

Week 11

March 12 - March 18

Deuteronomy 1-25

First, you are doing great in your reading! Keep up the good work and you will be rewarded. Romans 10:17 reminds us that our faith will be strengthened as we read and hear God's Word.

During this week you will read over two thirds of Deuteronomy. Some of it will be repetitive to portions of Exodus and Leviticus. This is where the name for the book comes from. In Greek deutero means second, and nomos means law, therefore the name Deuteronomy means second law or second giving of the law.

And our theme for this week is New Beginnings, for as Moses reiterates the law, Israel is on the verge of a grand new beginning in the Promised Land.

March 12th

Deuteronomy 1:1-3:20. "Remembering the Past"

The first three chapters of Deuteronomy recap the last forty years of wilderness wanderings. The whole book is Moses' final message to Israel and, in this opening section, his purpose is to remind them of how they got to this point.

Remembering our past is an important part of moving forward into the future. For Israel, remembering what God had done was essential. When Israel forgot the mighty deeds God had done in rescuing them out of Egypt, His provision in the wilderness, and His placement of them in the Promised Land; then Israel would stray from their covenant relationship with Him.

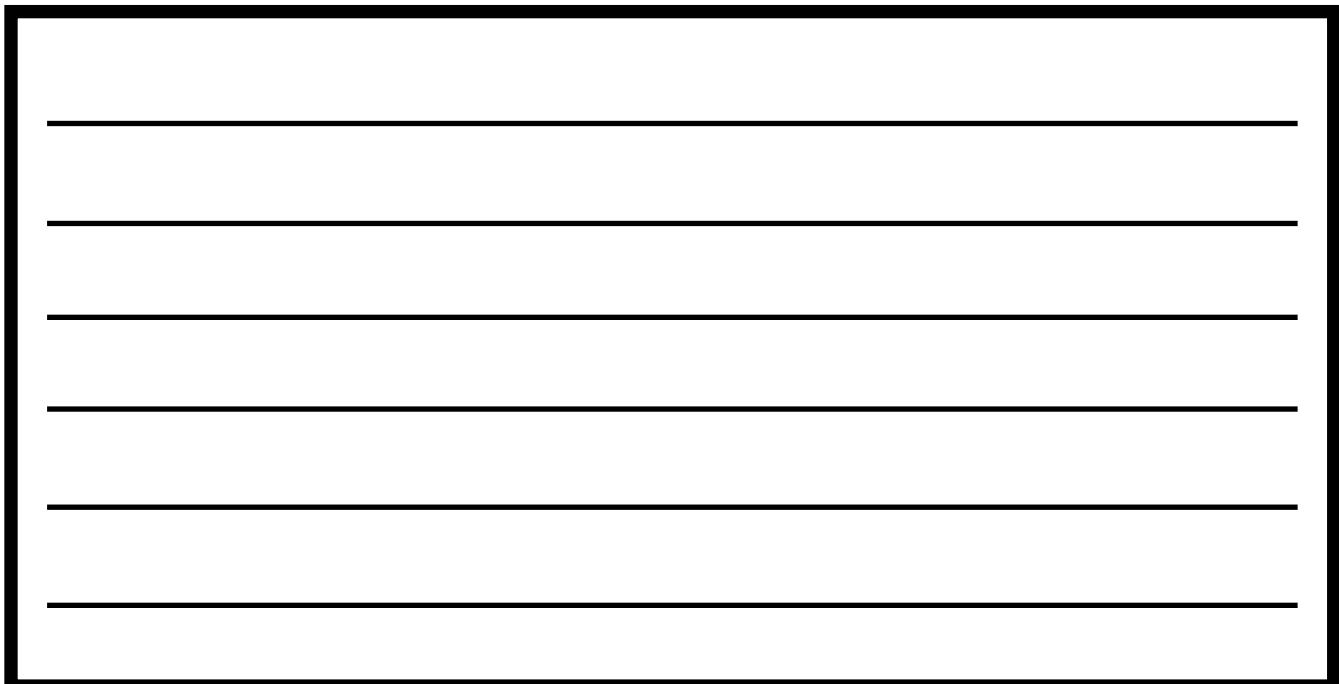
Remembering is important for us too. Christians can forget how lost in sin we were before receiving Christ. This forgetfulness is dangerous because it can develop within us a sense of entitlement to God's grace. Then we begin to see ourselves as righteous when, without the work of Christ, our righteousness is like filthy rags. Rather, if we can remember how sinful we truly are, then we will see God's grace as the unmerited favor that it is.

March 13th

Deuteronomy 3:21-5:33. "Whom He Loves He Disciplines"

Deuteronomy 4:26-31 foreshadows the future collapse of Israel and subsequent captivity in Babylon. God's covenant faithfulness toward Israel is so great that He does not abandon them even when they are in violation of the covenant. What a comfort it is to know that God does not abandon those whom He loves. And yet even though He does not abandon, He does discipline those whom He loves. So, what does discipline from the Lord look like?

I recognize that I have allowed my body to get out of shape. So, in response, I have begun to again discipline myself to train my body through exercise at the gym. This is what James speaks of when he says that "When our faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything" (James 1:3-4). God's discipline of us is through various trials in order to build up our spiritual endurance or our faith and trust in Him. Will you submit to God's discipline and allow it to accomplish a beautiful work in your life? - David Curtis



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March 14th

Deuteronomy 6-9. "Living by God's Grace"

God's grace is a wonderful and beautiful gift. Deuteronomy 9:4-6 is a picture for us of God's gracious gift. The Promised Land for Israel was God's blessed gift to His chosen people. And it is for us a foreshadowing of our future in Heaven. Israel in the Promised Land was God's chosen people living in a 'perfect' land, with God Himself dwelling among them in the tabernacle.

