

JUNE 2014

TODAY IN THE **Word**

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always.

Deuteronomy 5:29



Deuteronomy:
The Importance of Obedience

TODAY WITH PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Bible Institute

When God Said “No”



What’s on your bucket list?

I have traveled widely and experienced much in my life, but I still have a few things on my “want to do some day” list: visiting

the Great Wall of China, touring the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York, taking my whole family to Israel, and perhaps becoming a certified scuba diver.

For Moses, one thing on his bucket list would remain undone—entering the Promised Land. In this month’s study of Deuteronomy, we will consider the concluding portion of Moses’ life. At the end of Deuteronomy, Moses was 120 years old. Born into slavery, he rose to a position of power, spending 40 years in Pharaoh’s palace. For the next 40 years, he lived as a shepherd in Midian, until God commissioned him to confront Pharaoh and free the Israelites from bondage.

After their triumphal exit, Moses delivered millions of people out of servitude and brought them safely from one land to the other. Moses was indeed a great man of God. His 120 years were filled with trial but also incredible triumph.

What was left for him to accomplish? What else could have possibly been on his bucket list? I am certain one of Moses’ greatest desires was to set foot in the Promised Land. The journey from Egypt should have taken a mere eleven days, but it became 40 years of wandering due

to their disobedience and mistrust. Now, as he stood on the brink of this triumphant moment, he was no doubt painfully aware that he would never enter.

This moment exhibits a powerful mixture of consequences and grace. Being denied the chance to set foot in the Promised Land, Moses experienced the painful consequences of his disobedience to God. During one incident in the wilderness, the Israelites worried about having enough water. God instructed Moses to speak to a rock, and He would provide water. Instead of doing as God instructed, Moses struck the rock (Num. 20:12). While water came rushing forth, his action was disobedient.

Scholars have given different possible motivations for God’s decision not to let Moses enter the Promised Land, but unless God reveals His motivation, we cannot know it. We do know that Moses didn’t completely obey God’s command and forfeited the chance to walk in the Promised Land.

Mixed with that painful consequence, however, is evidence of God’s amazing grace. While He prohibited Moses from setting foot in the land, God did provide him the opportunity to climb Mount Nebo and see it. Certainly, Moses was disappointed; but viewing the land, he also knew that God’s promise to His people would be fulfilled. After seeing the land, Moses died and was buried by God.

What a testimony Moses had of amazing grace offered by our awesome God!

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by John Koessler



Contract or Covenant?

The book of Deuteronomy has many features that resemble the ancient political treaty form known as a covenant. It was a kind of contract made by two parties that included promises, stipulations, and mutual obligations. Covenants were made between individuals, tribes, and even nations.

Deuteronomy describes the renewal of the covenant that God initially made with Israel on Mount Sinai (Deut. 29:1). While they were camped on the plains of Moab, the Lord reminded Israel how He had rescued them from slavery in Egypt and made them His own people (Deut. 4:29). Although individual and corporate obligations were stressed, the primary emphasis was on the relationship between God and His people. This is what made the covenant more than a contract. The book of Deuteronomy is more than a list of duties combined with stipulations that must be met in order to experience blessing. It is a reminder of a divinely initiated relationship and a promise of future hope (Deut. 29:12–15).

The style of Deuteronomy is that of a legal document. As such it includes commands and warnings. But it also

reflects the Bible's overall emphasis on God's loving grace. Despite the book's emphasis on obedience, Deuteronomy does not leave us with the impression that we can become righteous by keeping the law. Quite the opposite. It described Israel's lack of understanding, reminded them of their unbelief, and predicted that they would fail and find forgiveness in the future (Deut. 29:3–4, 18–27; 39:2).

A thoughtful reading of Deuteronomy reveals why the apostle Paul said that God's people were "held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed" (Gal. 3:23). Deuteronomy, like the rest of the Old Testament law, reveals God's love and His justice. It calls us to faith and to repentance. In view of these themes, we should not be surprised to find that Jesus also used the language of covenant when He showed the disciples the significance of the things He was about to suffer. At the Last Supper He called the cup "the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:20). Every time we observe the Lord's Supper, we remember that Jesus has made it possible for us to have a relationship with God by shedding His blood on our behalf (1 Cor. 11:25).

For Further Study

To learn more about the covenant structure of Deuteronomy, read *Treaty of the Great King* by Meredith Kline (Wipf and Stock).

FROM THE EDITORS

by Elena Maffer

Michael Rydelnik: The Road to Faith

We are glad to welcome Dr. Michael Rydelnik to *Today in the Word's* Q&A team. His first Q&A column appears in this issue. A scholar specializing in the Hebrew Bible, the history of the Jewish people, the land of Israel, and biblical prophecy, Michael Rydelnik is professor of Jewish Studies at Moody and the host of *Open Line* on Moody Radio. He has written articles for various publications and several books, including *Understanding of the Arab Israeli Conflict: What the Headlines Haven't Told You* and *The Messianic Hope*. He co-edited the recently released *Moody Bible Commentary* (Moody Publishers)—a one-volume commentary on the whole Bible written by the faculty of Moody Bible Institute.

When Michael Rydelnik was a freshman in high school, his mother Ruth made a startling confession: she told her family she believed Jesus was the Jewish Messiah. Michael remembers being furious at his mother for her betrayal of his family's Jewish heritage. He did not know then that she had been a secret believer in Jesus for many years.

After Hitler came to power in her native Germany and started the persecution of Jews, Michael's mother found refuge in an orphanage with other children. While the Christian women who ran the orphanage respected the young girl's Jewish heritage, she came to a personal faith in Jesus the Messiah at age 16. After liberation from a Nazi concentration camp, Ruth worked as a nurse in Berlin, where she met and married Michael's father. An observant Jewish man, he said she could never tell

Michael and his wife, Eva, live in Chicago's historic Jewish neighborhood, also one of the most diverse communities in the city. They love Israel and enjoy showing people the Holy Land. Michael's deep knowledge of the Bible and Israel's history makes an indelible impression on those who visit the Land with Michael as a guide. His favorite place in Israel is the Western Wall in Jerusalem.

Michael was raised in an observant Jewish home in Brooklyn, New York, and his journey to the saving faith in Jesus the Messiah wasn't an easy one. Here are the edited excerpts from an article by Jamie Janosz in a recent Moody eNewsletter.

anyone she was a follower of Jesus. If Ruth did, he vowed to divorce her.

As she grew stronger in her faith, Ruth decided to tell her family she was a believer in Jesus. She needed to be sure that each of her children knew about Jesus. As he had vowed so long ago, her husband divorced her. Her children were also upset by their mother's surprising revelation. Michael met the woman who was teaching his mom about Jesus and began arguing with her about messianic prophecy. The more they debated, the more Michael studied the Hebrew Bible. And God's Word began to change his heart and his life: "I became convinced that Jesus was the promised Jewish Messiah and to be a good Jew, I must believe in Him." Today, looking back at his walk with Jesus, he knows that studying the Word of God offers hope and answers to the Jewish people.

