



# Remember

RECALLING GOD'S PAST FAITHFULNESS LEADS US TO WORSHIP HIM.

**Scripture Passage: Deuteronomy 4:1-9,15-20    Memory Verse: Deuteronomy 4:9**

For many years, I have kept a written record of God's faithfulness to my family. When He answers a prayer or brings an unanticipated blessing, I record it in my journal. Then when I feel discouraged, I get out the record, which reminds me how faithful God has been. I know that I've forgotten to record many answered prayers and blessings. Still, the journal testifies to God's faithfulness and drives me to gratitude and to worship.

Deuteronomy records Moses's words to God's people as they prepared to enter the promised land. In a series of sermons, Moses recounted many instances of God's faithfulness, despite Israel's unbelief. He wanted them to remember how their faithful God had led them out of Egypt, sustained them in the wilderness, and brought them to Canaan. They needed to trust Him for the present based on His past faithfulness, and they needed to express their gratitude through genuine, uncompromised worship.

As you study this passage, reflect on God's faithfulness to you. You might even consider starting a journal of your own. You also can challenge adults to express their testimonies of God's past faithfulness. Such faithfulness should lead us to worship Him.



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Older folks will remember family get-togethers that included porch sitting. After the evening meal, family members headed outside. A few sat in rocking chairs. Some were on the porch swing. The adults would talk. Someone would ask, “What ever happened to so-and-so?” Then the reminiscing began. They talked about their happy memories and the hurdles. The kids didn’t do a lot of talking. Mostly, they listened, not realizing how much they would treasure these memories decades later. (PSG, p. 73)

**What is your favorite family memory? How do your family's stories get passed down from one generation to the next?**



## Understand the Context (Deuteronomy 1:1–4:43)

As the Israelites camped in the Plains of Moab, God gave Moses His words to share (Deut. 1:1-5). Moses reminded them how he had appointed leaders to assist him after the people had received God’s commands and affirmed His covenant at Horeb (1:6-18). These men helped Moses bear the awesome responsibility of leading the Israelite multitude through the wilderness to Canaan.

Moses then recounted Israel’s tragic spiritual failure at Kadesh-barnea (1:19-45). He had sent twelve scouts into Canaan; however, the bad report by ten of the spies led to the people’s unbelief and refusal to enter the land (1:19-40). In judgment, God decreed that the entire unbelieving generation would die in the wilderness.

Now, their children stood at Canaan’s borders. After four decades wandering in the wilderness, the challenge for the new generation was to learn from their parents’ mistake and to avoid rejecting God’s commands.

The Israelites’ journey led them by the territories of three distant relatives. The Edomites were descended from Esau, Jacob’s brother (Deut. 2:1-7; Gen. 36:1). The Moabite and Ammonites came from Lot, Abraham’s nephew (Deut. 2:8-23; Gen. 19:36-38). God told Israel that He had given these peoples their respective territories. However, when the Amorite kings Sihon and Og attacked the Israelites, God’s people defeated them and took possession of their territory (Deut. 2:24–3:11; Num. 21:23–24,33). Moses then divided

the defeated kings’ former territory between the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and part of Manasseh (Deut. 3:12-20).

Moses encouraged God’s people to obey Him completely (4:1-14). They had seen His great works on their behalf in Egypt and in the wilderness. Moreover, the statutes and ordinances He had given them surpassed the wisdom of neighboring peoples. No other nation had received such blessed instructions.

Moses exhorted the people to worship God alone—and only in the manner He prescribed (4:15-40). They were not to make images to worship as other nations did (4:16-20). They also needed to teach future generations to follow God faithfully (4:25-31). No other nation could claim a God who took such personal care in leading His people (4:32-40) because their gods were nothing more than stone and metal images. Israel’s God, the one and only true God, deserved pure worship and complete obedience.

Moses established three cities of refuge east of the Jordan River where someone who accidentally killed another person could flee for protection (4:41-43). The closing verses of Deuteronomy 4 reminded readers of the context of Moses’s words (4:44-49).

**As you read through today’s text, underscore the imperative verbs. Pay close attention to the directives that appear once and those that are repeated. (PSG, p. 74)**

# ENGAGE



## DISCUSS:

**PREPARE:** On a focal wall, display **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outlines of Numbers, Deuteronomy*). Make copies of **Pack Item 10** (*Handout: Remembering God's Faithfulness*). Gather enough notecards so each adult can have one.

