

Through the Bible at 30,000 Feet

Deuteronomy | *Life Lessons for the Road of Obedience*

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Recap:

- **Genesis:**
 - God creates the universe.
 - He is sovereign over everything that He has made.
 - And everything He does is good.
 - The climax of creation was people who were made in God's image.
 - God gave them a mission to spread His image, His glory throughout the world.
 - But in **Genesis 3:1**, an enemy appears in the story, and five verses later (**3:6**), humankind rebelled against God.
 - But instead of destroying them, God speaks the very first Gospel to them. He promises to send a Hero who will one day crush the head of evil (**3:15**).
 - And then (in **Gen. 12**) God chooses Abraham and his family to be God's chosen people through whom the promised Hero would come, and He covenants Himself to this family (**Gen. 15**).

- **Exodus:**
 - God's people have been slaves in Egypt for 400 years
 - And God raises up a man named Moses to rescue them from slavery
 - God unleashes 10 devastating plagues on Egypt for the purpose of showing them that He is sovereign over all Gods and that His people are precious above all other people on the face of the earth.
 - Then He parts the waters of the Red Sea and leads them out of Egypt to a mountain in the wilderness, where God gave Moses detailed instructions for how a group of sinful people were to worship a holy God.
 - Their worship is going to look very different than anything they have every known before.
 - Why? Because they aren't worshipping idols made of wood or stone. They are worshipping the living God who is going to dwell in their midst.
 - That takes us right into Leviticus

- **Leviticus:**
 - Where God is continuing to give detailed instructions regarding how His people are to worship Him, but this book is more specifically regarding Israel's worship leaders – the Levites.
 - This is their seminary training before entering the ministry.
 - Two themes that are especially prominent in Leviticus are "holiness" and "blood".
 - The only way for a holy God can dwell in the midst of His sinful people is if their sin is covered by sacrifice of innocent blood.
 - But because there is no such thing as an innocent human, the sacrifice has to come from animals.

- But the blood of animals could never atone for the sin of humans, and so it was a temporary solution.
- Since God’s people would constantly struggle with sin, Leviticus shows us that animals had to continually be sacrificed.
 - Which means that Leviticus is covered with blood.
- **Numbers:**
 - After making a way (through the Tabernacle) for the Presence of God to dwell in their midst,
 - and after making a way for them to worship God (through sacrifice and purification laws),
 - and after teaching them how to love God and one another (by giving them His laws)...
 - God leads them to edge of the Promised Land, and calls them to go in and take it, but after seeing the giants and the fortified cities in the land, they feared their enemies more than they feared God.
 - The giants seemed bigger than their God.
 - The cities seemed stronger than their God.
 - The situation seemed more dangerous than their God.
 - The road ahead seemed more impossible than the miracles behind them.
 - Their God had just crushed the most powerful nation on the earth, but all they could see were the giants in front of them.
 - **How often is that our story...?**¹
 - Fear paralyzed them from obeying God, and so they spent the next 4 decades wandering in the wilderness until all the warriors of that generation were dead (those who didn’t trust God) and a new generation had been raised up.
 - And then, 40 years later, God brings this new generation back to the same place, and gives them the same opportunity and the same choice He gave their fathers:
 - Trust & Obey God and experience His blessings
 - Disobey God and experience His curses

And that becomes the theme of **Deuteronomy**.

- Deuteronomy is the final book in the collection that was written by Moses.
- In this final book, Moses gives a farewell speech to the Children of Israel – because he will not be allowed to go into the Promised Land with them.

In His farewell speech,

- He reminds them of their history with God.²
 - Over and over he says, “Your eyes have seen what the Lord has done.”³

¹ We get so focused on our present circumstances that we forget about all that God has done for us in the past.

² Deut. 7:18; 8:2; 15:15; 16:1; 24:9, 18, 22; 25:19.

³ Deut. 3:21; 4:3, 34; 5:24; 10:21; 11:7; 29:2.

- He reminds them of the choice that God has set before them and what is at stake in their decision.⁴

I call heaven and earth as witness today against you,
That I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing;
Therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live.
~ **Deuteronomy 30:19**

- He gives a rally cry for obedience.

And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you,
But to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him,
To serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul,
And to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes
Which I command you today for your good?
~ **Deuteronomy 10:12–13**

- Then he spends around 30 chapters reminding them of all the lessons they had learned over the past 40 years that will encourage them to obey God on the journey ahead.

