

HOW TO LOVE GOD

Deuteronomy



SERIES BREAKUP

DATE	BIBLE	DATE	BIBLE
25-30 Apr	Ephesians	30 May - 5 Jun	Deut 6:4-9,20-25
2-8 May	Deut 1:19-40	6-12 Jun	Deut 7:1-11
9-15 May	Deut 2:24-37	13-19 Jun	Deut 8:6-18
16-22 May	Deut 4:10-20	20-26 Jun	Deut 9:4-19
23-29 May	Deut 5:1-21	27 Jun – 3 Jul	Deut 11:8-17

DEUTERONOMY: HOW TO LOVE GOD

MAIN PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

Israel is on the plains of Moab about to enter the Promised Land. Their leader Moses is about to die. And so comes Deuteronomy - 3 sermons from Moses to tell God's people how to love God.

Deuteronomy is to the Old Testament what Romans is to the New Testament; it's the most thorough explanation of the character and purposes of God, how to become one of God's people and how to live and to love God as one of his people.

The main purpose of the book is to call every generation of Israelites to faithful covenant love for God, in response to his salvation and revealing of himself. Hearing God's word on the lips of Moses is meant to lead God's people to learn, to fear, to obey and to have life. How Israel hears God's words, and what they do in response, will determine whether they prosper or perish in the Promised Land.

If you could capture the message of Deuteronomy in 1 sentence, it would be this one (Deut 10:12-13):

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart & with all your soul, & to observe the LORD's commands & decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

For Israel, love for God is shown by having Yahweh alone as their God (6:4) demonstrated in unwavering loyalty, obeying all God's commands, and resisting the pull and allure of the false gods they will meet as they enter the Promised Land and interact with other nations.

Our culture, time and place in history is different, some of the commands have changed between the Old and New Testaments, and the false gods that surround us are perhaps not as obvious as they were for Israel. Even still, our love for God is shown in much the same way, as we strive to:

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind' and *'Love your neighbour as yourself'* (Matt 22:37-39)

...in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship. (Romans 12:1)

OTHER BIG MESSAGES

God's election: God's choice of Israel had nothing to do with their physical or spiritual abilities (7:6-8, 9:1-23) but was an act of sheer grace, based on God's free decision to love their ancestors (4:32-38). In being God's chosen people, Israel had the incredible privilege of being his holy people and treasured possession (7:6, 14:2, 26:18-19, 28:9), with the task of demonstrating to the nations around them the superiority and goodness of God (26:19).

There is a match between God's election of Israel and of Christians - we too are chosen by sheer grace, have the privilege of being his treasured possession, and have a similar purpose to proclaim his superiority and goodness to the world so they might turn to God (1 Pet 2:7-10).

The Covenant: The way God chose to relate to Israel was via covenants - agreements that bind God to people and people to God. The Israel we meet on the border of the Promised Land had been saved from Egypt to belong to God, and were brought to Mount Sinai where God made a covenant with them through Moses (Exodus 19:4-6).

In this covenant God explains what is required in response to his saving and choosing of them, and these are the things reiterated and expanded on by Moses in Deuteronomy. What is required is to obey God's words as his subjects and loyal people.

Christians too are in a covenant, the new covenant (Jer 31:31-34) brought about by Christ's death (Mark 14:24), so we too are called to faithfully obey as God's subjects and loyal people.

Blessing and Curse in the Promised Land: Israel's faithfulness to God and the covenant will result in either blessing or curses. If they keep the covenant they will be blessed: they will prosper in the land and God will cause it to abundantly provide (7:11-16, 11:8-15, 28:1-14). If they break the covenant they will quickly perish from the land and God will turn the land against them (4:25-28, 8:17-20, 11:16-17, 28:15-16).

