law” – v.5

A lot of important points are being made here. First, it is clear that the speaker is Moses. Moses has emerged as one of the most important leaders in human history. After a reluctant agreement to confront Pharaoh, he leads Israel out from captivity. He both performs and observes supernatural miracles of deliverance. And he leads Israel through a circuitous route through the wilderness.

He shows courage and frustration at various points of the journey. But now, things are winding down and he gives one final charge to this nation – he speaks to Israel in the wilderness.

Secondly, Moses makes it clear that what he will be speaking are not his ideas, opinions or arguments that he has produced after much study and reflection. He is speaking the Lord’s commands – these are non negotiable edicts. These are parameters and rules for living life according to the order of Yahweh. The source of all the laws and commands come from God himself. These are divine edicts, not human speculation.

Finally, Moses expounds the law. Everything Moses is about to say has been said before – but the laws have not been fully expounded or explained. This is what good preaching is: it is an exposition, a display, a picture of what the Bible says.

So – Moses is teaching the laws of God to Israel in the wilderness.

Questions

1. How would you rate your study of God's Word on a scale of 1-10.
2. If you scored low, ask a friend to keep you accountable in reading your Bible everyday this fall.
3. In v.6-7, God gives this awesome command to Israel. He tells them they have been camped on the mountain long enough. The time has come to enter the land he has promised them.
 - We are all at various stages of life. Some of us are in times of transition and need to obey God's commands to "break camp and advance". Pray and ask God if there are areas in your life where you need to make changes in order to serve him better.
 - Share with a friend where you think God might be leading you to change.
4. God has greatly blessed Ebenezer Baptist Church. It can be easy to grow complacent and rest. But that is not a biblical posture. Christianity is a forward looking religion. There is always more ground to take, more ministries to birth and more people to love and serve. Pray in your family or small group about where you feel areas of need are in your

community and in the Saskatoon area. Start to pray about how God might be calling you to meet those needs.

NOTES

SEPTEMBER 17

DEUTERONOMY 1:1-7, 9-18, 30-39, 2:7

GRACE ON THE JOURNEY

These are portions of the opening remarks Moses is giving Israel. These are explicit and direct descriptions of God's grace towards Israel. God's grace is shown by:

- God speaks to Israel – God loves us enough to communicate with us
- Provision for human organization – Moses creates a system of administration to care for the needs of the nation
- Protection
- Intimate care – God is described as a parent carrying a child
- God's will overrides human sin and rebellion – no one can stand in the way of God's plans
- God blesses our work – our prosperity and success can be traced directly back to God's grace

And on and on.

1. Read the passages and note examples of God's care.
2. Write down as many ways you can think of that God has taken care of you.
3. Reflecting on God's care leads us to be grateful. Numerous studies have found that expressing gratitude to others can have positive effects on our emotional health as well as on interpersonal and romantic relationships and even physical health.
 - Every day this week before you go to bed, reflect on 1 or 2 specific things you were grateful for that day.
 - See if this practice effects your mood. Share your findings with a friend.

NOTES

SEPTEMBER 24
JUSTICE AND JUSTICE ALONE
10:12-22/ 16:18-20
MICAH 6:8
JAMES 1:27

Throughout Deuteronomy, God is described in a variety of ways. In Deuteronomy 10, God is described as:

- Creator, sustainer of the entire created order
- Loving
- Sovereign
- Exclusive
- Mighty
- Awesome
- Fair
- Pure
- Defender
- Provider

These passages also reveal that God is a God of justice – 10:17 – he shows no partiality.

In the past few years, justice has emerged to the forefront of our culture. From the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to various social groups expressing their need and desire for justice and equity.

But as Christians how are we to respond? If we are called to imitate God, then that means we also are called into this work of justice – but this needs to be based on the character of God and the Word of God, not in the changing definitions of culture.