Life Lessons for the Journey of Obedience:

As I spent time meditating on Deuteronomy this past week, I counted over 20 lessons that ought to have been a profound encouragement to God’s people as they prepared to face the giants in their way. The same is true for us – because all of God’s promises are yes and amen in Christ.⁵

Since we don’t have enough time to look at all 20+ lessons this morning, I want to leave you with four of them.

1. **God has chosen His people.**⁶
2. God sees His people as a special treasure.⁷
3. **God loves you because He loves you** (not because you are perfect).⁸
4. Our worth is found in God alone.⁹
5. You will make mistakes.¹⁰
6. God is faithful to His promises.¹¹
7. **God is still with you.**¹²
8. God is good in all His ways.¹³
9. God fights for His people.¹⁴

⁴ Deut. 11:26; 30:1, **15–20**; **32:46–47**.

⁵ 2 Corinthians 1:20–.

⁶ Deut. 4:37.

⁷ Deut. 7:6–8; 9:29; 10:15; 14:2, 21.

⁸ Deut. 1:26–27, 32; 7:6–8; 9:6–7, 13, **24**; 31:20–21, 26–29; 32:15, 28–29.

⁹ Deut. 28:68; 32:10;

¹⁰ Deut. 31:20–21, 29.

¹¹ Deut. 1:10–11; 2:14; 7:9; 9:5; 10:22; 15:6; 26:5.

¹² Deut. 4:7–8; 7:21; 20:1, 4; 23:14; **31:6–8**, 23.

¹³ Deut. 32:3–4.

¹⁴ Deut. 1:30; 3:22; 7:22; 9:3; **20:4**; 32:35.

10. God never gives up on His people.¹⁵
11. God is sovereign over every part of your journey.¹⁶
12. God always provides everything you need.¹⁷
13. God knows what you're going through. He sees you.¹⁸
14. **Fight against your sin.**¹⁹
15. Consider your future.²⁰
16. Obedience is the key to true happiness.²¹
17. Fear God, not man.²²
18. God disciplines His children.²³
19. Meditate on God's Word.²⁴
20. Love the least of these.²⁵
21. Rejoice in God.²⁶
22. Take courage: there is no one like our God.²⁷
23. Remember that we are not home yet.²⁸

1. God Chose You

³³ Did any people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire,
as you have heard, and live?

³⁴ Or did God ever try to go and take for Himself a nation from the midst of another nation,
by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war,
by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors,
according to all that the Lord your God **did for you** in Egypt before your eyes?

³⁵ **To you it was shown, that you might know that the Lord Himself is God;**
there is none other besides Him.

³⁶ Out of heaven He let you hear His voice, that He might instruct you;
on earth He showed you His great fire,
and you heard His words out of the midst of the fire.

³⁷ And because He loved your fathers, therefore **He chose** their descendants after them;
and He brought you out of Egypt with His Presence, with His mighty power,
³⁸ driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you,
to bring you in, to give you their land as an inheritance, as it is this day.

Deut. 4: 33–37

¹⁵ Deut. 30:2–6.

¹⁶ Deut. 2:30, 33, 36; 3:24; 4:39; 8:2–3; 11:31; 13:3; 23:4; **32:39**;

¹⁷ Deut. 6:10–11; 8:14–16; 11:2–7; 26:5, 8–9; **29:5; 32:10–12**;

¹⁸ Deut. 2:7.

¹⁹ Deut. 7:5, 25; 12:2–4; 13:5, 9, 17; 17:7, 12; 19:19; 20:16; 21:21; 22:21–24; 23:9, 14; 24:4; 29:18.

²⁰ Deut. 32:28–29.

²¹ Deut. 4:1–2, 30; 5:1, 28–29, 32; **6:4–9**, 17–18; 8:1, 11; **10:12–13**; 11:8, 13, 22; 12:1, 25, 28, 32; 13:18; 15:5; 19:9;
26:16–19; 27:1, 10, 26; 28:1, 14, 15, 45, 58; 29:9; 30:2–10;

²² Deut. 1:21, 29; 3:2, 22; 4:10; 6:2, 13; 7:17–18, 21; 10:20; 13:4; 14:23; 20:3; 28:58; 31:6–8, 12–13.

²³ Deut. 8:5.

²⁴ Deut. 11:18; 32:46

²⁵ Deut. 14:27–29; 15:7–8; 24:17–22; 26:12

²⁶ Deut. 12:7, 12, 18; 14:26; 16:11, 14–15; 24:5; 26:11; 27:7; **28:47**; 30:9; 32:43; **33:29**.

²⁷ Deut. 33:26–27.

²⁸ Deut. 12:9.