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TODAY IN THE **Word**

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

Deuteronomy: The Importance of Obedience

What comes to your mind when you hear the word *obedience*? Some of us may have problems with authority; for others this word brings back memories of childhood conflicts with parents and grade-school teachers. That's why the first word that could come to mind is "difficult." But the biblical meaning of obeying God differs radically from our worldly notions. The Bible equates obedience with love. Jesus said: "If you love me, keep my commands" (John 14:15). And what is the first and greatest commandment? "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37–38). God Himself created this "circle of love" for us, to make obedience possible—and even easy.

This month in *Today in the Word* we'll learn what the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy tells us about obedience. We'll look at godly obedience in the context of covenant relationship, and we'll trace the connection of obedience with worship, grace, and justice. Most important, we'll learn more about love—what it means, by obeying God, to love Him with all our heart, soul, and mind.

Loving the Lord also means loving His Word. Thank you for studying the Bible with *Today in the Word* month after month, and thank you for being obedient and faithful in your support of this ministry. Your prayers and financial help are vital for this devotional! You enable us to send *Today in the Word* to thousands of readers through many channels: print, website, emails, Twitter, and Facebook. Thank you!

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Introduction to the Book

At the start of Deuteronomy, which means “second law-giving,” the Israelites stood at the edge of the Promised Land. After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, they were finally ready to trust God and claim His promises. Their great leader, Moses, however, would not be going with them. To encourage and exhort them, he delivered four discourses or sermons that set forth the responsibilities of God’s people under the Law and the covenant. In essence, these four sermons, which together form the book of Deuteronomy, were Moses’ legacy.

These are the words Moses spoke to all Israel.

Deuteronomy 1:1

laid out the responsibilities or obligations of the covenant relationship, from general to specific (second sermon, 4:44–26:19); and finally affirmed the consequences of either keeping or breaking the covenant (third sermon, 27:1–29:1). Key themes that run through the book are God’s lovingkindness and His worthiness to be worshiped alone as God.

Deuteronomy is a pivotal book in the Bible. It highlights the fulfillment of God’s promises; summarizes the Law; and displays a deep understanding of who God is, how He relates to His people, and how He

Our month’s study of Deuteronomy is organized around these four sermons, the first three of which follow the literary form of an ancient Near Eastern treaty or covenant. Such a treaty imagined the form of an ideal society and the ideal relationships existing within it. It typically began by narrating or recalling the historical background (first sermon, 1:5–4:43); then

acts in history. It’s therefore no surprise to learn that it is the Old Testament book most often quoted in the New Testament. Verses from Deuteronomy are found in 17 out of 27 New Testament books, notably including numerous citations by Paul in Romans and Christ’s quotations from it during His temptation in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1–11).

Apply the Word

The “Book of the Law” found by Hilkiah during the reign of King Josiah was probably the book of Deuteronomy (2 Kings 22:8–13). As the leaders read it and realized how badly they had broken God’s covenant, this rediscovery of Scripture led to significant revival in Judah. Let our prayer this month be that studying Deuteronomy will have a similarly powerful impact in our own spiritual lives!

Pray with Us

Please pray for Moody Central, one-stop student services center on our Chicago campus. Jim Burdick, with the help of part-time student staff, oversees the operations of Moody Central. Their workdays are busy, and they will appreciate your prayer support.

Israel's Previous Collective Disobedience

William Jackson was a house slave for Confederate president Jefferson Davis during the Civil War. Because Davis did not consider Jackson to be a person, he would hold key military conversations in his presence. Jackson used this access to pass on strategic information as a spy for the Union Army. And he wasn't the only one—hundreds of black men and women gathered intelligence during the war that helped the North to victory.

A biblical spy story is at the heart of today's reading. Unfortunately, this spy story had an unhappy ending, because ten out of twelve spies recommended disobeying the Lord and not entering Canaan. This was the faithless failure that had led to a generation's worth of wandering in the wilderness. Moses reminded the nation of this sin in order to properly frame the historical context. This is the usual first section in a Near Eastern covenant—an accounting of how things had gotten to this point.

I have given you
this land.

Deuteronomy 1:8

Today's narrative recap includes all the main themes of the covenant history. God had clearly commanded the people to take the land, in fulfillment of His promises to Abraham (1:8). But Israel had rebelled against God and made the ridiculous claim, "The Lord hates us" (1:26–27). Despite His track record of faithfulness and care, the people had been unwilling to trust Him (1:32–33). Their failure to obey the Lord had included failure to follow His appointed leader. Moses had exhorted them to obey and to do what God said (1:29–31), but they ignored him. As a consequence, the fulfillment of the promise was delayed a generation (1:34–36).

Israel had shown a weak devotion to the Lord, and then they compounded their initial disobedience with additional disobedience and arrogance. Even so, God continued to show His love to His people throughout their wilderness years (2:7).

Apply the Word

When the ten spies reported back, they did so in a spirit of fear. Two spies, Joshua and Caleb, on the other hand, reported back in a spirit of faith. Faith versus fear is a basic division in our relationship with the Lord as well. Will we walk in fear, overwhelmed by circumstances? Or will we walk in faith, trusting in God's commands, promises, and character?

Pray with Us

Please include in your prayers Greg Thornton, senior vice president of Media at Moody. Working together with him are dedicated teams at Moody Radio and Moody Publishers who spread solid biblical teaching over the airwaves, in print, and online.

Early Victories West of the Jordan

The Roma people, also known as Gypsies, have in recent years been migrating from Romania to other European Union nations in search of jobs, education, and better living conditions. In many countries, however, they have encountered fear and hostility from people who see them as an economic burden. To the Roma, this is nothing new—they have faced oppression and discrimination for centuries.

In a sense, in their day the Israelites were the Roma of the Near East. No one in Canaan was happy to see these former slaves arrive at the borders of their land. As Moses continued to recount the historical background of the covenant, the focus changed from Israel's past sin to God's ongoing faithfulness, proved again in the nation's recent victories west of the Jordan River. This was regarded as a down payment on conquering the Promised Land itself (2:31). Although the two-and-a-half tribes who would live west of the Jordan already had

their land, they were warned not to shirk their duty. They must help the other tribes gain their inheritance as well, fulfilling God's mandate together.

The emphasis in this retelling is on the sovereign deeds of the Lord. He put fear into the enemies' hearts (2:25), won victories (2:33), and set boundaries to Israel's military activities (2:37). They "completely destroyed" the enemy as an act of obedience and devotion to the Lord (2:34; see the NIV text note for more on this phrase). The fact that the enemies lived in walled cities (3:5) indicated they were a strong

and settled population, normally safe from migrant groups such as the Israelites. With God leading the way, however, the normal situation was turned on its head. In the end, the Lord promised to give His people "rest," that is, peace, security, and a home (3:20). Their wandering days would be over!