What we notice in Deuteronomy 9:4-6 is that God didn't place Israel in this land because they earned it, but rather God was carrying out His promise to His chosen people.

God's grace works in the same way for us. We have not earned the right to receive God's grace. It is God's choice to extend grace to those who come to Him in faith.

We experience a new beginning when we come to faith in Jesus Christ. It is a life that is begun through God's grace, it is lived in God's grace and it is culminated by God's grace. You may acknowledge that you received new life through God's grace, but are you living by God's grace, or are you now trying to earn His grace through works and following manmade rules?

March 15th

Deuteronomy 10-12. "Place of Worship"

Why was God so concerned with having a centralized location for worship? I think that there were two main reasons for this. First, the sacrificial system foreshadowed the coming sacrifice of Christ and having the sacrifices performed in a central location made it less likely for changes or variations to take place which would cause it to lose this great meaning.

Second, was the role of community. Having a centralized place for worship brought an aspect of community that would be lost if everyone was able to worship at their own home.

Community is important for us as well. While Jesus declared that there is no longer one and only one place for worship (John 4:21), the need and value of worship in community is still present (Hebrews 10:25). Without community we risk isolation and discouragement in our Christian lives. We also miss out on the biblical instruction and correction that comes from our elders and the accountability that is present in community. Are you valuing the community of faith and its role in your life?

March 16th

Deuteronomy 13:1-16:17. "Canceling of Debts"

Every seven years Israel was to have a fresh start or a new beginning financially. It was not a total reversal of someone's financial outlook, but it was an opportunity for them to have a fresh start. This was accomplished in two ways: the first was the canceling of financial debts that a fellow Israelite had incurred. The second was granting of freedom to anyone who had willingly entered into servanthood.

Why would God place this provision in His law? The first reason is that God was demonstrating that all of Israel's wealth (Leviticus 25:23) and their very lives ultimately belonged to Him (Leviticus 25:55). Because God "owned" the land and they owed their lives to him as their redeemer, it was within His right to place these provisions on them. A second reason, I think, was to reinforce the concepts of forgiveness and redemption. This process that would occur every seven years was a picture of God's grace and forgiveness of sin. How do you view your possessions and your very life? Will you be willing to view them as belonging to God, the Author and Sustainer of life?

March 17th

Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9. "Wisdom does not Guarantee Obedience"

Deuteronomy 17:14-20 outlines the guidelines for the future kings of Israel. If you are familiar with the history of Israel, then you know that most of them failed to live up to this standard. In fact, if you look at 1 Kings 10:14-11:13 you will see that one king, Solomon, disobeyed all three of the prohibitions given to Israelite kings in verses 16 and 17.

Now, why was it that Solomon, the wisest man on earth (1 Kings 4:29-34) and author of the majority of Proverbs, was unable to obey the Lord in these areas? The answer isn't so much in what Solomon did, but rather in what he didn't do. Deuteronomy 17:18-20 instructs us that regular study of God's law would enable the king to "learn to fear the Lord his God by obeying all the terms of this law" (Deuteronomy 17:19).

It was the absence of this regular time to study God's Word that led to pride in Solomon to the point where he ignored a direct warning (1 Kings 11:10) from God. So, wisdom does not guarantee obedience. Rather, regular time studying and submitting to God's Word puts us in the best position to obey Him.

March 18th

Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19. "Random Acts of Kindness"

Today's reading was full of a variety of laws and regulations for Israel to do when they entered the Promised Land. All of these laws were important for them to remember as they prepared to cross the Jordan River and experience a new beginning.

As I read through this passage, a seemingly insignificant command really jumped out at me. In Deuteronomy 22:1-4 we see the command to not ignore a neighbor who needs help. There's a principle here for helping others that continues to apply today for we see this principle at work in the New Testament as well. In James 2:15-16 we are told that words of blessing without meeting a real physical need will not accomplish anything.

Then in Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus adds to this principle by saying that when you minister to the needs of others, you are ultimately ministering to the Lord Himself. And if you ignore these needs, then you are refusing to help the Lord. Are you willing to help meet other's needs, or will you be found pretending not to see?

General Questions for each day:

Summarize the day's Bible passage in your own words.

What thoughts, actions, attitudes or beliefs are addressed in the passage?

How is the Holy Spirit leading you to apply this passage to your life today?

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Bible Discussion Guide:

Why do you think it was important for Moses to deliver the law again to Israel?

What does that reveal to us about our own need to study God's Word?

The March 12th devotional speaks of remembering our life before knowing Christ. How would you describe your life before you knew Christ?

What has the new beginning that faith in Christ brought, meant for you?

The March 13th devotional speaks of receiving the Lord's discipline. How have you seen the Lord's discipline in your life?

How has it been a benefit to you?

What does it mean to live by the grace of God?

Having been saved by grace, are you now living by a system of works and rules?

What do you need to change in order to live by grace?

How has the community of faith been a blessing to you?

What is it about being a part of a community that is easy or difficult for you?

How can forgiveness bring a new beginning?

How would life be different if we saw everything, including people as being God's possession?

How can regular time in the Bible put you in a better position to obey God?

Do you agree that we experience a new beginning every time we open God's Word? Why or why not?

Personal application: How would life be different if we all took the time to help when we see someone in need?