



Parkway Fellowship

PEAK ENCOUNTERS • MT. NEBO • DEUTERONOMY 32:48-52; 34:1-3 • 8/9/2020

MAIN POINT

I need God to give me His perspective because I can't see with mine.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

How do you typically respond to someone with whom you just can't see eye to eye: avoid that person, regularly argue, ask questions in a genuine effort to try to see his or her point of view, other?

What about when you can't see what God is up to? What do you tend to do then (i.e. pull away from Him, pray harder, question Him, doubt Him, study Scripture, seek wisdom from a godly mentor, etc.)?

Name a past event in your life that caused you to question what God was up to.

What did you end up learning about God from that situation? If you're still working through that process, what do you want to learn about God from that situation?

We learned in this week's message that if we don't see our lives from God's perspective, we are likely to misunderstand what He is doing. When that happens, we're likely to become disappointed with God, mislabel what He is doing as hurtful, and even cease to believe that above all things, God is love. All of us are prone to draw incorrect conclusions about God, when in reality, what we need is His perspective. We see this truth in the final chapters of Deuteronomy, a peak encounter on Mt. Nebo which, apart from God's perspective, might have been considered a sad or unfair end to Moses' life.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DEUTERONOMY 32:48-52

What did God want Moses to see on Mt. Nebo?

What two different perspectives could Moses have taken as he considered God's instructions here?

Pastor Mike pointed out that, at first glance, these verses seem like God is just being mean to Moses by making him look at all he'd be missing out on in the days ahead. Additionally, Moses already knew he'd messed up and wouldn't get to enter the Promised Land, right? Why do you think God brought it up again (v. 51)?

If God were to ignore or accept your sins, would that be evidence of love or something else? Explain. How is calling your sin "sin" actually evidence of God's love for you?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DEUTERONOMY 34:1-3.

Why do you think the Lord permitted Moses to see the promised land from Mount Nebo, even though he would never enter it? How do you think Moses felt as he looked over the land?

We don't know specifically what went through Moses's mind, but the perspective he determined to choose (to see God as being mean or to see God as loving) clearly impacted his actions. We see in Deuteronomy 34 that Moses obeyed God and made the journey up Mt. Nebo. As was noted in this week's message, Moses never would have seen the Promised Land if he had not trusted God what God said to do and climbed Mount Nebo. Had Moses chosen to pursue his own goals (Heb. 11:24-27), he would never have seen God's purpose fulfilled through his life's work. When we choose to follow God's purposes over our own we can make an impact on others that has eternal results.

What factors do you think led Moses to see this situation from God's perspective and follow in obedience?

What steps can you take to develop the kind of relationship with God that allows you to see your life from His perspective, even in the difficult moments (i.e. studying His Word, praying continually, engaging in a biblical community of faith, regularly confessing your sins, etc.)?

What glimpse into your future life with Him has God given to you in His Word? How does that change your perspective about life and death?

Adam and Mike gave some other examples of how trusting what God says to do gives us a glimpse into the future of the blessings He has in store for us (tithing, honoring parents, and forgiving people). What other examples can you add? When have you trusted what God says to do and, in return, received a glimpse into the future of the blessings He has in store for you?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What event in your life currently tempts you to question what God is up to? How does this week's study encourage or challenge you in that situation?

What is something hurtful that you can now see God's love at work in it? Have you considered that God wants to use that experience to help other people glimpse a future of a life lived for Him? Why or why not? How might that good outcome take place?

What would it look like this week for you to trust God more?

PRAYER

Thank God that His perspective is always right and, in Christ, He always gives you the power to see that perspective. Ask Him to give you a heart to find His love in events that seem unloving. Invite Him to give you the courage to trust what He says to do so that you might glimpse the future of a life lived for Him.

COMMENTARY

| DEUTERONOMY 32:48-52

32:48-52. Ironically, after Moses had exhorted the assembly to obey “all the words of this law” in anticipation of their crossing the Jordan and occupying the promised land, he was reminded once more that he himself would not be able to accompany them (cf. Num 20:12; 27:14; Deut 1:37; 3:26–27). He had done two things to disqualify himself: (1) he had “broken faith” with the Lord at Meribah Kadesh, and (2) he had failed to “uphold the Lord's holiness” (v. 51).