I will begin to put
the terror and fear
of you on
all the nations
under heaven.

Deuteronomy 2:25

Apply the Word

Following the Lord in faith—not fear—appears in today's reading as a major theme. True faith looks beyond situations (such as walled cities) to God, whose power and promises transcend all. No matter what things look like from a human perspective, God is in control and we can trust in His ever-faithful love for us. "Do not fear, for I am with you" (Isa. 41:10).

Pray with Us

Quality and relevance have distinguished Moody Publishers titles over the years. Today, please pray for the Sales staff—Gene Eble, Stephen Gemeiner, Denise Ortiz, Laurence Rogers, and Roger Williams—and thank the Lord for their contribution to ministry.

Moses' Previous Personal Disobedience

Congregations often appreciate when a pastor uses a personal illustration during a sermon, particularly if it recounts some struggle or weakness. From the pews, the person behind the pulpit can sometimes look like a spiritual giant, impervious to hardship or temptation. These kinds of illustrations reveal that the pastor is as human as the rest of us and must walk by faith, just as we do.

Today's reading includes the story of Moses' worst and most consequential act of disobedience. After the historical summary, Moses charged Joshua to remember all that God had done and to trust Him for the battles yet to come (3:21–22). Implicitly, he was telling Joshua and the people not to be tempted by recent victories into thinking that this was all about them. Moses had made that mistake at Meribah, when he pridefully went beyond God's instructions in providing water for the people.

The fact that even a great leader and prophet like Moses was held accountable for a sinful choice demonstrated to the nation that obedience and disobedience are choices with enormous stakes (4:2, 9). Moses paid a price—he was barred from entering the Promised Land. Nonetheless, God graciously allowed him to experience the preliminary victories and to view the land from the slopes of Pisgah (Mount Nebo). Similarly, Israel had sinned and paid a price—forty years of wilderness wanderings. Nonetheless, God graciously provided a new leader, Joshua, and renewed His covenant promises at this key time.

Keep the
commands of the
LORD your God that
I give you.

Deuteronomy 4:2

I can't go with you, Moses was saying, but don't be discouraged, trust in the Lord. He had taught them God's law, which was all they needed to know to become a "great nation" (4:5–6). They in turn were to teach their children and establish a heritage of godliness (4:9).

Apply the Word

The most significant event in this historical retelling—more important than the first failure to enter the land—was the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai (4:10–13). The spirit of awe in which the people worshiped there was a defining memory. What about the stories and milestones on your own spiritual timeline? Can you recall a time when God revealed Himself to you in a special way?

Pray with Us

Collin Lambert, vice president of Moody Radio, will be grateful for the prayers of the Moody community for Moody's radio ministry. May the Word of God continue to go out into the world with power and purpose on our stations and online.

Lesson of History: The Lord Alone Is God!

Many years prior to today's reading, the Israelites had been camped at the foot of Mount Sinai (also called Mount Horeb). After Moses received the Law, the nation worshiped the Lord, offered sacrifices, and affirmed their commitment to the covenant (see Exodus 24). The priests and other leaders saw a vision of God and ate a celebratory feast in His presence. This solemn and joyous occasion was inscribed in Israel's collective memory.

Moses reminded the people of these events, of who they were, and of who God was. He alone is worthy of worship! This is the central lesson of the historical review in Moses' first sermon (v. 35). The nation was not to follow other gods (v. 23). The list of what not to worship encompassed every category of created thing, including many that were worshiped within Canaanite religions of that day. To be enticed into wrong worship would be completely inappropriate for the Israelites, whom the Lord had brought

"out of the iron-smelting furnace, out of Egypt, to be the people of his inheritance" (v. 20). This metaphor indicated a refining or purifying process.

God is described as "a consuming fire," a phrase that reminded the Israelites of their perception of the glory of the Lord on Mount Sinai (v. 24; Ex. 24:17). He is also called "a jealous God." Unlike human jealousy, which is often sinful and leads to conflicts, God is both righteously jealous—the worship due Him should not go to another—and lovingly jealous—

the covenant relationship, like marriage, demands faithfulness.

To forget or disobey the covenant would lead to judgment and consequences (vv. 25–27), but there would be opportunities for repentance and God's mercy (vv. 29–31). Worshiping God alone means taking to heart and keeping His commands (vv. 39–40).

The LORD is God;
besides him there
is no other.

Deuteronomy 4:35

Apply the Word

Yesterday we mentioned your spiritual timeline. If you've not done so before, take some time to make one today. Such a timeline might include milestones such as conversion and baptism, as well as times when God answered prayer or taught you something new about Himself. To review His past work in your life can, as in Moses' sermon, inspire you to trust Him more with your future.

Pray with Us

As we keep Moody Radio in our prayers, please include in your time with God today its Marketing and Development department headed by George Economos. Ask God to increase the reach of Moody Radio to more listeners around the world.

Ten Commandments as the Keys to the Covenant

Augustine prayed: “Now it is you alone that I love, you alone that I follow, you alone that I seek, you alone that I feel ready to serve, because you alone rule justly. It is to your authority alone that I want to submit. Command me, I pray, to do whatever you will. . . . Drive out from me all fickleness, that I may acknowledge you alone. Amen.”

This prayer of commitment and obedience captures the spirit of the Ten Commandments, which may be seen as the keys to the covenant. This is why Moses began his second sermon or discourse with them. This sermon is the largest chunk of Deuteronomy (4:44–26:19) and we’ll be studying it through June 21. In terms of the literary form of a Near Eastern treaty or covenant, this is the section in which obligations or responsibilities of the covenant are spelled out (4:45). Having reviewed the main historical events, including the giving of the Law at Sinai, Moses now

proceeded to spotlight the main content of the covenant.

The Ten Commandments, in essence, summarize the responsibilities of the covenant relationship. The first five are to worship no other gods, make no idols, not misuse God’s name, keep the Sabbath (a pattern dating from creation), and honor one’s parents. The second five are prohibitions against murder, adultery, stealing, lying or bearing false witness, and envy or covetousness. Receiving these commands at Sinai, the people had made a commitment: “We will listen and obey” (5:27).

Learn them and be sure to follow them.

Deuteronomy 5:1

The Ten Commandments were a spiritual foundation not only for Israel but for us as well. The *NIV Study Bible* comments that they “constitute the basis of the moral principles found throughout the Western world and summarize what the one true God expects of his people in terms of faith, worship and conduct.”

Apply the Word

Memorizing the Ten Commandments is a worthy goal (5:6–21; Ex. 20:1–21). Psalm 119:11 reminds us that one purpose of Scripture memorization is to cultivate holiness: “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” Memorizing is not a mere rote activity, but one that includes praising, obeying, meditating, and delighting in the Lord.