Christians await a different Promised Land, the new creation where: '*God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them*' (Rev 21:3). Christians also don't have the same tight connection between our obedience and physical blessing, or disobedience and cursing/suffering. Instead we have '*every spiritual blessing in Christ*' (Eph 1:3) and suffering serves not to show our unfaithfulness but to refine our faith:

'In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.' (1 Peter 1:6-7)

The Role of the Law: contrary to popular belief, the Law was never the way for Israel to be saved but was the grateful response of those who had already been saved (6:20-25). Moses shows the law was not a burden but a response to the privilege of knowing God's will (4:6-8), not a duty but an expression of love for God (26:16-19), not merely external actions but evidence of the nature of Israel's hearts (10:12-11:1), and not a pressured response to a tyrant but a willing submitting of everything - all you are and all you have - to the gracious God of Israel (6:4-9, 10:12-13).

The particular laws Christians follow have changed. We are now under the "law of Christ" (Gal 6:2, 1 Cor 9:21), and Jesus says on a number of occasions '*A new command I give you*' (John 13:34).

There is something new, but what has not changed is the purpose of the law - it remains the grateful response of those who have already been saved. Obeying God's law for Christians is not a burden, a duty, merely about external actions or a pressured response to a tyrant, but the incredible privilege of knowing and doing God's will so we can please our heavenly Father.

Teaching Others: The covenant's purpose and conditions, God's character, the privilege of being God's people, - all these things Israel were meant to pass onto their children and to future generations:

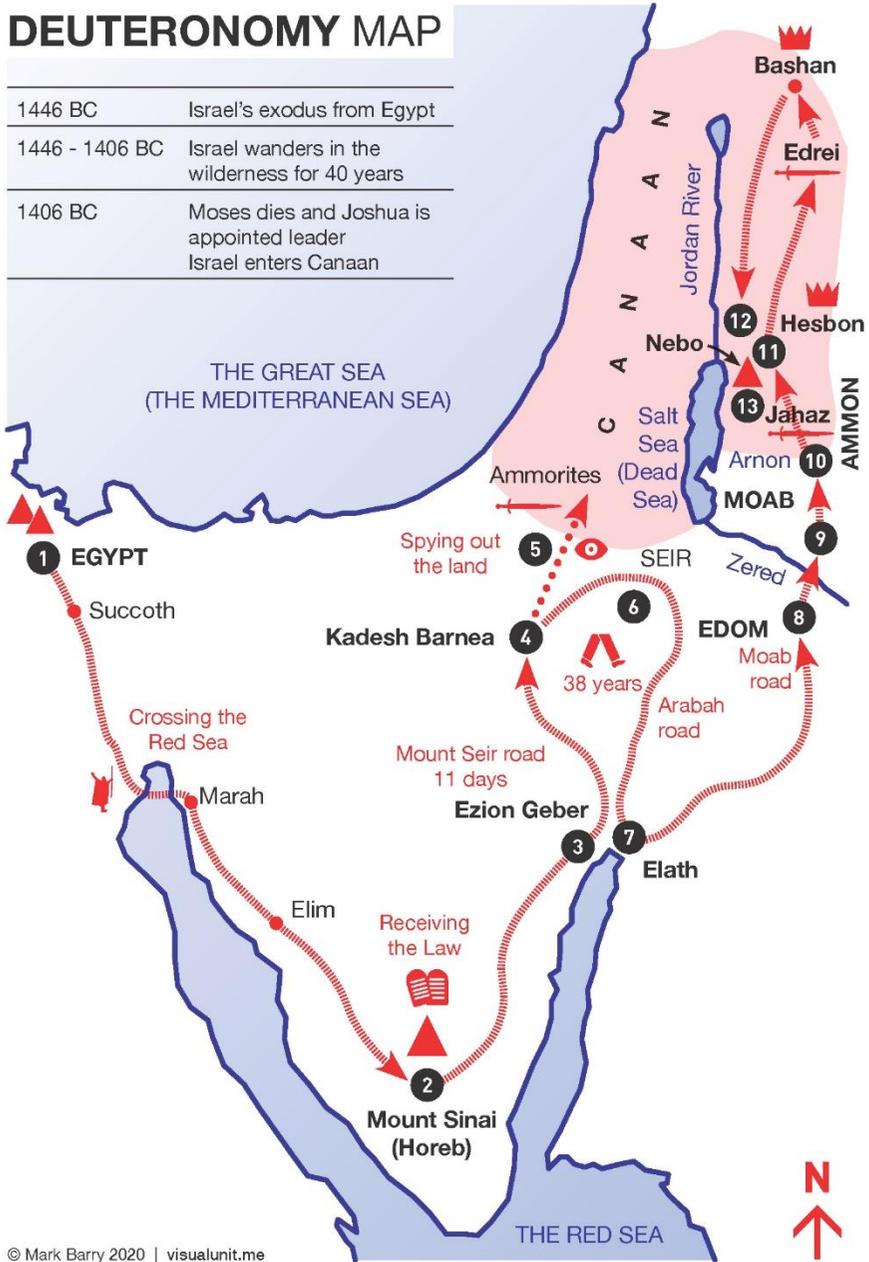
'These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (6:6-9)