Q. Why has this group of people seen His power and heard His voice and tasted His love in such profound ways?

A. The answer is in **verse 37**: *Because God chose them?*

- God has never made His Presence known to anyone like He has to His people.
- And why has God made Himself known to them like this? *Because He chose them!*²⁹

And this is the language that God uses across the whole Bible:

- In the NT, Jesus looks at His disciples and says, “I chose you” (**John 6:70**).
- In His letter to the Christians scattered throughout the world, the Apostle Peter says, “Hey don’t forget that you are ‘chosen’” (**1 Peter 2:9**).

Never forget, that if you are part of the family of God, it’s because God chose you.

- When you feel like nothing but a failure, remember that God chose you.
- When you doubt yourself, remember that God chose you.
- When you don’t feel like you can do what God is calling you to do, remember that God chose you.
- When obedience feels impossible, remember that God chose you.
- When the temptations to sin are so strong, remember that God chose you.
 - **GOD. CHOSE. YOU.**

Maybe you’re thinking, “*Yeah, but what if God made a mistake in choosing me?*”

- “*I’m not cut out for this.*”
- “*I don’t have the personality for this.*”
- “*I don’t have the gifts for this.*”

Illustration: Library Job

When I was a freshman in college, I was on the hunt for a job, and my mom told me I should try working at the college library. She told me that there isn’t really any work to do at a college library, and so I could just sit behind the desk and do my homework – and get paid for it.

- It turns out that the college library had an opening, but there were quite a few students applying for the job.
- Long story short, I made them believe that I was right guy for the job, and they hired me.

²⁹ One of my favorite books in the Chronicles of Narnia is “**The Silver Chair**.”

- It starts with Jill and Eustace being chased by bullies at their boarding school in England.
- They start calling out Aslan’s name (who represents Jesus), and suddenly, a door opens in the gate, and they rush through...
- [Jill] “I was wondering – I mean – could there be some mistake? Because nobody called me and Scrubb, you know. It was we who asked to come here. Scrubb said we were to call to – to Somebody – it was a name I wouldn’t know – and perhaps the Somebody would let us in. And we did, and then we found the door open.”
- [Aslan] “You would not have called to me unless I had been calling to you.”

But what I didn't **realize** was that they expected me to work the whole time.
And what **they** didn't realize was that I was planning on doing homework the whole time.

And so it ended up being a **miserable experience** for all of us.

- I didn't want to be there.
- Eventually they didn't want me to be there.

Why? Because they chose the wrong guy.

- They thought they knew me, but they didn't.

That's not the way it works with God!

- He knew everything about you before He chose you...*and then He chose you!*

God has called Liz and I to do some really hard things in our life, and He is continuing to call us to do hard things...and one of the most powerful encouragements for us to obey God's call on our lives is remembering that "He chose us."

And if he chose us...

- And He will complete the good work that He started (**Phil. 1:6**).
- Because He's not just the author of our faith; He is also "the finisher" (**Heb. 12:2**).

2. God Loves You Because He Loves You

Maybe you are thinking to yourself, "Why would God choose Me? I'm...nobody."³⁰

- Maybe you look in the mirror, and you hate what you see.
- Maybe you feel weak, empty, broken, dirty, useless, sinful...³¹
- And you think to yourself, I don't have anything to offer God...

What if I told you that you were right...?

- That you *are* weak
- That you *are* dirty & sinful
- That you *don't* have anything to offer God...³²

But then what if I told you that your weakness and sinfulness have absolutely no bearing on God's love for you. None!

- God doesn't choose people because they have something to offer Him.³³
- He chooses people because He loves them. Period.

³⁰ "I'm just a nobody trying to tell everybody all about somebody who saved my soul" ~ **Casting Crowns**.

³¹ Like Peter (**Luke 5:8**) or Moses (**Exod. 4:13**).

³² "My worth is not in what I own, not in the strength of flesh and bone, but in the costly wounds of love at the cross" ~ Keith & Kristyn Getty.

³³ "Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things" (**Acts 17:25**).

⁶“For you are a holy people to the Lord your God;
the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself,
a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.
⁷The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you
because you were more in number than any other people,
for you were the least of all peoples;
⁸but because the Lord loves you,
and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers,
the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand,
and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.
~ Deuteronomy 7:6–8

Q. Why does God loves us?
A. Because He loves us!³⁴

He doesn't love us because we are righteous or wise or humble or consistent or courageous or faithful or because of any other virtue we might wish we possessed.

- Moses reminds them, “You were *the least* of all people” (7:7).³⁵

He loves us because He loves us!

Probably everybody here knows the first stanza of the hymn “Amazing Grace”.

