

Over the past 6 weeks or so, we have been in this series in Deuteronomy. For many, Deuteronomy might seem so ancient and so removed from our lives today that it's difficult to find the relevance.

But we have found quite the opposite to be true in our series we're calling *Remember and Renew*. The people:

- God delivered out of bondage in Egypt
- Led through the Red Sea, closing it in drowning Pharaoh's army
- And the people he led through the desert wanderings

They are now on the threshold of the promised land he was going to be giving to them. But before they entered into this huge adventure, Moses needed to prepare them in heart and mind because they were going to face daily temptations that threaten to shipwreck their faith and devotion to God.

- They faced the risk of pride and forgetting God gave them everything they have.
- They faced the risk of being conformed by godless cultures and religious practices diluting and polluting their worship.
- They faced the risk of gradually depending on false gods and idols to make life work for them.
- And today we learn they face the risk of listening to the wrong voices in the culture around them and falling into detestable practices.

Throughout our series we've been attempting to show you how all these risks for the people of God THEN, are clear and present risks for us TODAY in our culture.

**[Transition]** - In the midst of all the voices competing for your attention, Moses' message today is a call for us to listen to God, and God's voice alone.

We live in a world where it has never been easier to hear voices (And I'm not talking in some sort of psychotic way). From the moment we wake up all sorts of voices are clamoring for our attention:

- Notifications on our devices.
- Podcasts
- Influencers
- News commentary
- YouTube
- TikTok
- Self-help experts
- Political voices
- Spiritual voices

Everyone has an "urgent message." Everyone has an opinion. Everyone claims authority. Everyone promises the path to freedom, health, happiness, purpose, or truth. And if we're honest, many of us feel overwhelmed by it all.

**[Illustration]**- It's like trying to have a conversation in a crowded restaurant where everybody is talking at once. At first, you can hear clearly—but eventually all the voices sort of blur together into noise. That's the world we live in spiritually. Noise, noise, noise!!

And Israel was entering a world very much like that. The verses leading up to our focus verses today repeatedly tell us the land of Canaan was filled with “detestable practices.” In fact, beginning in verse 9-12 you have the most complete list of magical or spiritistic arts in the entire Old Testament. The Hebrew for this literally means, something that is an “abomination, repulsive, something that is practiced as a lifestyle.”<sup>1</sup> And the word detestable makes it clear it is “repugnant”, or “loathsome” to God, something he “abhors.”<sup>2</sup>

Moses spells these detestable practices out:

- False gods
- Pagan spirituality
- Child sacrifices
- Sorcery/witchcraft – basically the use of black magic. Using demonic powers to influence or manipulate the natural world and people.
- Divination, or consulting the dead – The attempt to gain insight into hidden knowledge, future events, through omens, rituals, or spiritual mediums.
- Competing prophets – prophets who all claim to be speaking messages from God, but don’t agree.
- All manner of deceptive voices

God abhors and detests all these types of practices.

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<sup>1</sup> James Swanson, [\*Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew \(Old Testament\)\*](#) (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

<sup>2</sup> R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., [\*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament\*](#) (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 976.

The cultures they were about to encounter were godless, and demonically hideous in their practices. And the people needed to be prepared to intentionally tune out all those destructive practices and voices and listen only to the one true God—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The God who delivered them from bondage and was about to give them a whole new future.

**[Transition]** - So, before they enter that land, God gives them a promise: You guys don't have to try to sort out truth from those around you... "I will raise up for you a prophet like Moses" -just listen to him. I will speak."  
Read verses 15-17

### **Our God is a speaking God (vv. 15-17)**

One of the distinctive realities about being a Christian, is that our God is always graciously revealing himself and speaking to his people.

In these verses Moses reminds the people of Israel about how intense it was hearing from God at Mt. Sinai. When God descended on the mountain to speak to his people:

- Thunder shook
- Fire burned
- Smoke filled the mountain
- The people were terrified.

And at that time, they said: "We cannot endure hearing God speak directly." And because of that, God promised: "*I will raise up a prophet...*". Stop and think how gracious and loving is that? God does not leave his people in fear, troubled and guessing. He doesn't get frustrated and say, "Just deal with it"

No, he commits to speak...he even agrees to modify his approach and do what it takes to communicate with them. That's so gracious and loving.

**[Illustration]** – I don't know how you feel, but to me one of the worst things in a relationship is the silent treatment...am I right? The silent treatment wrecks me. Fortunately, my wife and I weaned that out of our communication style in our early years.