Like Israel Christians are to remember, to teach one another, and to raise the next generation to know, follow and obey God. To give a few examples: *'the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others'* (2 Tim 2:2); *'Bring [your children] up in the training and instruction of the Lord'* (Eph 6:4); *'Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another'* (Col 3:16).

Christians *want* to love God. Deuteronomy shows us *how* to.

DEUTERONOMY MAP

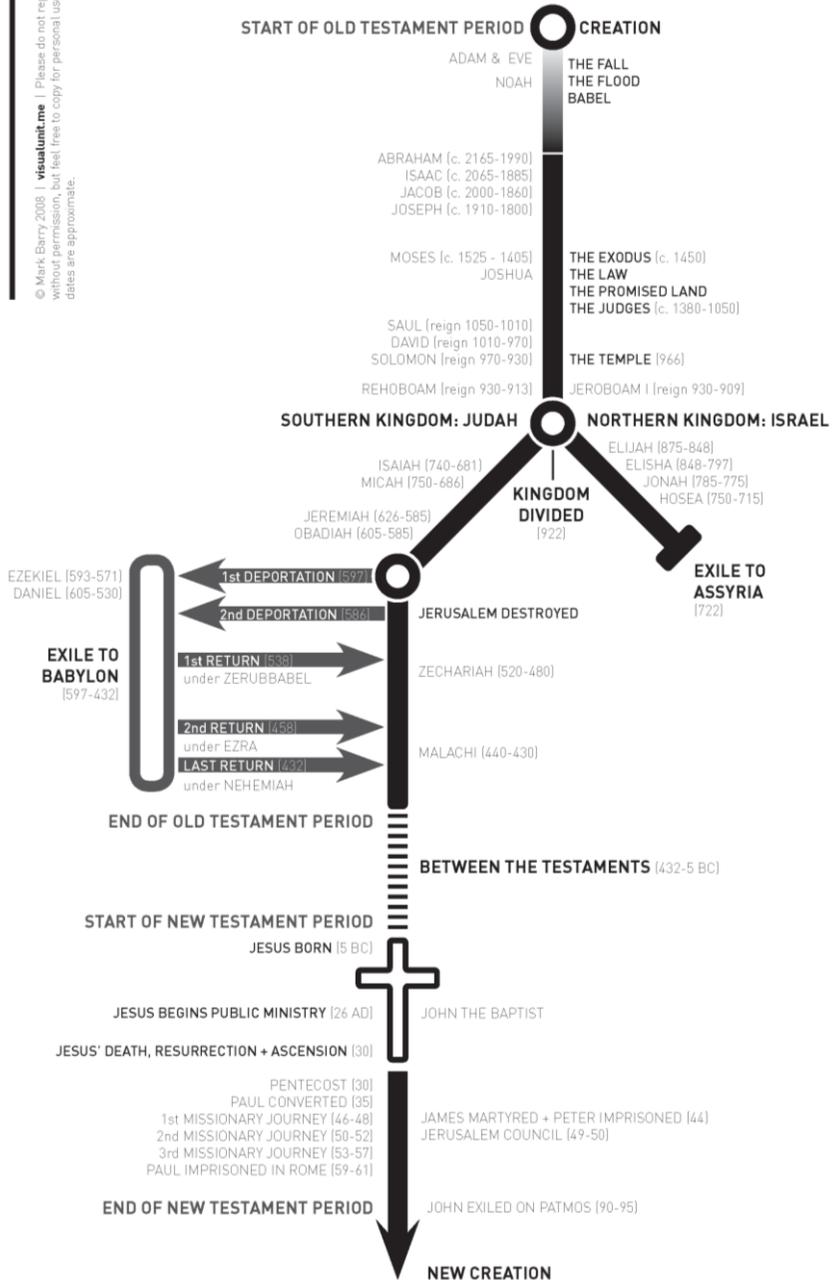
1446 BC	Israel's exodus from Egypt
1446 - 1406 BC	Israel wanders in the wilderness for 40 years
1406 BC	Moses dies and Joshua is appointed leader Israel enters Canaan