1. What are we asked to do in v.12? Do you do this – discuss your challenges in doing what God asks here.
2. Read v.18-19.
 - a. Who are the fatherless, widow and foreigner today?
 - b. What is God's relationship with these groups?
3. Have you ever considered that working for justice is part of what it means in following Jesus? Why or why not?

Close in prayer, meditating on the verses in this passage that discuss the character of God.

Ask God to reveal to you what he wants you to know about his concern for the poor and oppressed.

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OCTOBER 1

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

5:1-22

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

You shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make for yourself an image and bow down to it or worship it

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God

Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy

Honor your father and your mother

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

You shall not covet

1. What are the three things Moses tells Israel to do in v.1?
2. Thank God that he brought you out of the slavery of sin and into new life through Jesus.
3. Slowly read through each commandment and ask yourself if this is an issue in your life.
4. Murder, adultery, theft and coveting all begin in our hearts as seeds of anger, lust and envy.
 - a. Examine your heart and see at what levels anger, lust and envy are active in your heart. (We all wrestle with these – the issue is whether they are controlling us or we are submitting them to God to forgive and reform us)

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OCTOBER 8 – THANKSGIVING SERVICE

During this weekend of family and food, take some time alone to meditate on the words of this hymn. Here is a link to a beautiful version by artist Sara Groves:

<https://open.spotify.com/track/0SHqEOAX5JeSl26nboNSkz?si=d20ba25c984c4dce>

PRAISE TO THE LORD

Songwriters: Dp, John Mark Nelson, Sara Groves

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation
O my soul praise Him for He is your help and salvation
All you who hear, now to His temple draw near
Sing now in glad adoration

Praise to the Lord who has fearfully, wonderfully made you
Who from the heavens the streams of His mercy does send you
Ponder anew what the Almighty can do
Who with His love does befriend you

Ponder anew
The wings of His mercy will shade you
Ponder anew
His Spirit uplifts and sustains you, oh

Praise to the Lord, oh, let all that is in me adore Him
All that has life and breath, come now with praises before Him
Let the Amen sound from His people again
Gladly forever adore Him
Let the Amen sound from His people again
Amen

OCTOBER 15 – INSTALLATION SERVICE FOR LEAD PASTORS CHET AND SANTOSH

This sermon is a step out of our series.

But this is a good week to contemplate and ponder leadership.

Passages on leadership in the Bible:

Deuteronomy 1:9-14

1 Timothy 3:1-12

1 Peter 5:1-4

Titus 5:1-9

Pray for the pastors of Ebenezer this week:

Chet Ingram – Lead, Life Groups

Santosh Ninan – Lead, Teaching

Bryan Conrad – Seniors and Missions

Cal Fong – Equipping, Teaching

Wes Hodgson – College and Career, Teaching

Grace Sawatzky – Life Groups, Welcome Ministries

Ashlyn Feenstra - Children

Will Dmytrow - Youth

Shadi Saleh – Arabic Church

Ramesh Tamang – Nepalese Church

Spencer Van Der Walt – House for All Nations

Hyoungwon Lee – Vision Korean Church

Prayer Points

- Spiritual protection for their families
- The ability to hear clearly how God is leading
- Passion and zeal in serving God
- Humility in serving others

- Joy in the midst of ministry
- Deep love for God and his church

See Appendix A for an article Pastor Santosh wrote on the role of a pastor.

NOTES

OCTOBER 22

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING

6:4-9

In Matthew 22, Jesus is asked an incredible question: What is the GREATEST commandment in the law? This seeker wanted Jesus to sift through the 613 laws in the Torah and land on just one. Jesus answers him by quoting Deuteronomy 6:5. This is known as the Shema – the most important doctrine in Judaism. The Shema is repeated twice daily by Orthodox Jews. It is a powerful and beautiful prayer that shows the centrality of God in faith.