**What is your favorite family memory?** (PSG, p. 73) Give each adult in the group a notecard. Guide them to record their responses on the card. Invite a few volunteers to share what they wrote.

## READ:

Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 73 of the PSG.

## ASK:

**How do your family's stories get passed down from one generation to the next?** (PSG, p. 73) Discuss responses.

## EXPLAIN:

Point out **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outlines of Numbers, Deuteronomy*). Share that this session shifts from the book of Numbers to the book of Deuteronomy. Mention that the study reminds us of how recalling God's past faithfulness leads us to worship Him.

## TRANSITION:

*Deuteronomy is built on a series of speeches or sermons Moses delivered on the border of the promised land. As we dig into a portion of Moses's first message to the people, reflect on how his challenges to the Israelites are applicable in your own journey.*



## Group Activity Option

### Music

Direct adults to find “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” (*Baptist Hymnal* 2008, No. 96). Guide them to read aloud together the three stanzas, then to sing the chorus once or twice. Ask: **How has God been faithful to you in your lifetime?** Lead in a moment of silent prayer as adults consider God's faithfulness to them.



## Obedience (Deut. 4:1-4)

**1** “Now, Israel, listen to the statutes and ordinances I am teaching you to follow, so that you may live, enter, and take possession of the land the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. **2** You must not add anything to what I command you or take anything away from it, so that you may keep the commands of the LORD your God I am giving you. **3** Your eyes have seen what the LORD did at Baal-peor, for the LORD your God destroyed every one of you who followed Baal of Peor. **4** But you who have remained faithful to the LORD your God are all alive today.”

(v. 1) In Deuteronomy 1-3, Moses reviewed the Israelites’ history from the time they left Mount Horeb (Sinai) until the time they arrived at Canaan’s border. He wanted them to remember God’s protection and provision along every step of their journey so they would commit themselves to Him fully as they entered the promised land.

The word *now* introduces a conclusion based on what Moses had already said. He first addressed *Israel* in the singular. The verb form of *listen* indicates this command went to the nation as a whole. Plural verb forms appear in the rest of the passage because Moses also called every individual Israelite to obedience.

God’s leader challenged the people to obey the Lord’s *statutes*, along with His *ordinances*. Moses asserted that their faithfulness toward God should be based on His faithfulness to them. The word “statutes” comes from a word that means “to inscribe” and highlights the written and prescribed nature of God’s commands. “Ordinances” also can denote God’s righteous decisions. The two words regularly occur together to describe God’s commands.

The word translated *follow* literally means “do” and stresses Moses’s desire for the people to act in obedience. The Lord expected His people to *live, enter, and take possession of* Canaan. The expression *God of your ancestors* stresses the long-term relationship God had established with His people, a relationship that included a promise to Abraham to bring them back to the land (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:16).

(v. 2) Moses stressed the importance of keeping God’s Word pure. The people could not *add anything*, for doing so would put their own human words on the same level as God’s words. They also were warned against trying to *take anything away from it* by choosing which of God’s words they wanted to retain and which they wanted to lay aside. Rather, Moses encouraged Israel to *keep*

*the commands of the LORD your God*. The wording implies all of God’s commands are in view, not just a chosen few. “Keep” also suggests watching or guarding. In other words, the people needed to prioritize their obedience to God’s words.

(v. 3) *Your eyes have seen* stressed the Israelites’ role as personal eyewitnesses to all God had done in the wilderness. They could testify to future generations regarding the benefits and blessings of faithful obedience to God.

• *Baal-peor* was where the people had compromised their faith through sexual sin with foreign women (Num. 25:1-9). The term *Baal of Peor* denotes an image of Baal, the chief god of the Canaanites. Supposedly, he was the god of the storm and of fertility, and his worship often involved illicit sexual rites.

God sent a plague against the Israelites who worshiped this pagan god, and 24,000 died (Num. 25:9). This verse reminds us of Moses’s instruction in verse 2 not to add or subtract anything from the Lord’s commands. God desired pure worship because His ways were best.

(v. 4) Moses contrasted God’s judgment on rebellious Israelites with those who had *remained faithful* to Him. The Hebrew word literally means “cling” or “cleave” and occurs in Genesis 2:24 to describe the union between a husband and wife. When God’s faithful people faced temptation to compromise, they clung to the Lord instead. They refused to yield to the enticements of Baal worship.