The former term (Heb. *mā'al*) has the basic idea of treachery or unfaithfulness, suggesting here that Moses, as covenant mediator, had proved to be disloyal to that covenant commitment in a time of unusual trial. The verb occurs in numerous other places where the issue of covenant is

central (cf. Lev 26:40; Num 31:16; 1 Chr 5:25; Ezek 17:15–19; 20:25–27). 3 Whatever else may have happened at Meribah Kadesh, the place where Moses struck the rock in anger (Num 20:11), the whole episode is summarized as an act of rebellion (*mārâ*) against God (Num 20:24; cf. 27:14; 1 Sam 12:15). Such an act by the very leader of the covenant community was unthinkable, so, tragically enough, Moses was barred access to the land to which he had led the people.

Failure to “uphold holiness” (*lō’ qiddaštem ’ôṭī*) with respect to the Lord (also associated with the Meribah Kadesh incident; cf. Num 20:12; 27:14) was failure to give proper consideration to who he is. That is, it was a denial of his transcendent uniqueness and lordship and an attempt, conscious or not, to reduce him to a human level. Again the covenant implications are clear, especially in Moses’ act of rebellion. The Lord had told him to speak to the rock (Num 20:8), the mere act of speaking being designed to demonstrate the power of God who creates by the spoken word. To strike the rock was to introduce an interruptive element and thus to diminish the significance of the powerful word. By doing this, Moses betrayed not only anger and disobedience but he correspondingly reflected on the God whom he served by implying that God could not bring forth water by the divine word alone.

Even God's discipline is mitigated by his grace, however, so Moses was allowed to see the land of Canaan from a distance (v. 52; thus minneged; cf. Num 2:2; 2 Kgs 2:15; 3:22; 4:25). More specifically, he could ascend Mount Nebo, opposite Jericho, and there take in the panorama of the land before he died on the mountain (vv. 49–50). The “Abarim Range” refers to the high plateau area east of the Jordan River and Dead Sea, the highest peak of which was Pisgah, a part of Mount Nebo (cf. Deut 34:1). 4 This peak, with an elevation of over 2,600 feet, is about twenty miles from Jericho as the crow flies and affords an unobstructed view of nearly all the promised land (cf. Deut 34:1–3).

Aaron too had died on a mountain, Mount Hor, some ten miles northeast of Kadesh Barnea (cf. Num 20:22–29). The significance of death and burial on a mountain may lie in the notion, even in the Bible, that the mountain peak symbolizes nearness to heaven, that is, to God himself. The “high places” associated with pagan worship certainly conveyed this concept, but the Lord himself sanctions the idea that he meets in a special way with those who worship him on designated mountains (cf. Gen 22:14; Exod 3:1, 12; 19:11; 24:16; Josh 8:30; Pss 43:3; 48:1; 68:16; Isa 2:2). It is fitting that Aaron and Moses, despite their rebellion, be buried “near God” on a prominent mountain top.

| DEUTERONOMY 34:1-3

34:1. Moses would not be permitted to enter the promised land, but he would be allowed to see it from Mount Nebo. Mount Nebo was located in the plains of Moab east of the Jordan River and opposite the fortress of Jericho. The phrase top of Pisgah (Num. 21:20; 23:14; Deut. 3:17,27) apparently referred to the mountain range in which Mount Nebo was located. God's provision for Moses to glimpse the promised land from a distance was a unique and gracious recognition of the leader's faithfulness to a very difficult calling. We will discuss the reason Moses was not permitted to enter the land in connection with Deuteronomy 34:4. The list of regions Moses saw represented a comprehensive view of Israel's future possession. It was meant to be representative of all the land the Lord promised to give the Israelites.

34:2. The mention of tribal names such as Gilead, Dan, Naphtali, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Judah anticipated the future possession of these areas by the named tribes.

34:3. The region referred to as the Negev represented the southern extent of the promised land. Zoar was a village located somewhere in the valley region south of the Dead Sea. Lot was afraid to settle there after the divine destruction of Sodom and chose instead to live in a mountain cave with his surviving daughters (see Gen. 19:30), probably located south of the Dead Sea. The statement that Moses was able to see as far as the Mediterranean Sea indicates that he was given divine enablement to see farther than normal sight would allow.