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BIBLE TIMELINE

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EPHESIANS • 25-30 APR

DIRECTION: This weekend is Salt Stay and we're looking at the whole book of Ephesians across Saturday and Sunday. So for the bible discussion this week we're going to do a big-picture whirlwind look at the whole book of Ephesians – or as much of it as you can get through!

Don't stress if you only get a little way through Ephesians, or if you get overwhelmed by all the ideas you come across. This bible discussion is meant to whet our appetites for Salt Stay, whether we can be there in person or can just listen to the talks or watch the stream later on.

To help us engage with what we're reading, pause after you read out each chapter to ask the questions.

PRAY TO START: Help us to see some of your massive plan today God.

INTO THE BIBLE: Explain to everyone that we're doing a whirlwind big picture look at the book of Ephesians today, before Salt Stay.

- Watch "[The Bible Project - Overview: Ephesians](#)" (you can google this)
- **Read out 1 chapter of Ephesians** (or play it on an audio bible app). After each chapter you read, pause and ask everyone:
 - What stands out to you?
 - What questions do you have?
- When you're about to finish your bible discussion time – regardless of how far through Ephesians you got – ask this:
From what we've seen in Ephesians today, tell me in 1 sentence...
 - What do you think is the big message of Ephesians?
 - What is 1 thing you want to do in response to what we've read?

PRAY TO END: God help us learn more about your massive plan this weekend, so we can know you better, love and obey you more deeply.

DEUT 1:19-40 • 2-8 MAY

DIRECTION: We're kicking off in the book of Deuteronomy today, to learn how to love God. Over the next few months, we'll explore chapters 1-11, then dive back into Deuteronomy next year. Since the OT is often more unfamiliar to us and there's background info we don't know, we'll generally look at smaller sections in our small groups, and bigger sections in our sermons on Sundays, to make it more digestible.

In this first bible discussion, we'll get an overview of the whole book, then look at God's faithfulness to his unfaithful people – when Israel left Egypt, they arrived at the Promised Land but refused to trust God and enter it, so most of that whole generation never enter the land. Moses is speaking now though at the edge of the land, to the next generation of Israelites who are about to enter it. Though His people are unfaithful, God is faithful.

PRAY TO START: Help us to love you & to learn how to from Deuteronomy

LAUNCH: Tell me everything you know about Deuteronomy. Go!

- How do you feel about reading this OT book?
- Anyone got tips on how to read and to get the most out of the OT?

WATCH: [“The Bible Project - Overview: Deuteronomy”](#) (you can google this)

Read Deuteronomy 1:19-40

OBSERVATION: What event is Moses talking about here? What happened?

MEANING: Why were God's people unwilling to enter the Promised Land?

- Why do you think God judged his people in this way?
- Who is Moses talking to now as he retells this event?

Hint: check out 1:39-40, 2:14-17. It's the Next Generation of Israelites Moses is talking to, 40 years after the events he recounts in 1:19-40. Again, the Israelites are on the edge of the Promised Land, in the plains of Moab (1:1).

- What does that show us about God's character?

Even though God was justified in judging and wiping out the whole of Israel for their unfaithfulness, he remains faithful to his covenant and enables the Next Generation to enter the land he promised to Abraham and his descendants.

APPLY: God doesn't tell us to trust him to enter the Promised Land of Israel. But he does tell us to trust him in many other ways, at many other times, with many other things.

- Where are you struggling to trust God at the moment?
- How does God's character – both that he judges sin and that he is constantly faithful – encourage you to trust and obey him?