Moses affirmed that they were *all alive today* because of their wise decision. God’s judgment had not swept them away. Only those who had denied Him had died. Again, the Israelites had seen for themselves God’s judgment on the disobedient and His preserving grace toward those who remained loyal (v. 3).



**APPLICATION POINT: We are to obey God's commands.**

**OVERVIEW:** Summarize the following background of Deuteronomy 1-3 from the Understand the Context (Leader Guide, p. 90):

"As the Israelites camped in the Plains of Moab, God gave Moses His words to share (1:1-5). . . . Moses then recounted Israel's tragic spiritual failure at Kadesh-barnea (1:19-45). In judgment, God decreed that the entire unbelieving generation would die in the wilderness. Now, their children stood at Canaan's borders."

**READ:**

**Call on a volunteer to read aloud Deuteronomy 4:1-4** as adults listen for Moses's instructions.

**EXAMINE:**

Encourage the group to read the passage again and to call out the words and phrases Moses used to direct the people to follow God's commands. Lead a brief discussion about why our past experiences with God can move us forward in faith.

**DISCUSS:**

Read Deuteronomy 4:4 again. Use the following content from page 76 of the PSG to explain what happened at Baal-peor:

*The Israelites knew they were to worship God alone. At Baal-peor, they had done the opposite. The Israelites began to "prostitute themselves with the women of Moab. . . . and the people ate and bowed in worship to their gods. So Israel aligned itself with Baal of Peor, and the LORD's anger burned against Israel" (Num. 25:1-3).*

**ASK:**

**Why do you think Moses kept emphasizing that the words he was speaking were from God?** (PSG, p. 76)

## Wisdom (Deut. 4:5-9)

**5** “Look, I have taught you statutes and ordinances as the LORD my God has commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to possess. **6** Carefully follow them, for this will show your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the peoples. When they hear about all these statutes, they will say, ‘This great nation is indeed a wise and understanding people.’ **7** For what great nation is there that has a god near to it as the LORD our God is to us whenever we call to him? **8** And what great nation has righteous statutes and ordinances like this entire law I set before you today? **9** Only be on your guard and diligently watch yourselves, so that you don’t forget the things your eyes have seen and so that they don’t slip from your mind as long as you live. Teach them to your children and your grandchildren.”

(v. 5) Moses’s command *look* again emphasized the Israelites’ personal witness. They were participants in God’s kingdom work. *I have taught you* implies Moses had been sharing God’s *statutes and ordinances* with them regularly. His affirmation *as the LORD my God has commanded me* highlights how God gave His words to Moses and how Moses gave them to the people. Peter later affirmed that God delivered His Word to humanity as “men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21).

### Key Doctrine

#### The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God’s revelation of Himself to man. (See Isaiah 40:8; 2 Timothy 3:16-17.)

(v. 6) The command to *carefully follow* is a combination of Hebrew words that highlight active obedience. The people needed to give high priority to obeying God’s commands. As they demonstrated their faith in God by living out His Word, their *wisdom and understanding* would be evident to the *peoples* they encountered.

“Wisdom” denotes the ability to apply one’s knowledge to a situation and occurs in reference both to God’s wisdom and the wisdom God gives people. The term “understanding” is related to the word “between,” suggesting the ability to distinguish between truth and error. Knowing and fearing God leads to both (Prov. 9:10).

As neighboring peoples heard of God’s commands and saw the Israelites living by them, they would conclude that Israel was a *great nation* comprised of a *wise and understanding people*.

The adjectives “wise” and “understanding” come from the same roots as the nouns in the verse.

(v. 7) Moses’s question *What great nation is there . . . ?* was rhetorical, anticipating a negative answer. No god was as *near* to his people as God was to Israel! The expression *the LORD our God* again stressed a close relationship. Whenever Israel would *call*, God would answer.

(v. 8) Moses’s second question was also rhetorical. No other people possessed such *righteous statutes and ordinances*. These commands were righteous because they displayed God’s character. Living according to His perfect design brought blessing. Moses affirmed the righteous quality of *this entire law* (*torah*). All God’s instruction and teaching reflected His righteousness.