Pray with Us

We are thankful for the service of Rodney Simon and Mark Williames from Engineering Services at Moody Radio Chicago. Please support in prayer their contribution to the ministry of Moody Radio, as they maintain and update the broadcasting equipment.

Greatest Commandment as the Heart of the Covenant

Deuteronomy 6:4–9, and especially verse 4, is known by the Hebrew term the *Shema* (meaning “hear”). These verses are so central to the Jewish faith that they are recited daily by believers and weekly in synagogues. The practices of wearing *phylacteries* on the forehead and left arm and of placing *mezuzot* (both are small boxes containing Scripture passages) on the doorframes of houses are also based on these verses.

In today’s passage, Moses proclaimed the core responsibility of the covenant: to love God with one’s whole being, holding nothing back. The Ten Commandments are the key to understanding covenant responsibilities, and this greatest commandment is the heart of living out covenant relationships. Jesus Himself also affirmed this in the Gospels (see Luke 10:27).

The *Shema* confession tells us why we are to love God in this way: “Hear, O Israel:

Love the LORD your
God with all your
heart and with all
your soul and with
all your strength.

Deuteronomy 6:5

The LORD our God, the LORD is one” (v. 4). “Hear, O Israel” calls attention to the significance and truth of what follows, similar to when Jesus said, “I tell you the truth” or “Verily, verily.” Israel’s monotheism stood in strong contrast to the polytheistic paganism common in Near Eastern religions in that day. Total love for the one and only King of All is the most fitting response! Loving one’s neighbor is a related dimension of this principle (Lev. 19:18).

The religious life of God’s people was not to be a set of rituals, but a set of relationships, beginning with love, worship, and obedience of God. Putting oneself first or following false idols instead would be a deep, hurtful betrayal of the covenant. These truths were not just for special occasions, but were to be part of daily and family life (vv. 6–9). One generation would tell the story to the next (vv. 21–25).

Apply the Word

This text still challenges us to love God with all that we are. Pray through these verses, asking the Lord to show you if you need to love Him more fully. Is there some part of your schedule and activities where He is not the center? Is He the first priority in your checkbook and your day planner? May we see growth in our love, worship, and obedience of the one true God.

Pray with Us

June marks the end of our fiscal year here at Moody. Ken Heullitt, chief financial officer, would like to thank you for your partnership and asks for your prayers for Moody’s finances in the next fiscal year.

Nature and Obligations of the Covenant Relationship

On his blog, seminary professor Eric Ortlund has offered “A Very Brief Guide to Reading the Old Testament Devotionally.” He suggests, for starters: “Read everything, even if it’s boring, even when it seems utterly irrelevant. Everything. The OT is its own best teacher, and will teach you how to read it as you do.” Another idea: “Pray as you read. Don’t let a paragraph go by without this.”

As we dig deeper into Deuteronomy, this is excellent advice. Most of us today probably are not looking for military victories, nor are we often tempted to bow before Canaanite deities. But as we read Moses’ sermons, we should learn and marvel at the faithful, promise-keeping character of God. And we are challenged by what it means to be His people—pure, holy, and consecrated.

Today’s passage warns of four dangers to this covenant relationship. First, external factors might corrupt the people’s identity as God’s “treasured possession” (7:6). The

Israelites were therefore ordered not to intermarry, make treaties with, or adopt the false gods of the Canaanites. Second, internal factors could lead to pride and rebelliousness. The temptation would be for people to start thinking that God had chosen them on their merits, or that they had prospered on their own (8:17).

Praise the LORD
your God for the
good land he has
given you.

Deuteronomy 8:10

Third, fear could derail them from obeying God’s commands. Humanly speaking, the Israelites were underdogs and had no reasonable expectation of conquering the Promised Land. Their courage and hope needed to rest entirely

ly on God’s power, as He had proved in their liberation from Egypt (7:19). Fourth, spiritual forgetfulness could undermine their faith (8:2). In the wilderness, they had been provided for, tested, humbled, and disciplined. The peace and prosperity of covenant blessings could, ironically, cause them to forget these lessons and to neglect the covenant (8:12–14). To “remember” must thus be a purposeful and disciplined spiritual choice.

Apply the Word

When we are reading some of the more time-specific details of Deuteronomy, it’s all too easy to forget that this is God’s Word for us as well. Let’s make the purposeful choice to remember what God has done for us. Just like the Israelites, we can be distracted by the trials and pleasures in front of us and forget to be faithful to God.

Pray with Us

The work of Eunice Childress, Janet Mitchell, Holly Motta, and Paulette Philips from Treasury Operations requires organizational skills and attention to detail. We appreciate their service and ask for your prayers for them.

Past Sins as an Antidote to Future Pride

An immunization shot gives a weak form of a disease—not enough to do harm, but strong enough to cause our bodies to generate protective antibodies. In today's reading, Moses implied that past sins, if confessed and learned from, can in a sense "immunize" us against future sins. The protection is not infallible, but the spiritual antibodies, as it were, formed by repentance can help keep us from similar or worse future sins, especially pride.

In the case of Israel, Moses reminded them of their past failure to enter the land in order to spur them toward present obedience. He reviewed what he had said in his first sermon to drive home the point that this covenant was not in any way about their merit or worthiness (9:3–6).

Instead, it's all about God. He was the one leading Israel to victory. He was the one judging the wickedness of the Ca-

naanites and decreeing their defeat. He was the one keeping His promises to the Patriarchs. There was no reason for the people to feel prideful or behave in a "stiff-necked" manner. This word suggests an ox or horse that won't respond to guidance—not a flattering picture, but an accurate one.

It is not because of
your righteousness
that the LORD your
God is giving you
this good land.

Deuteronomy 9:6

For example, Moses reminded them that no sooner had they received the Ten Commandments than they broke the first one by worshiping a golden calf. They had been flagrantly rebellious at the very foot of Mount Sinai! The Lord responded with grace to Moses' intercession, which did not make excuses but rather sought God's glory (9:25–29). At this point in his sermon, Moses may have pointed toward the Tabernacle and the Ark, in which a second copy of the Ten Commandments had been placed as a witness to the nation (10:1–2).

Apply the Word

Have you ever given thanks for the spiritual lessons that you learned through repentance from past sins? This may seem like an unusual gratitude item for your prayers, but we worship an unusual God. He turns mourning into dancing, makes the wisdom of this world into foolishness, and can use past disobedience and sin to teach us about present obedience and holiness. Repentance gives us an opportunity to praise Him!

Pray with Us

Continuing to keep our prayer focus on Treasury Operations, we ask that you encourage in prayer Lindsey Reimers, Diane Sergeant, and Catrina Weinum, as they manage students' financials on Moody's Chicago campus.