PRAY TO END: Praise God that he is faithful, even when we're not. Ask God to help us trust and obey him.

DEUT 2:24-37 • 9-15 MAY

DIRECTION: We're looking at a heavy passage and idea today: Holy War. God commands his people to utterly wipe out and destroy all the men, women and children of Heshbon (part of the Amorite nation). And they do. This raises doubts for us about the goodness of God's character. But God's judgements are always right. God is using his people here as the means by which he brings about his divine judgement on sinful humans.

If God never showed mercy to anyone that'd be fair. Incredibly though, just as God chose to show mercy to Israel in spite of what they deserved, so in the gospel God chooses to show us mercy in spite of what we deserve. Christ was killed for us: *'For he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.'* (Isaiah 53:5)

PRAY TO START: Help us to understand your character here God.

LAUNCH: If a Christian said to you "I prefer the New Testament God to the Old Testament God", what would you say?

What extra things would you add if a non-Christian said this to you?

Read Deuteronomy 2:24-37

- Let me share 1 necessary bit of background info: Sihon is the King of Heshbon, which is part of the Amorite nation / the Amorites.

If you look at point 11 on your map (on page 7 of these notes), you can see that Heshbon is part of the shaded Amorites nation.

- What did the Israelites do to Sihon and his people?
- How do you feel about the fact God told the Israelites to do this?
- Why do you think God commanded Israel to do this?

Read Genesis 15:12-16, Deuteronomy 7:1-4 and 12:29-31

- What would you add about why God commanded Israel to do this?

Read Ephesians 2:1-5

- What's the same and what's different between us and the Amorites?
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- *BONUS QUESTION:* Some Christians (or people who've claimed to be Christian) have used bits of the bible like Deuteronomy 2:24-37 to support going to war on / crusades on / genocide of, ungodly nations.

What clues in Deuteronomy 2 and other passages we've looked at today show this is an inappropriate application?

The main clue is that the nations Israel are to destroy are listed. They don't fight the Ammonites (2:37), or all nations who reject God, just those in the Promised Land.

APPLY: How do you feel about what God asked his Son Jesus to do?

- When are you tempted to feel like you deserved salvation?
- How does a passage like Deuteronomy 2:24-37 help you remember God's undeserved grace?
- What unanswered questions do you have from this passage / topic?

PRAY TO END: Praise God that he is merciful to us, and pray that we would rightly be in awe of both God's kindness and his firmness.

DEUT 4:10-20 • 16-22 MAY

DIRECTION: God gave Israel the privilege of belonging to and worshipping him. Yet they're tempted to worship God *plus* idols, or idols *instead of* God. So Moses pleads with them – flee idolatry! We have the same privilege, and the same warning to wholeheartedly worship and enjoy God alone.

PRAY TO START: Help us to wholeheartedly follow Jesus.

LAUNCH: When you hear “idol” what springs to mind?

Read Deuteronomy 4:1-2 and 4:10-20

- What does Moses tell Israel to do, or not do? Why?
- Why do you think God hates idolatry so much?
- Why do you think Israel need to be warned so firmly about this?

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10, 1 Cor 10:14 & Colossians 3:5-10

- God has changed the way Christians relate to Him and to idols. How did he change it? What did he change it to? How should we live now?

APPLY: To apply this, split into guys and girls / smaller groups. Get people to answer some questions from this list, then pray. (*You might want to print this list out*). These questions can reveal what might be idols in our lives.

- What preoccupies me? What do I daydream about?
- What do I use to comfort myself when things go bad or get difficult?
- What makes me feel most valuable? Where do I get my self-worth?
- What am I the proudest of? What do I want to be known for?
- What do I lead with in convos? What do I post most on social media?
- What prayer, if unanswered, would make me seriously consider turning away from God?

PRAY TO END: Praise God for enabling us to worship and belong to him. Ask for his help to wholeheartedly worship him and to flee idolatry.

DEUT 5:1-21 • 23-29 MAY

DIRECTION: The 10 Commandments are Israel's guidebook of how to live, so they can please God, and can be blessed by God to live long in the Promised Land. That's similar to why God gives Christians commands: it's how we please him. For this bible discussion we're rolling the observation, meaning and application questions all into one, to do as we go.