Here's why it's so destructive. When communication disappears:

- Confusion grows
- Insecurity rises
- Distance develops
- In the silence we build our own stories about why it's happening and what it's about. Friends...we're terrible at story building.

As a kid, the silent treatment was one of my mom's favorite parenting practices. It's why it wrecks me to this day. In the silence I was only left to guess (build a story) as to what was going on. In that silence I was constantly wondering:

- What did I do?
- What do I do now?
- Am I still loved?
- Am I safe?
- Am I valued?
- Am I accepted?

It was cruddy. And emotionally painful.

Thank God he is not silent toward us. The entire story of Scripture is the story of a God who speaks:

- Through his creation

- Through his Word
- Through his prophets
- Ultimately through his Son Jesus and his Holy Spirit

Hebrews 1:1-2 says, *"In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe."*

**[Application]** - Friends, we don't discover ultimate truth by looking deeper within ourselves. As Doug referenced last week...truth is not discovered simply through our feelings. Truth is not something that originates out of our own heart, soul and mind. Truth is never "my truth", or "your truth." *Truth originates in God and comes from God revealing himself and communicating to us.* Thank you Lord, you are a revealing and communicating God.

**[Transition]** - When Moses says, "You must listen to him." He means more than simply hearing his words. Read verses 18-19.

### **God's People Must Listen to His Voice (v. 18-19)**

Listening to God requires trust-filled obedience. Moses says if you're gonna steer clear of the destructive culture around you and if you want to avoid the painful consequences of following their practices, then, "You must listen to him."

And please realize, Biblical listening is more than hearing words. It means:

- Receiving or taking in the words, receiving and taking in his truth.
- Trusting that truth.

- Demonstrating your trust by obeying the truth—learning to put it into practice.

Israel struggled with this, and so do we. They listened to God when it felt safe, convenient, or easy. But when obedience became costly, fear often became louder, and more compelling than faith. Happened to them... happens to us.

**[Illustration]** - Imagine going to a doctor because you're seriously sick. The doctor examines you, runs tests, diagnoses the issue, and prescribes treatment.

But instead of following the prescription, you say: "I appreciate your opinion... but I think I'll do what I've heard others do." Or "I think I'll do what feels right to me." Or "I think I'll just keep doing what I've been doing---eating what I want to eat, sleeping in my same patterns, exercising too little, or too much. I'll just keep doing what I want.

Most of us would call that foolish. Why? Because ignoring trustworthy guidance has consequences. And spiritually, we often do the same thing with God.

We ask for His wisdom...We open His Word...But when his direction conflicts with our desires, thoughts, or emotions, we choose our own path instead.

**Here's the reality:** Biblical listening is not merely hearing God's voice—it's trusting His wisdom enough to obey it.

**[Application Questions]** - What voice is most shaping you most at this point in your life?

- Fear?
- Culture?
- Politics?
- Social media?

- Personal desires?
- Friends?
- Cable news?
- Jesus?

Please realize...The voice you trust most...will shape the life you live!

**[Transition]** - Not tuning into God's voice and instead listening to false voices leads to destruction. Look at verses 20-22.

### **False voices lead to destruction (vv. 20-22)**

God is basically warning us here, not every spiritual voice speaks truth. Israel was about to enter a land overflowing with false spirituality and competing voices and prophets. So, God warns them; false voices are dangerous because they distort reality about God.

For example, a false prophet or false voice may use spiritual language, sound convincing, and even appear confident. But they still lead people away from truth. We must learn to listen to God's voice alone.

**[Illustration]** - Imagine being in a crowded stadium or concert hall after a event. Thousands of people talking. Noise everywhere.

But suddenly you hear one familiar voice; your spouse, your parent, your child...and instantly you recognize it. Why?

Not because it's louder than every other voice—but because you know it intimately and your brain instantly recognizes it.

That's how learning to listen to the voice of God and spiritual discernment works. The goal is not becoming experts in every false ideology. The goal is knowing the voice of Jesus so well that competing voices are tuned out almost automatically.

What do you think are the false voices in our culture? They probably don't wear robes or claim mystical visions. More likely they sound like:

- "Follow your truth."
- "God just wants you be happy."
- "You can define your own identity."
- "Sin isn't really serious."
- "Truth is relative."