1. Why are we told to love God with heart, soul, and strength? What do these three things represent in our lives?
2. What are practical ways you can love God?
3. How can we keep the commands of God “in our hearts?”
4. V.7-9 talk about how these laws should be a comprehensive part of our lives. We are to talk about them while sitting, walking, and lying down. Yet, for many of us our spiritual lives are relegated to an hour and a half on Sunday mornings and then brief snippets during the week.
 - a. What are 2 practical things you can do that would include God in during your day?
 - i. Examples: reading a devotional on the youversion Bible app during lunch or listening to worship music on your commute.

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OCTOBER 29
WALKING THROUGH TROUBLE
8:1-9

This is an interesting passage that looks back on Israel's journey in the wilderness. The passage says that God humbled and tested Israel. It then looks forward to life in the promised land.

1. Israel had been led by God for 40 years. Reflect on your life and consider how God has led you. It might be helpful to break your life up in 5 or 10 year segments and consider how God was leading you during those years – what lessons he was teaching you and what challenges you walked through.
2. How has God humbled you in your life? What has that taught you or changed you?
3. It's hard to think of God disciplining us. What is the purpose of discipline? What is God's purpose in disciplining us?
4. You might be in a place of struggle or challenge today. Take time to praise God for his past care for you, decide to choose that God is using your current struggle for your good and His glory. And then ask God to reveal his heart of love for you in the midst of your struggle.

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NOVEMBER 5
TITHING
10:10-18 / 14:22-28

Jesus famously said it is hard for rich people to get into the Kingdom of Heaven, comparing it to a camel going through the eye of a needle. He also said the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil and warned of the deceitfulness of riches.

How do we handle money? How do we handle wealth? This passage is so incredibly appropriate to the church in North America. While poverty and homelessness are a part of the reality of our society, many of us live in relative comfort.

Tithing (giving 10% of our income) should be a regular part of our Christian lives, as much as worship, prayer, and Bible study. Tithing is part of the spiritual discipline of giving. It humbles us and reminds us that all we have comes from God and he asks us to partner with him by giving back a portion of what he has given us.

1. Do you tithe? Why or why not?
2. Take time to thank God for all the things he has blessed you with including:
 - a. The food you ate today
 - b. The clothes you are wearing
 - c. The house or apartment you live in
3. Take time to pray and consider how you might start tithing or increasing your tithe.

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NOVEMBER 12

CURSES AND BLESSINGS OF FOLLOWING GOD

27-28

These chapters display in stark contrast that our decisions have consequences. It's interesting that as they cross the Jordan, 6 tribes will bless the people and 6 tribes will pronounce curses on the people.

It's a graphic way of teaching Israel that if they align themselves with God they will be blessed, but if they reject God, they will experience curses.

Life does not align itself so neatly. We know godly people who contract stage 4 cancer, and we also see evil people prospering. So, what are we to make with the descriptions in these chapters and the lived reality we see around us?

We must believe that alignment with God leads to blessing and rejection of God leads to punishment. This is simply true. Our problems arise with how we define blessing and punishment. For most of us we define blessing in terms of material comfort or positive life circumstances – but this kind of belief system quickly leads to disillusionment and bitterness when we encounter hardship.

A proper perspective is to look beyond circumstances and look at our hearts – how is God forming us through what we are enduring. Pastor Tim Keller who died of pancreatic cancer this year commented how having cancer caused him to enjoy life more because it made every moment with his wife and children precious. This does not make cancer good, but it is an amazing way that God can use something that is bad to bring about a good outcome.

1. Do you feel blessed by God? How?
2. How do you view negative circumstances in your life?
3. Spend time in prayer meditating on 3 things you are grateful for.
4. Spend time in prayer bringing something painful to God and ask him to walk you through this pain. (You might want to share this with a trusted friend or a Christian counselor or therapist).

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NOVEMBER 19
CHOOSE LIFE
30:11-20

V. 19 is often used by pro-life activists as they advocate for an ethic of life. The way Moses presents it, it is a command, and it is a choice. And it is very practical – it is “not difficult” or “beyond our reach”.