PRAY TO START: Help us to obey your commands to please you God.

LAUNCH: What are the 10 Commandments? Can we together say them all?

Read Deuteronomy 5:1-21 and 5:32-33

- Work your way through each of the 10 commandments. For each one:
 - In your own words, what is the commandment?
 - Why are Israel told to do / not do it?
 - What could it look like for Christians / you to obey this now?
- What do you think the purpose of the 10 Commandments was *for Israel*? What clues do you get in Deuteronomy 5:1-21, 5:32-33?
Importantly, their obedience to these commands doesn't save them; they have already been saved out of Egypt (5:6) when God makes this covenant with them. Instead, it's their side of the covenant: this is what it looks like for them to obey God.
- What do you think the purpose of them is *for Christians now*?
This is a complicated topic, so you're unlikely to explore it all or get consensus in the time you have. That's ok though – just let people raise their thoughts and questions in a respectful way and look forward to unpacking it more on Sunday. If you want to read or share more with your group, check out the intro notes on page 4-5.

PRAY TO END: Praise God that Jesus fulfilled the law for us (Matthew 5:17). Pray that we'd keep God's commandments to obey and please him.

DEUT 6:4-9,20-25 • 30 MAY-5 JUN

DIRECTION: Israel are meant to love God completely *and* they're meant to teach the next generation of Israelites to love God completely. This is not meant to be accidental; it's a deliberate task they're to set their minds and efforts towards. Like Israel, Christians are to teach each other and to raise the next generation to know, follow and obey God too. Again, for this bible discussion we'll roll observation, meaning and application questions into 1.

PRAY TO START: Help us to pass the gospel on really well.

LAUNCH: What's 1 bit of advice you got from a parent or carer as a kid?

Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 6:20-25

- What does Moses tell Israel to do?
- Why do you think he tells them to do these things?
- What stands out to you in the hypothetical-parent's answer (6:21-25)?
- Do you feel a responsibility to teach and encourage other Christians? What about teaching and encouraging the next generation of kids?
- Do you think *all* Christians have this responsibility, or just *some* of us?

Read 2 Tim 2:1-2, Ephesians 4:14-16, 6:1-4 & Colossians 3:16

- What would you add to your answer about Christians' responsibilities?
- In teaching/sharing the gospel/bible with Christians, what do you find *complicated* and what do you find *easy* – when doing this with:
 - Christian kids and youth?
 - A brand-new Christian?
 - A Christian who is your peer?
 - A Christian who's older than you (older either in age or in how long they've been a Christian)?

PRAY TO END: Praise God we even have a saviour to tell each other and the next generation about! Ask for help to get better at teaching others.

DEUT 7:1-11 • 6-12 JUN

DIRECTION: Israel will face a danger in the Land: pressure to be like the crowd & follow the world instead of God. We face the same danger.

PRAY TO START: Help us to be happily counter-cultural as Christians.

LAUNCH: Have you ever bought / worn / done something because you wanted to be like everyone else? What was it?

Read Deuteronomy 7:1-6

- What does God tell the Israelites to do / not do?
- Why does God tell them to do / not do this?
- What's the danger if they don't listen to God? i.e. what's at stake?

Read Deuteronomy 7:7-11

- With the commands in 7:1-6 to remove other nations, your average Ancient Jew might start to think Israel is better than those nations, and that's why God loves Israel but is judging those other nations.

What truths does Moses give in 7:7-11 to correct this way of thinking?

Read 1 Peter 2:9-12

- How are we Christians:
 - Similar to Israel in belonging to God?
 - Similar to Israel in how we're to treat the culture around us?
 - Different to Israel in how we're to treat the culture around us?

APPLY: It's hard to be counter-cultural and to stand out in our culture!

- What Christian *teaching & behaviour* do you find it hard to stand up for?
- How have the bible verses today encouraged & challenged you in this?

PRAY TO END: Praise God that we are "his special possession" simply due to his choice to love us. Pray for courage to stand-out & stand-up for Jesus.