God Deserves Love, Obedience, and Holy Fear

Vitamin C brings many health benefits. Research reveals a growing list, including strengthening the immune system; protecting against cardiovascular problems, cancer, strokes, and eye diseases; and preventing skin aging. The best results seem to come from a dosage of 500 milligrams per day for adults.

Given the benefits, making sure we get enough vitamin C is common sense. In the same way, righteous living in obedience to the covenant should have been common sense for Israel. The benefits were obvious, “for your own good.” As contrasted with the people’s frequent rebelliousness and stubborn sinfulness, as seen in yesterday’s reading, God deserves a response of love, obedience, and holy fear (10:12–13; 11:1). These are all interwoven. To love means to obey. To fear the Lord means to keep His commands. Obedience and fear are an expression of love and worship.

Love the LORD your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws and his commands always.

Deuteronomy 11:1

Why does God deserve this response (10:14–22)? He is sovereign over heaven and earth. He is mighty and just. He defends the powerless and the outsider. Against all reason, He chose and loved Israel and performed wonders on her behalf (11:2–7).

The phrase, “circumcise your hearts,” indicates that chosenness as the people of God is first and foremost an inward reality (10:16). Pointing out that they are now as “numerous as the stars in the sky” alludes to God’s promise to Abraham (see Gen. 15:1–6). He is faithful!

To respond to God on this basis meant to keep the covenant. Keeping the covenant would give Israel strength, peace, prosperity, and blessing (11:26–29). With so much at stake, worshiping the Lord in the right ways should be at the center of personal, family, and community life (11:18–21).

Apply the Word

Moses exhorted the people: “You are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt” (10:19). Since the United States is a nation of immigrants, the likelihood is high that recent immigrants live somewhere in your city or community. Have you considered reaching out to them? This can be a practical way to love the Lord by befriending others and sharing His love and the gospel.

Pray with Us

Bruce Everhart, VP of Donor Development and Channel Strategy, welcomes your prayers for his teams’ work of increasing the outreach to Moody’s partners and strengthening the connections within the Moody community, on and off our campuses.

God Deserves Unique Worship

Over the years, many theologians have explored the relationship between God and human culture. Some have pointed out that He can work in or through culture; others think that He often opposes it due to its sinfulness. Still others have suggested that He uses and transforms culture, or that He simply transcends cultural categories.

In Deuteronomy, the relationship between God and human culture includes some of each of these. The literary form of the book, for example, follows the structure and content of a Near Eastern treaty or covenant, showing how God used elements from the culture of that day. Today's reading, on the other hand, explicitly forbids the use of local cultural customs in worshipping the Lord.

The problem wasn't culture as such, but the fact that Canaanite cultures worshiped false gods. The Israelites had already shown a tendency toward idolatry, and Moses knew that idolatry would be the main

barrier to their obedience in keeping and honoring the covenant. He emphasized God's command to completely destroy the pagan places of worship that they would find in the Promised Land (vv. 2–3). They were also not to use or adapt pagan rituals or customs to worship the Lord. One reason is because they included practices God detested, such as child sacrifice (vv. 30–31).

Instead, Israel must worship the one true God in the ways He had commanded (v. 4). One day, when they were a settled nation, the "everyone doing as they

see fit" approach of the wilderness years would no longer be acceptable (v. 8). Rather, there would be a national worship center for the offerings, sacrifices, and celebrations described in the Law (vv. 5–7)—allowances had already even been made for real-world factors such as travel and distance. The point was to worship God, not however they wished, but as He chose.

You must not
worship the LORD
your God in
their way.

Deuteronomy 12:4

Apply the Word

We need godly wisdom when we consider our culture today. What is sinful and must be opposed? What is redeemable and can be enjoyed? Some cultural forms can be helpful, like the example of Near Eastern covenants in our text. Others are sinful, like Canaanite religious rituals. Prayerfully consider whether your cultural choices in entertainment and worship glorify God.

Pray with Us

One of the departments headed by Bruce Everhart is Donor Communications. As you pray, please mention Paul Currie, Joe Forrider, and part-time student staff who make sure Moody stays connected with our financial and prayer partners through all available channels.

God Deserves to Be Worshiped Alone as God

What is missing from the modern relationship with God? Author Paul Tripp thinks the answer is awe. “You and I were created to live our lives in the shadow of awe. Every word we speak, every action we take, every decision we make, and every desire we entertain was meant to be colored by awe. We were meant to live with eyes gazing upward and outward. . . . [This is] that sense of divine wonder that is meant to shape every person’s life.”

Living with awe is the right response to an awesome God. There is none like Him! Just as He deserves worship that is unique, He also deserves to be solely or uniquely worshiped. Under no conditions whatsoever is any other “god” to be worshiped, for the Lord alone is God. This is the foundational truth of the covenant, making it an appropriate conclusion to this first, more general section of Moses’ second sermon in Deuteronomy. (We begin studying the second, more specific section tomorrow.)

It is the LORD your God you must follow, and him you must revere.

Deuteronomy 13:4

Absolutely nothing is more important than God’s worthiness to be worshiped. Compared to it, experience is not to be trusted (vv. 1–5). Even if a prophet’s word comes true or he performs a sign, he is to be ignored if the accompanying word contradicts this truth.

More than that, the nation is to “purge the evil” by putting that false prophet to death. Such a person is guilty of blasphemy and “inciting rebellion” against the Lord.

This truth also trumps even the closest of human relationships (vv. 6–11). A family member who suggests worshipping an idol must also be rejected, exposed, and put to death. Finally, this truth is the very definition of societal wellbeing (vv. 12–18). Incidents of idolatry must be investigated and rooted out.

Better that a whole town burn than the nation be led into covenant unfaithfulness.

Apply the Word

The idea that truth might contradict experience is tough to accept. We live in a culture where personal experience carries great authority. We connect learning with experience. We try to make abstract principles relevant to people’s lives. We tend to define right and wrong in situational terms. Yet above all and despite all, God is God. Faith means holding to this truth even if the whole world seems to contradict it.

Pray with Us

Moody has provided a tuition-paid training for ministry to thousands of undergraduate students. Dr. Larry Davidhizar, VP and dean of the Undergraduate School, invites you to thank God for giving us this unique opportunity and asks for His continued guidance.

Worship, Purity, and Generosity in Covenant Life

A food safety scandal in southern China recently seized international headlines. Up to one hundred lambs per day were being slaughtered at an illegal warehouse, then injected with dirty pond water to increase their weight and price. Inspection stamps were forged so that the meat could be sold at markets and restaurants in major cities such as Guangzhou.

Purity and impurity with regard to food and other aspects of daily life were an important responsibility under the Law. These were among the specific covenant obligations reviewed by Moses in the second part of his second sermon (Deuteronomy 14–26). As we study these chapters, we'll be keeping our focus on big-picture themes. In today's reading, the specific regulations highlight three characteristics of covenant life—purity, worship, and generosity. These characteristics or qualities provide the spiritual meaning behind the rules. These instructions showed the Israelites how to live like God's "treasured possession" and

how to remain holy or consecrated to Him (14:2, 21).

