

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 5



DAY
1

The Way of God for His People Deuteronomy 1:1-2:7

Deuteronomy is the fifth book of the Pentateuch. It looks back as a reminder of all that God has done since the Exodus. It looks forward to what God will do taking the people into the Promised Land. It describes the New Society God will form in his people.

In English, Deuteronomy means *second law*, but Deuteronomy is actually a restatement and renewal of the law God gave at Mt. Sinai (Christopher Wright). The Hebrew title for the book is simply the opening words: **These are the words.**

Deuteronomy describes the creation of a moral society in which righteousness, justice, shalom, and goodness are the responsibility of all (Jonathan Sacks).

Deuteronomy is the description of how individuals come together in collective responsibility, deep commitment, and mutual love and fidelity to create a life together.

Deuteronomy is the story of God forming a people to be different—to be like God and to be God's representatives to the world.

Deuteronomy is the story of God forming a people who belong to him and who will be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, and a blessing to the nations. The essential word is COVENANT. God enters into a unique relationship with Israel. There are core themes that explain the covenant (and begin with the letter "C"). Israel is 1) chosen, 2) called, 3) constituted-created (new identity), 4) changed (new character), and 5) commissioned (purpose) to be a blessing to the nations.

The divine activity and presence of the One True God, personal morality, and social ethics joined together in a new law create a national way of life that is unique in the world. When Israel is holy, faithful, and obedient they will be blessed, and they will be a blessing to the nations.

Make a list of 5 to 10 main insights you learn from Deuteronomy 1:1–2:7. How do they apply to your life as a follower of Christ?

DAY
2

People Who Belong to God Deuteronomy 4:1-14

Above all, the people of God BELONG to God. They belong to the One True God. They belong to YHWH (Yahweh). This is God's Name. YHWH is not the generic word "god," it is the personal name of the God who has saved them out of Egyptian slavery and is taking them to a new land. It means God invites his people into personal relationship where they experience his presence (his nature and character), his power (mighty acts on their behalf), his purposes (plans to bless the nations), and his promises (for their flourishing).

YHWH first reveals his name to Moses in Exodus 3:13-15. My name is *I Am Who I Am* or *I Will Be Who I Will Be*. Names in the Bible speak about the nature of the one who is named. We could not know God is like this if God did not communicate his very nature to us. Who is our God? What is our God like?

God is self-existent and eternal. He does not depend on anyone or anything for his existence.

God is relational. He interacts with people. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ... and of Moses ... and of Israel.

God is present with us. He is not at a distance. The presence of God was precious to Moses (Exodus 33:12–17), although the people were often fearful of that mighty presence.

God is the one who makes a covenant with us. This emerges out of both relationship and presence, and it defines our relationship and our experience of God. God makes an enduring, transforming, binding, and obligating relationship with his people. (More on this in the weeks ahead.)

God is sovereign, almighty, majestic, holy, all-wise, gracious, and awesome (Exodus 34:5-7). This is our God, and we are his people. See the “C” words in Day 1. It is a holy relationship and a high responsibility.

What did you learn from the day’s text? What spoke to you? Praise God for each of the qualities that describe his nature.

DAY
3

Listening to the Prophets

On each Day 3 you will see how the Old Testament prophets revisit the themes and concerns of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy was the plan and will of God for his people.

1. The prophets remind Israel of God’s Word. They remind Israel about the reality of God. God is the One True God and all other gods are useless idols. God is holy and good. God loves his people. God wants to bless his people. God has a good and perfect will for Israel. The prophets tell Israel to remember God.
2. The prophets point out the rebellion of Israel. Israel did not listen to God, did not love God, did not worship God, and did not live in the ways of God. They were unfaithful and disobedient. They were not just and generous. They followed other gods. They acted like all the other nations. They failed to keep the covenant commitments God gave to them.
3. The prophets explain the consequences of that failure. All the suffering and destruction from foreign invaders is because of their failure. The exile and captivity they will experience is because of their sin.
4. The prophets call the people of God to repent and return to their God. God loves them. God will forgive them and heal them. God will bring them back to their land and bless them again even more, but they must humble themselves, confess, repent, and return to the way of obedience.
5. The prophets speak words of judgment on the nations of the earth, including the very nations that defeated Israel. God’s will is for justice, shalom, and righteousness to be done among all the nations and for all nations to be blessed by God. But the nations are also guilty of evil. The nations will be judged, but if they repent, God will bless the nations as well.
6. And finally, the prophets look forward to the true King of Israel to rise up one day and redeem and restore the hearts of the people back to God. Then God will restore the Kingdom to his people, for the salvation of the world.