*“Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind but now I see.”*

Q. Do you know who wrote those words?

A. **John Newton**.

- John Newton was born almost in 1725 – almost 300 years ago.
- As a young man, John Newton spent a number of years working on ships that transported slaves as part of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.
- Eventually, he became a captain of several slave ships.
- Even after he retired, he continued to invest in the slave trade.
 - In other words, John Newton was an active participant in one of the most horrific and barbaric atrocities that this country has ever known.³⁶
 - He made his living destroying lives and ripping apart families...*and that's putting it mildly.*

Yet, his song is probably the most universally beloved hymn in Christian history.

³⁴ “God loves us because He loves us.” ~ Thomas Manton.

³⁵ Reminiscent of Paul’s self-declaration in **1 Timothy 1:15**, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”

³⁶ Abortion would also be in this category.

Q. Why is that?

Q. Why does God save wretches like John Newton...and me...and you.

- Because He loves us.
- And because His love is **stronger** than our sins.
 - Because His love goes **deeper** than our sins.
 - Because His love is more **powerful** than our sins.

If God has chosen me...and if I know that He loves me...then why should I fear what He is calling me to do?³⁷

³⁷ God is Still with You

One of my favorite promises in the New Testament is **Hebrews 13:5** where we are reminded of something that God said in the Old Testament: *“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

Do you know where that promise comes from? **Deuteronomy 31.**

Be strong and of good courage,
do not fear nor be afraid of them;
for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you.
He will not leave you nor forsake you.
~ **Deuteronomy 31:6**³⁷

In Exodus and Leviticus, God made it clear that His Presence is what set His people apart from all the other peoples of the world. And here in Deuteronomy, He promises that He will never leave them – no matter what.

That doesn't mean it always feels like God is with us. There are times when God's people feel forsaken.

- In **Psalm 22:1**, David says, *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me?”*
- In that moment, David felt forsaken, but God's promise was stronger than David's feelings.

No doubt, there were days in the wilderness when Israel felt forsaken, but then God reminds them that He has been with them every step of the way.

And I have led you forty years in the wilderness.
Your clothes have not worn out on you,
And your sandals have not worn out on your feet.
~ **Deuteronomy 29:5**

The author of Hebrews reminds us that this promise is also true for us.

- When you go to work tomorrow, God will be with you.
- As you go home to your families... As you pour yourself into your children...
- As you do the laundry & wash the dishes...
- As you figure out how to pay your bills...
- As you get your van towed because the transmission went out...
- As you have those hard conversations...
- As you take a radical step of faith because you feel God calling you...

So now the question for us (and for the children of Israel on the verge of the Promised Land) is:
How do we respond to a God who has chosen us, loved us, and promised to always be with us?

Brothers and sisters...we will watch the giants fall as we walk in obedience.

What giants? How about...

- addiction to pornography. fear of man. discouragement. hopelessness. bitterness. pride.

But in the Name of Jesus, these giants fall when we walk in obedience to the Word of God.

Whatever God is calling you to do, it's because He knows you & loves you & wants what is best for your life. And as you trust Him and walk in obedience, you will watch giants fall.

3. We Join God when we Fight Against our Sin.

God knows that His people are sinners, and He knows that they will continue to struggle with sin until the day they die.

You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you.
~ *Deuteronomy 9:24*

That's their past.

And then here's their future.

When I have brought them to the land flowing with milk and honey,
Of which I swore to their fathers,
And they have eaten and filled themselves and grown fat,
Then they will turn to other gods and serve them;
And they will provoke Me and break My covenant.
~ *Deuteronomy 31:20*

God knows our struggle.³⁸

- But the fact that we struggle with sin does not mean that we

He also knows that the road of sin always leads to death.³⁹

And so, for the sake of their souls and their joy and their families and their future...God is calling them to wage war against their sin.

He knows that, as a nation, one of Israel's strongest temptations was toward idolatry.

- That's what they grew up with in Egypt.
- That's what they reverted to at Sinai when they made the golden calf.

³⁸ Psalm 103:14.

³⁹ Genesis 2:17; Romans 6:23.

And so as they prepare to enter into the Promise Land which was full of pagan cities and pagan gods with pagan altars in pagan temples, God is calling them to wage all out war against anything that would draw them into idolatry.

But thus you shall deal with them:

You shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars,
And cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images.

~ *Deuteronomy 7:5*

4. You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess severed their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree.

5. And you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place.

6. You shall not worship the Lord your God with such things.”

~ *Deuteronomy 12:2-4*

Sin is like a river. If you don't actively seek to destroy it – it will destroy you.

PRAYER