The first characteristic of covenant life, purity, is seen in the ceremonial laws regarding clean and unclean food. Jews today still eat "kosher" according to these rules (cf. Leviticus 11). The second characteristic, worship, is the spiritual reality behind the practice of tithing. Tithing was about much more than offering 10 percent of one's income to the Lord. It involved rejoicing, eating a celebratory worship feast, and providing for orphans, widows, and Levites.

The third characteristic, generosity, is the motive behind the forgiveness of debts and freeing of indentured servants every seven years. A "sabbath" from these normal economic activities among God's people honored Him and helped distribute the wealth more equitably (15:1–4). Everyone was reminded that money and power are resources to be righteously used, not selfishly abused.

You are the children
of the LORD
your God.

Deuteronomy 14:1

Apply the Word

How is giving part of your worship? This question goes beyond whether you support God's ministries financially. Worshipful giving means that you are prayerful, thoughtful, and intentional in your giving—not haphazard, grudging, or thoughtless. No matter how large or small the gift, God desires our giving to be part and parcel of our overall worship and walk with Him.

Pray with Us

Our Educational Ministries faculty—Gina Behrens, Christina Deppen, Timothy Downey, and Dennis Fledderjohann—provide academic and spiritual guidance to our undergraduate students in Chicago. Would you pray for their ministry today?

Holy Days in the Life of the Nation

Many of us have heard the story of Squanto, a Patuxet Indian who taught the Plymouth Pilgrims how to grow corn. Less well known is that he also helped them survive by teaching them how to catch a highly nutritious fish—eel. Evidence suggests that Native Americans on the east coast had been trapping and eating eels for thousands of years, and it became a staple of the Pilgrims as well.

Today, the Thanksgiving holiday still commemorates the survival of the Pilgrims and the provision of God—even though traditionally we eat turkey and not eel! For the nation of Israel, holidays were truly holy days. At the heart of the covenant was the recognition that God was Lord over all of life, including their diet, agricultural livelihoods, financial transactions, worship practices, and the rhythms, schedules, and seasons of their social and personal lives.

The “big three” holidays on the Jewish calendar were Passover (vv. 1–8), the

Festival of Weeks (vv. 9–12), and the Festival of Tabernacles (vv. 13–15). Passover commemorated the Israelites’ liberation from slavery in Egypt, and especially the awesome signs and wonders the Lord had done to free His people. Celebrating these events annually reminded the people that their God was worthy of their love and worship. Jesus Himself ate the Passover meal just before His death—an event we know as the Last Supper and which we ourselves celebrate as the Lord’s Supper. The Festival of Weeks, like Thanksgiving, was a harvest holiday

for wheat. The Festival of Tabernacles was also mainly a harvest holiday for dates, grapes, olives, and other crops.

For each of these three festivals, all Israelite men were required to make a pilgrimage and appear before the Lord at the national worship center (vv. 16–17). Covenant holiday seasons were to be filled with gratitude, joy, and worship.

Three times a year
all your men must
appear before the
LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 16:16

Apply the Word

Today is the perfect day to count your blessings and give thanks to the Lord! One practice to help you be intentional in your thankfulness is to write items of gratitude on cards and put them in a small box. You can then choose one each day to give thanks, or perhaps take time once a month to review these items. You might be amazed to remember how much God has done for you!

Pray with Us

As we continue to pray for the professors at Moody’s Educational Ministries department in Chicago—Nancy Kane, Robert MacRae, Michael Milco, Elizabeth Smith, and Peter Worrall—we ask God to encourage them by His Word and strengthen them by His Spirit.

Question and Answer

By Dr. Michael Rydelnik, Professor of Jewish Studies and *Open Line* Host



What is the meaning of the “days” of creation?



Moses wrote that “in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth” (Ex. 31:17). In light of current scientific theories that say that the earth is billions of years old, people wonder what the word “day” in the creation story means (see Genesis 1).

Many Bible believers say that the word *day* refers to an age. Thus, each day of creation represents a long period of time in which the world could evolve under God’s sovereign hand. And it is possible for the word “day” to mean a period of time and not a 24-hour revolution around the sun. For example, in Genesis 2:4, the entire six-day period of creation is literally called the “day” or “when the LORD God made the earth and heavens.” Also, the prophets use the phrase “the day of the LORD” to describe the entire period of the end times.

But one of several problems in adopting this “day-age” view is that death only entered the world with Adam and Eve’s sin (Gen. 2:17; 3:3). A “day-age” interpretation would require death in each of the ages, so that fittest could survive and evolve, before Adam and Eve’s fall. It would be surprising for fossils, which indicate dead animals, to exist before the fall of humanity.

Alternatively, it is possible to interpret the creation account as referring to six 24-

hour days. This would likely mean that the earth is relatively young. The 24-hour day interpretation is supported by the simplest, most normal reading of the passage. The text does not indicate that Moses was referring to an age when he used the word “day.” Moreover, the repetition of the phrase, “evening came, and then morning” (Gen. 1:5, 7, 13, 19, 23, 31) seems to refer to a 24-hour period.

This interpretation seems to contradict the evidence of an old earth as well as the fossil record. Yet, it is not impossible to hold to a young earth for two reasons. First, God may have created the earth with apparent age. Just as Adam and Eve did not look like infants when they were created but adults, so God could very well have created the earth with seeming age. Second, the fossil record could be explained by a vast, worldwide catastrophe rather than a long period of time. For example, when Mount St. Helens erupted in 1980, a vast forest was cast into Spirit Lake below. The trees became water-logged and floated to the bottom. Since the roots had the most water, the trees settled in an upright fashion. Thirty-five years after the eruption, a petrified forest is now at the bottom of the lake. Any person seeing it would assume that it took millions of years. But it was caused by a catastrophe in 1980.

Whichever view one chooses to explain the word “day,” what is most important is to recognize God as the creator of the world. It is through the Lord Jesus the Messiah that “all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible . . . all things have been created through

Continued on next page

It was the Nephilim's corrupting influence on the earth that led to God's judgment of the world by flood in Noah's day.

Continued from previous page

him and for him" (Col. 1:16). We must bow before the Lord Jesus, our Creator and Redeemer.



Who are the "Sons of God" in Genesis 6?



Many people wonder about the statement that "the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose" (Gen. 6:2). It is said that out of these unions came the *Nephilim*, a supposed race of giants that corrupted the earth (Gen. 6:4).

One view of Genesis 6:1–4 does indeed understand the passage as referring to the unions of fallen angels ("sons of God") with humanity ("daughters of man") resulting in a race of giants on the earth. In fact, "sons of God" is used elsewhere as a title for angels (see Job 1:6). Moreover, some maintain that the New Testament affirms this interpretation when it speaks of "angels when they sinned" (2 Peter 2:4) and "did not keep their position of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling" (Jude 6).