(v. 9) The verbs in verse 9 revert to the singular form (see v. 1), highlighting that Moses again addressed the nation as a whole. He called Israel to stand as one united people in its determination to worship God purely. His command to *be on your guard and diligently watch yourselves* stressed the seriousness of the situation. The people would *forget* what their own *eyes* had witnessed if they weren’t intentional about nurturing their walk with God. They would allow the memory of these great works to *slip from your mind* at their own peril. The people could lose their spiritual foundation through faithlessness.

Further, Moses instructed the Israelites to *teach them to your children and your grandchildren*. At some point, the eyewitnesses to God’s mighty works would be gone, so they had to make sure the testimony was passed down and a legacy of faith shaped future generations.



## READ:

**APPLICATION POINT:** We are to value and seek the wisdom that comes from the Lord.

**Invite a volunteer to read aloud Deuteronomy 4:5-9** as adults listen for two groups who would be influenced by the faithful obedience of the Israelites.

## LIST:

Call on adults to call out the groups mentioned in Deuteronomy 4:5-9 and write their responses on the board. Point out that other nations and the Israelites' descendants would learn from the example of positive, godly obedience.

## EXPLAIN:

Use this content from page 77 in the PSG to describe how the Israelites' faithfulness would be viewed by surrounding nations:

*Obeying God's statutes and ordinances would be a witness in the eyes of the other peoples. As others observed the Israelites living by God's principles, they would recognize the wisdom that governed their lives. Living by God's standards would set His people apart. They would be seen as a great nation. Ultimately, that differentiation would point people to God.*

## ASK:

**How will obeying God's Word set believers apart in today's world?** (PSG, p. 78)

## DISCUSS:

Lead a brief discussion about the role of parents in pointing their children toward God. Allow a few volunteers to share practical ways they have nurtured their own children's spiritual growth over time. Take a moment to pray for parents and their families.

## Group Activity Option

### Object Lesson: Photos of Children

Prior to the session gather some photos of children from your family. (Examples: children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and so forth) Display the photos and encourage adults to show one another their own family photos. Ask: ***What specific actions can you take to teach these children about God's Word and the gospel?*** Call on volunteers to share their experiences in teaching children about God's Word.

## Worship (Deut. 4:15-20)

**15** “Diligently watch yourselves—because you did not see any form on the day the LORD spoke to you out of the fire at Horeb— **16** so you don’t act corruptly and make an idol for yourselves in the shape of any figure: a male or female form, **17** or the form of any animal on the earth, any winged creature that flies in the sky, **18** any creature that crawls on the ground, or any fish in the waters under the earth. **19** When you look to the heavens and see the sun, moon, and stars—all the stars in the sky—do not be led astray to bow in worship to them and serve them. The LORD your God has provided them for all people everywhere under heaven. **20** But the LORD selected you and brought you out of Egypt’s iron furnace to be a people for his inheritance, as you are today.”

**(v. 15)** *Diligently watch yourselves* closely parallels the instruction in verse 9. Earlier, Moses had urged the people to fear God so they could gain the wisdom that came from faithful obedience. Here, he charged them to practice proper worship. God wanted them to worship Him only as He prescribed.

The statement *you did not see any form* recalled the moment the people accepted the terms of the covenant at **•Horeb** (Ex. 24:1-8). They heard God’s voice as He spoke to them *out of the fire*, but they saw no image or likeness of anything. This event laid a strong foundation for Moses’s forthcoming warning against idolatry.

**(v. 16)** Moses did not want the people to *act corruptly*. The verb highlights the ruin that they would bring on themselves and others if they were to *make an idol*. The prohibition of making and worshiping an “idol” also occurs in the second commandment (Ex. 20:4).

In the following verses, Moses described forms these idols might take. The examples he gave all appear in Genesis 1, which describes God’s act of creation. It made no sense for people to worship what had been created; rather, they should worship the Creator alone.

**(v. 17)** The expression *animal on the earth* generally denotes the larger land animals. Genesis 1 explains how God made these creatures on the sixth day of creation, whereas animals in the air (*winged creature*) were created on the fifth day (Gen. 1:21). Both classes of animals had their place in God’s created order, but the people needed to remember that they were not objects of worship. The apostle Paul later decried those who “worshiped and served what has been created instead of the Creator” (Rom. 1:25). God alone deserved the people’s worship.