Many voices might sound spiritual, but they are leading people away from God. Jesus said, *"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves"* (Matthew 7:15). And the Apostle John said, *"Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world."*- 1 John 4:1

This is why God says, you gotta test their message. And if it's not accurate, they gotta be dead to you. Don't give them access to your heart and mind. We have to learn to listen only to God.

**[Transition]** - Moses is teaching us our God is committed to speaking to us. He's speaking to us in all kinds of ways—generally through his creation, and more specifically through his prophets, and the writings of Scripture. And ultimately, he will raise up a prophet who is like Moses, but greater.

In Acts 3 when Peter is speaking about Jesus the Messiah, he references Deuteronomy 18, *"For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.'"*-Acts 3:22-23.

**Jesus is the greater prophet Moses promised (Acts 3:22-23)**

Jesus is God's final, most direct, and perfect revelation. Peter explicitly says here in Acts 3: Jesus is the Prophet Moses promised. Everything in our text today points forward to Him.

Like Moses:

- Jesus speaks God's Word
- Jesus mediates between God and people
- Jesus frees us from bondage

But Jesus is infinitely greater:

- Moses delivered Israel from Egypt.  
Jesus delivers us from sin and death.
- Moses mediated the old covenant.  
Jesus establishes the new covenant.
- Moses spoke God's words.  
Jesus IS the Word made flesh.

**[Illustration]** - It's like the difference between moonlight vs. sunlight. The Old Testament prophets were like moonlight. Real light. Helpful light. God-given light. But moonlight is always reflecting something greater. Jesus is more like the sunrise. In Him, the full revelation of God arrives.

### **[Conclusion]**

You know what that means friends? God's final word to humanity is not merely a message—it is a person: Jesus the Christ. Listening to him, leads to life.

### **Listening to him leads to life**

True and satisfying and meaningful life is found in listening to and following Christ. We must continue to train ourselves to listen to Jesus!

In our culture, countless voices promise life:

- **Wealth and Possessions** - Culture says: "If you just had a little more... you'd finally feel secure." But possessions make terrible saviors.
- **Success** - Culture tells us: "Your value is determined by your performance." Career, achievements, productivity. And as I've shared with you before, many people spend their lives climbing ladders only to discover they leaned them against the wrong wall.
- **Identity** - Our culture seems to say: "Look within yourself to discover who you are." The assumption is, you define yourself. You create yourself." But scripture says our truest identity is not invented by us—it is received from God.
- **Fulfillment** - The world promises, "Follow your heart and you'll be happy." Do whatever feels right. Pursue whatever satisfies you. Never deny yourself. But eventually many people discover: A life centered entirely on self still leaves the soul empty.
- **Freedom** - Our culture defines freedom as, "Nobody can tell me how to live." But biblical freedom is different. The Bible teaches that true freedom is not the absence of all authority—it's being freed from sin so we can become what God created us to be.

The tragedy is not that all these voices promise too much. The tragedy is that they ultimately deliver too little. Jesus alone has the words of eternal life. We must listen to him.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke...in their Gospels record the events of the transfiguration. I know many of you are familiar with the scene:

- Moses appears
- Elijah appears
- Jesus stands between them

And the Father speaks from heaven: "This is My beloved Son... listen to Him." That is the fulfillment of our text today here in Deuteronomy 18. The greater Prophet has now come.

So, in a noisy world full of competing voices: Listen to Him. And the clearest way to hear God is to listen to Jesus.

Let me suggest 4 practices to increase your ability to listen to Jesus:

1. Read/listen to your Bible consistently - you won't learn to recognize God's voice if you rarely listen to him speak by reading his Word.
2. Reduce competing noise - Most of us are overstimulated with sound and noise. It's hard to hear God when our lives are constantly flooded with loud. Seek to practice regular moments of silence and solitude. Some of the loudest voices in your life are not evil—just distracting.
3. Walk with godly people - The voices closest to you will shape your spiritual direction. Proverbs 13:20 says, "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise."

4. Obey what God already said - This is the best way to learn to listen to God is to obey what he's clearly said already. Many people are waiting for new direction while ignoring old instruction.

If Jesus truly is the greater Prophet...if He truly has the words of life... then listening to Him cannot be an occasional activity. It must become the pattern of our lives.

#### RESPONSE TIME

Let's spend a few moments and invite God to speak to us...and let's listen to him.

- What do you hear God saying to you today?
- What competing voices need to be turned down?