But there are some problems with this view. First, the phrase "sons of God" may mean angels but more frequently refers to humanity (Deut. 14:1; 32:5; Ps. 73:15; Isa. 43:6; Hosea 1:10; 11:1; Luke 3:38; 1 John 3:1–2, 10). Second, the New Testament passages more likely refer to angels following Satan in his rebellion against

God and not marriage with women. Third, and most important, Jesus taught that angels were not capable of marriage and sexual reproduction (Matt. 22:30).

It seems better to understand Genesis 6:1–4 as referring to the intermarriage of the godly line of Seth and the ungodly line of Cain. The genealogies in the context support this interpretation. The text recounts the line of Cain, the first murderer (Gen. 4:17–24), immediately followed by the line of Seth (Gen. 4:25–5:32), a godly line from which "people began to call on the name of the LORD" (Gen. 4:26). After listing the two genealogies, Genesis 6:1–4 describes the uniting of these two groups (the sons of God and the daughters of man). The result of the merging of these two lines was the *Nephilim*, a Hebrew word that means "fallen ones," indicating that both lines were now corrupted. The older translation for these descendants was "giants," but a better translation is "heroes" or "powerful," indicating that they became infamous as "men of renown" (Gen. 6:4). It was their corrupting influence on the earth that led to God's judgment of the world by flood in Noah's day (Gen. 6:8–8:22).

Although Canaanites are called *Nephilim* later in Numbers 13:31–33, they were not the physical descendants of those in Genesis 6 because all humanity was destroyed in the Flood that followed the corruption of the earth. Rather, the use of *Nephilim* in Numbers more likely identifies the Canaanites as a people who were corrupted and powerful.

Political Leaders and the Covenant

Government corruption is a staggeringly huge problem. Every year, more than one trillion dollars is paid out in bribes around the globe. A recent study rated Somalia, North Korea, and Afghanistan as the most corrupt countries in the world. Corruption hampers economic development, cripples judicial systems, and deepens poverty. It also helps to facilitate organized crime and terrorism.

God's covenant with Israel addressed the issue of human sinfulness in political leadership. Israel was a theocracy, so God was the head of the government and the human leaders had a special responsibility and accountability to Him.

Judges, for example, were not to use their power or position for personal gain. Such corruption has been common throughout history, but bribes defeat the purpose of the legal system and prevent wisdom from being used to address social problems (16:19). These leaders were instead instructed to "follow justice and justice

alone" (16:20), a daunting imperative considering it was given by a perfectly just God. Priests would assist with difficult cases, directly consulting the Lord in order to ensure a correct decision.

Political leaders were responsible not only for governing but also for keeping the nation on track spiritually. With this in mind, Moses also gave instructions for any future king (17:14–20). He would be chosen by God, must be an Israelite, and was to be limited in horses, wives, and wealth.

This was countercultural to the normal practices of the day. The Lord didn't want the leader's trust to be in money, military strength, or alliances (the wives), and He knew that the latter would also make idolatry a stronger temptation. The king would not be above the Law, but would be subject to it like everyone else. In fact, he was instructed to write out his own copy and to make studying it a life-long activity.

Follow justice and
justice alone.

Deuteronomy 16:20

Apply the Word

Copying out a text by hand, as any future king was instructed to do with the Mosaic Law, is a good way to slow down and read it more carefully. That remains true today—perhaps especially so since technology has given us so many easier options. If this idea intrigues you, we invite you to consider handwriting a personal copy of a favorite chapter or even book from the Bible.

Pray with Us

Today, we'd like to uphold in prayer all Moody students on our three campuses as they prepare for the upcoming semester. Even in summer, they are busy on short-term mission trips, touring with music ensembles, working on campus, or in internships.

Religious Leaders and the Covenant

Many cultures practice ancestor worship in various forms. In Vietnam, for example, nearly every home or place of business contains a small altar for the ancestors, who are regularly offered food, incense, replica paper money, and prayers. It is thought that the ancestors can influence events in the present-day lives of their descendants.

Ancestor worship has become deeply interwoven with Vietnamese culture, creating a difficult situation for Vietnamese Christians. But Scripture is clear—only God is worthy to receive worship. The main responsibility of the spiritual leaders of Israel was to keep the nation obedient to this truth and away from idolatry (vv. 9–13). It was their duty to lead in worshiping the Lord as the Law described rather than imitating the “detestable ways” of the local people. The fact that the Canaanites practiced child sacrifice, witchcraft, fortune telling, and speaking with the dead is why they received God’s judgment.

The LORD is their inheritance.

Deuteronomy 18:2

In addition, the priests and Levites were instructed to live out their faith publicly by having the Lord as their only inheritance (vv. 1–8). That is, they did not receive a share of the land as the other tribes did, but rather were to live off tithes and offerings given by the rest of the people. This was not just a matter of real estate—in an agricultural society, land meant provision and prosperity. Without land to trust in, their only means of acquiring their daily bread was from the Lord.

The prophet was another religious leader, one who spoke for God as His covenant representative (vv. 14–22). He had a responsibility to speak only God’s messages. In such a position, the temptation to speak one’s own words would be difficult to resist. The simple way to tell false prophets from true was whether their words came true.

Apply the Word

Land and a good harvest were even more important in the ancient Near East than for most of us today. Like the Israelites and their Promised Land, we also face temptations to trust in something other than God—even His gifts—for our provision. What is that temptation for you? Your education? A good job? Talents and abilities? These are good things, but not worthy objects of faith or trust (see 1 Tim. 6:17).

Pray with Us

Your prayers are important for the work of our Information Technology department under the leadership of vice president Frank Leber. We are grateful for the IT team’s computer expertise and ask God to bless their service at Moody.

Cities of Refuge and the Priority of Justice

Last January, a video was posted online that quickly went viral. It showed Russian judge Yevgeny Makhno apparently asleep during a trial in which a businessman was accused of fraud. The judge found him guilty and sentenced him to five years in a penal colony. But after the video was posted, Judge Makhno was forced to resign and the defendant was given a new trial.

Justice is a significant priority in the Law. Today's verse, which explains that justice "brings joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers," reflects a principle underlying all covenant leadership responsibilities. In today's reading, there are three means of justice: cities of refuge (vv. 1–13), boundary stones (v. 14), and the requirement of multiple witnesses in a trial (vv. 15–20).

Cities of refuge, which would be geographically spread out through the country, would be "safe zones" for anyone

guilty of accidental manslaughter. When one person killed another, the cultural tradition was for a close relative to become the "avenger of blood" and retaliate. In a case of premeditated murder, the tradition stood, because the punishment fit the crime (Lev. 24: 19–20). Such a criminal could not seek protection in a city of refuge. But in a case of accidental manslaughter, the Law modified the tradition for the sake of justice. As long as the guilty person stayed in a city of refuge, he would be safe, "so that innocent blood will not be shed in your land" (v. 10).