DAY
4

Deuteronomy in the New Testament 1 Peter 2

On each Day 4, you will see these themes in the New Testament. If there is one book in the New Testament and one chapter in that book that most fully gathers all the themes of Deuteronomy and applies them to the Church it is 1 Peter 2.

Peter describes his audience as God’s elect and God’s exiles scattered throughout the world. As God’s elect, they are called and chosen to belong to God. As God’s exiles, they are no longer identified by their participation in any particular nation on earth, they are identified simply by belonging to God wherever they may live (1:1).

They are chosen by God and precious to God (2:4). They are living stones being built into the Living Stone (Jesus). They are a spiritual house (2:5). The Apostle Paul says they are a living temple (Ephesians 2:20-22) where God lives by his Spirit.

They are a holy priesthood who offer spiritual sacrifices (2:5). They do the work of mediating the Lord and Savior Jesus to the world. Their very lives are a sacrifice for the sake of Jesus and for the sake of the world that needs Jesus.

They are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and God’s special possession (2:9). Each phrase is powerful. These

words are the New Identity of this New People of God. Jewish Peter is applying the identity of Israel described in Deuteronomy to the Church, or the people of Jesus. They are those who have received the mercy (grace, love, forgiveness, goodness) of God (2:10).

And repeating the themes of 1:1, they are foreigners, exiles, strangers, sojourners in the world (2:9). The world is not their true home, only their temporary home. But the world is their missional responsibility. As they make their way through the world, they represent the Lord God. They live holy lives and do good deeds to the glory of God (2:13–25). They are willing to suffer (3:8–22; 4:12–19) as they live for God and his purposes (4:1–11). The Church is God's new society and presence of the Kingdom of God breaking into the fallen world.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & LIFEGROUP CONVERSATION

As a group, spend a few minutes just catching up. How was your week? Where did you experience God this week? As a group, how can you celebrate the goodness of God on behalf of one another? Is there anyone in your group that needs comfort?

ONE: How often do you read anything in the Old Testament? When was the last time you read the book of Deuteronomy? Why do you think many Christians neglect the Old Testament?

TWO: There is a big theme we want to address right away. The Judeo-Christian faith is concerned with the individual AND it is just as concerned with society. Contemporary Christianity tends to focus on the personal, private spiritual life and neglect the ways of God for life together. And not just life together in the Church, but the ways of God for society. The entire Bible is profoundly concerned for ALL OF LIFE.

The Bible speaks about politics, economics, law, culture, crime and punishment, war, sexuality, family—everything. In the book of Deuteronomy, God is creating a New Society with all its systems and structures. You will see the principles God establishes for society. The great challenge is to discern how we respond to and establish those principles and values for being a Good Society. How interested are you in learning what God says about these social themes?

THREE: From your Day 1 reading, what insights spoke most powerfully to you? Also, look at the many “C” words that describe what God has done for you and for all his people. How often do you think about your life with God in these words?

FOUR: Day 2 focused on the God who is “our” God. The Christian life is a life of intimacy and encounter with the One True God (Father, Son, and Spirit). Using the descriptions of God on that day, how did you experience God's presence with you this week? What can Christians do to be more aware of God's presence and activity?

FIVE: On Day 4 there are many descriptions of God's people in 1 Peter 2. As a group, go through each description and talk about what the phrase means for you today. In particular, what do you think about being an exile and stranger in the world?