DEUT 8:6-18 • 13-19 JUN

DIRECTION: We've seen 1 danger Israel will face as they enter the Promised Land: pressure to compromise and follow the culture round them. Today there's another danger: success. When God blesses them in the Land, they might proudly imagine it's come from their efforts, not God's. As Christians who live in 1 of the most prosperous safe countries in the world, at 1 of the most prosperous times in history, this is super relevant for us!

PRAY TO START: Thankyou God that you're so abundantly generous to us.

LAUNCH: What's 1 thing you regularly thank God for?

Read Deuteronomy 8:6-18

- What is a danger Israel will face as they enter the Promised Land?
- To protect them from this danger:
 - What does Moses command Israel to do?
 - What does Moses remind Israel of?
- How do you think these commands and reminders will protect Israel?
- Do you feel like you face a similar danger to Israel?

Read Romans 1:21-23, Ephesians 1:3 and Colossians 3:17

- What do you notice about "thanks" or "praise" in these passages?
- How could these reminders and commands help protect us?

APPLY & PRAY: To apply this let's spend a bunch of time just giving thanks to God for anything and everything we can think of.

You could encourage people to do quick 1-2 sentence prayers for this, e.g. "Thanks God for a safe country, Amen". That way you'll all get to share lots of things, and get to thank God for the huge variety of things he's blessed us with, and it won't feel weird if lots of people pray multiple times.

DEUT 9:4-19 • 20-26 JUN

DIRECTION: Here's a 3rd danger Israel face as they enter the Promised Land: imagining they get it as a reward for their righteousness. But Moses has a big point to drive home to Israel: "You are not righteous!" In fact, *'you have been rebellious against the Lord ever since I have known you'* (9:24). They're only in because of God's perfect character & faithfulness to his promises. That's the reason we're declared righteous & have fellowship with God too.

PRAY TO START: Help us never to take your forgiveness of us for granted.

Read Deuteronomy 9:4-6

- What is another danger Israel will face as they enter the Land?
- What is Moses' big point here? How does he drive it home for Israel?

Read Deuteronomy 9:7-19

- What stands out to you in Moses' retelling of the Golden Calf saga?
- Why do you think Moses would remind Israel of this story in particular?
- What do we see about Israel's character? What about God's character?

Read 1 John 1:5-2:2

- What big point is John trying to drive home for Christians here?
- What do we see about our character? What about God's character?

APPLY & PRAY: To apply this, split into guys and girls / smaller groups to share and confess our sin/s, and to pray for each other.

- What's a sin you need to confess to God – something you have done but shouldn't have, or haven't done but should have?
- Let's pray for each other about these things, trusting God's promise to *"forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9).

DEUT 11:8-17 • 27 JUN-3 JUL

DIRECTION: Here there's a big difference between Christians and Ancient Israel: God *blessed* or *cursed* Israel based on their obedience, and did this in *physical* material ways. But with Christians God *blesses* and *disciplines* / *refines* us, and he's given us every *spiritual* blessing in Christ Jesus.

PRAY TO START: Help us to trust you when it's hard to do that.

LAUNCH: What's one thing you'd love God to give you?

Read Deuteronomy 10:12-13

- This is a great summary sentence for the whole book of Deuteronomy. What stands out to you in this sentence?
- How does it remind you of things we've already seen in the book?

Read Deuteronomy 11:8-17, 26-28

- What blessings / curses does God promise if they obey / disobey him?
- Do you think this is how God relates to Christians now? Why, why not?

Read Ephesians 1:3, Hebrews 12:7-11, 1 Peter 1:6-7

- What do you notice about God blessing and judging Christians here? How is it similar or different to Ancient Israel?

Check out the notes on page 4 for more info. But basically, unlike Israel: a) our blessings are mainly spiritual, b) physical material blessings are no longer a sign of God's approval of the way we live, and c) when God judges us it is discipline to grow the quality of our faith, rather than punishment to cut us off from his people.

APPLY: How can we keep trusting God: (A) when he doesn't give us what we ask for? (B) when we're experiencing suffering and discipline?

PRAY TO END: Praise God for all we've learnt about how to love him from Deuteronomy! Ask for his help to apply it.



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And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart & with all your soul, and to observe the LORD's commands & decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

Deuteronomy 10:12-13