**(v. 18)** The description of an animal that *crawls on the ground* most likely designates reptiles. The law of Moses designated all reptiles as unclean for eating (Lev. 11:29-31). *Fish* that possessed fins and scales were acceptable to eat, but still were not worthy of worship (11:9).

**(v. 19)** Many ancient people, including the Assyrians, Babylonians, Canaanites, and Egyptians, worshiped *the sun, moon, and stars*. The sun god in particular played an important role in the pagan worship of these societies, but Moses warned God’s people not to be *led astray* by such idolatry. God had *provided them* as a blessing for humanity and as a testimony to His greatness (Ps. 8:3-4). But, like created animals, none of these were designed to take the place of God in their lives. It was not the focus of any part of Israelite worship.

**(v. 20)** The Lord called His people to live distinct from other nations that engaged in many sinful practices and manners of worship. The residents of the Canaanite nations worshiped many gods, but God wanted to reach these individuals through His chosen people, the people He was building into a nation.

The Lord had delivered Israel from the *iron furnace*. This reminded His people of the harsh conditions of *Egypt’s* slavery: high temperatures, little rainfall, and much oppression. He had rescued them to be *a people for his inheritance*. He had given the Israelites a new identity, and they were called to respond by worshiping and serving Him in the way He instructed. In time, if Israel remained faithful, people of other nations would see their uniqueness and be drawn to their God.





## READ:

**APPLICATION POINT:** We can rejoice that God has called us to be His people.

**Enlist a volunteer to read Deuteronomy 4:15-20** as adults underline references to idols in these verses. Ask volunteers to share what they underlined.

## REFLECT:

Distribute copies of **Pack Item 10** (*Handout: Remembering God's Faithfulness*) and lead adults to work in pairs to make a list of what God had done for Israel. Encourage the pairs to make a second list of things God has done for them. Allow a few volunteers to share. Direct them to keep the handout in their Bible and to add items to the list that may come to mind in the next several days.

## ASK:

**What kinds of idols do we need to refrain from worshipping today?** (PSG, p. 80)

## DISCUSS:

Summarize the list of pagan idols from other cultures mentioned in the content for verses 15-19 (PSG, pp. 79-80). Emphasize this content from verse 20 on page 80 of the PSG:

*Out of all the earth's inhabitants, God had selected one group, Abraham's descendants, to receive His grace. Hearing their cries in Egypt, God remembered His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He brought them out. This is always God's work of redemption. He brings us out—from darkness to light, from death to life, from the yoke of slavery to freedom in Christ.*



## Group Activity Option

### Bible Skill

Guide adults to complete the Bible Skill on page 76 in the PSG. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share what they learned from the atlas and the Bible dictionary. Spend a few minutes discussing why this location was so important—and so dangerous—for the Israelites. Review the question included in the activity and explain the spiritual compromise associated with Baal-peor.

## CHALLENGE

### SUMMARIZE:

Briefly overview these points from Apply the Text on page 81 of the *Personal Study Guide*:

- *We are to obey God's commands.*
- *We are to value and seek the wisdom that comes from the Lord.*
- *We can rejoice that God has called us to be His people.*

### EXPLAIN:

Point out that even though believers in Christ rely on His grace rather than their works for salvation, obedience is still an important part of the Christian life. Remind adults that Jesus equated love with keeping His commands (John 14:15).

### DISCUSS:

Direct attention to the first set of questions on page 81 of the PSG. Lead a brief discussion on the meaning of worship and things that might hold us back from true worship. Suggest that a lack of obedience is a key hindrance to worship. Lead adults to consider how they can better obey the commands of Jesus and, in doing so, draw closer to God in worship.

### PRAY:

Lead a time of directed prayer, guiding adults to speak aloud a prayer of thanksgiving for how God has been faithful to them in the past. Close the prayer by asking God to strengthen our love for Christ and our faithful obedience to Him.

## AFTER THE SESSION

After the session email or text adults and encourage them to continue to add items to the list they started on **Pack Item 10** (*Handout: Remembering God's Faithfulness*). Challenge them to use the list in their daily prayers to strengthen their reliance on God's faithfulness. Suggest they make a specific plan to share a meaningful story about God's faithfulness with a family member or a friend this week.

## ADULT COMMENTARY



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