1. How is this command “very near to us”? How is it in our mouth and heart?
2. What are the choices set before us?
3. How do we make these choices in our lives? Do we make them once or are they perpetual choices? Explain.
4. Choosing life is deeper than a view on abortion. How are other ways Christians can be pro-life?
5. Brainstorm with your life group or a group of friends some practical thing you can do for someone or a community organization that would be sharing “life” with them.
 - a. Example – volunteering at House For All Nations or serving your local public school

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NOVEMBER 26
SUMMARY
31-34

We come to the end of this amazing book. Moses has reflected, commanded, and reminisced with Israel. He is soon going to die, never setting foot in the promised land. The leadership mantle will go to Joshua who will continue the story of Israel.

1. What are 1 or 2 things that God spoke to you through this study and sermon series?
2. What do you think Moses was feeling in ch. 34 as he sees the Promised Land?
3. This chapter can cause us to reflect on our own legacies. Did we steward our lives well? You might want to take some time in the coming weeks to take some time to reflect on our life – where has God led you? Where is God leading you. You might want to talk with a trusted friend about what you think God is saying to you.
4. Close in prayer, thanking God for his guidance in your life.

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APPENDIX A

PRIMARY TASK OF THE PASTOR

My primary task as a pastor is to be a shepherd of the flock that is under my care. (1 Peter 5:1). The act of shepherding includes caring for, feeding, protecting, and leading.

I care for the flock by preaching, teaching, leading and providing pastoral care.

Preaching is the action of communicating God's truth from the Bible in the power of and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. My preaching is almost entirely expository. Expository preaching is simply explaining what the biblical text says. I am most comfortable preaching through entire books of the Bible. I have preached through Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, 1 Peter, Philippians and portions of Psalms and Proverbs, along with numerous single passage sermons.

Teaching is different from preaching in that it is more about knowledge transfer, while preaching is geared towards life change because of what is in the text. I have taught on the background and context of New Testament, evangelism classes and apologetics courses.

Leading a church is another aspect of this primary calling of shepherding. Leadership is all about movement. Leading a church is a slow process – moving a barge, rather than a jet sea. It requires patience, discernment, and sensitivity. After a season of prayer, reflection and study the pastor can begin to propose needed changes in structure or direction. In the past I have led churches to increase their small group ministry, develop an outreach ministry,

augment an adult education program, and increase local engagement.

Pastoral care is the action of visiting, expressing concern and providing resources for congregants. I have done this through visiting people in hospital, in their offices, homes and at times of crisis. The presence of the pastor is often a strong enough expression of care than the actual words or scripture passages that are shared. The physical visit of the pastor tells the congregant that the pastor could be anywhere else, doing anything else – but instead has chosen to be here with them now, thereby expressing deep love and concern for the congregant. It is also an expression of solidarity – the individual is not alone – the pastor (and by extension the rest of the congregation) is with the person in crisis.

The Deeper Task

The above items are external or visible aspects of pastoral leadership. The more important task of the pastor/leader is their inner life.

The pastor is called to be an example in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity (1 Timothy 4:12). Being an example in these areas can only come about from a heart that is daily being renewed by the gospel, engaging with God in prayer, meditation, Bible study and repentance.

A very sobering verse is 1 Timothy 4:16 – “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.” The pastor is to **watch** their life – are the fruits of the Spirit in evidence and growing? Is the old nature dying and exerting less power?

Perseverance in being circumspect around life and doctrine will save the pastor AND the congregation! Analyzing that, shows

what a weighty task is placed upon the pastor. A pastor who falls morally or is no longer preaching biblical truth places not just themselves, but their church in danger!

The role of the pastor is to shepherd the flock in their care through preaching, teaching, pastoral care and leading out of a heart and mind that is being perpetually renewed by the gospel.

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