Requiring multiple witnesses in a trial also helped to deter injustice. Whereas one person might speak maliciously, commit perjury, and break the tenth commandment, hearing multiple perspectives would help judges find the truth. If ty, if it tolerated wickedness, had no place—the priority of justice required a kind of dedicated ruthlessness (v. 21).

When justice is done, it brings joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers.

Proverbs 21:15

Apply the Word

As He did so often in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus went beyond the Law to reveal its true spirit (Matt. 5:38–42). Simple justice meant eye for eye and tooth for tooth. A willingness to turn the other cheek, however, shows an entirely different attitude. This attitude isn't anxious about fairness and rights, but rather rests in God to see justice done (Rom. 12:19).

Pray with Us

Would you include in your prayers the ministry of Moody Radio Florida, broadcasting from St. Petersburg, Florida? Please mention while you pray its staff: John Blok, Kate Bruington, Pierre Chestang, Andrew Leuthold, and Ron Maxwell.

Trusting God for Victory in War

In the days of Eli the priest, the Israelites went into battle against the Philistines carrying the Ark of the Covenant. As the story makes clear, this was not an act of faith or submission to God's authority. Rather, they were treating the Ark as a kind of magic talisman, a sort of national lucky rabbit's foot. God did not honor their attitude—they were defeated and the Ark was temporarily captured (see 1 Samuel 4).

Victory in war depended, like other covenant blessings, on obedience. Presuming on their status as God's people got the Israelites nowhere, but when they trusted Him and were faithful to their covenant obligations, God promised to protect them from their enemies and give them victory in battle. The enemy might be stronger militarily, but "victory rests with the Lord" (Prov. 21:31). This was why a priest, not an army general, would address the troops before a battle: to remind them that the source of their cour-

age should be God rather than military preparedness or resources (vv. 2–4).

Today's reading also puts military ventures into proper perspective—there were more important things in life. Though the Israelites had been commanded to completely destroy the Canaanites, conquering and plundering was not to become a way of life. For example, exemptions from military duty were granted for simple domestic reasons, including a new wife, home, or vineyard (vv. 5–7). After all, these were the blessings for which they were fighting!

The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord.

Proverbs 21:31

In addition, conflict was not to be pursued if terms of peace could be negotiated. Forced labor was better than killing. God cared enough for creation even to instruct that fruit trees should not be cut down for siege works but instead preserved and enjoyed after the victory (vv. 19–20).

Apply the Word

God still fights our battles for us today! We desperately need Him, for "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against . . . the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12). With Him on our side, victory is assured. "If God is for us, who can be against us? . . . We are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Rom. 8:31–37).

Pray with Us

Natoshia Portis serves in Catering on Moody's Chicago campus, with part-time student staff helping her at numerous events. Please lift up in prayer their ministry of hospitality.

Marriage and Family Life in the Covenant

Researcher John M. Gottman has investigated why marriages succeed or fail. In a 20-year study involving more than 600 couples in marriage counseling, he categorized husband-wife interactions, especially conflicts. He took those observations, plotted them on a graph, and came up with a mathematical formula that he claims accurately predicts how long a marriage will last.

Marriage and family life are also addressed in the Law, but we find no formulas here. Instead, Moses emphasized themes of respect, order, purity, and justice. The covenant covered not only public issues (such as war and capital punishment) but also private life, for every area of life matters to God and is part of a right relationship with Him.

The marriage regulations in today's passage stress moral purity and just consequences (22: 13–30). As was common in that day, adultery was a capital offense.

Women guilty of adultery and promiscuity were to be put to death. Men guilty of sexual immorality, including rape, were to be put to death. Men who falsely accused their wives of immorality, looking for an easy divorce, paid a steep fine. A man who took advantage of a virgin had to then marry her.

Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure.

Hebrews 13:4

Other family regulations protected certain human rights. For example, a woman taken captive in battle could not be sexually used and discarded (21:10–14). She must be given time to grieve, marry, and have religious free-

dom. If the marriage ended, she would be free to go. For another example, the rights of a firstborn son could not be set aside (21:15–17). A family head could not play favorites among his wives (polygamy was tolerated in that day, despite Gen. 2:24). These rules reflect human worth intrinsic in being God's creation, and the moral imperative to respect that worth.

Apply the Word

The weightiness of obedience comes through clearly in the rule about a rebellious son (21:18–21). Such a person was to be put to death. Habitual and extreme disobedience to the fifth commandment was as consequential as any other sin. Do we take sin as seriously as God does? Reviewing Romans 1:18–32 today might give us more respect for the wrath of God against evil.

Pray with Us

Please uphold in prayer the work and ministry of Dr. Junias Venugopal, provost and dean of Education at Moody. We pray for God's wisdom and guidance for every decision Dr. Venugopal has to make in his leadership position.

Community Life and Purity in the Covenant

What is the House of Representatives? Who is Susan B. Anthony and what did she do? Where is the Statue of Liberty? These questions are on the civics test that immigrants must pass in order to become American citizens. They need to demonstrate basic knowledge about American government, history, and geography. According to one official, “This test genuinely talks about what makes an American citizen.”

What questions might have been on an Israelite citizenship test? What knowledge and actions were essential for God’s people under the Law? Community life is a key theme in today’s reading. The “camp must be holy” (23:14) because of the presence of God. The regulations found here fall mostly into three categories: idolatry, generosity, and health. The health regulations implied that purity had physical as well as spiritual dimensions. These are mainly practical rules regarding, for example, sanitation (23:9–14) and disease (24:8–9).

Your camp
must be holy.

Deuteronomy 23:14

Generosity and mutual respect were to characterize social interactions within the covenant, especially financial transactions. Interest was not to be charged on loans to fellow Israelites. A borrower must be treated with dignity. Just because someone had fallen on hard times and needed a loan didn’t give his creditor the right to disrespect his home or take key assets as collateral (24:6, 10–13). Also, farmers who were gathering in a harvest should not be too “efficient” but should instead leave some to be gleaned by the poor.

Idolatry was utterly unacceptable. Any contacts or connections with false religions were to be shunned (23:17–18). The groups excluded from the community of faith here were probably blacklisted due to idolatry or connections with pagan religious practices (23:1–8). All these rules were part of being people with “clean hands and a pure heart” who could stand before God (Ps. 24:3–4).

Apply the Word

How can we apply principles from today’s reading in our own day? Integrity is a good place to start. We should be people of our word (23:21–23; Matt. 5:33–37). Another example, particularly if you’re an employer or leader on the job, is to recognize that justice forbids exploiting workers or taking advantage of people who are economically vulnerable (24:14–18).

Pray with Us

For the next three days, please join us in praying for the Food Service staff on Moody’s Chicago campus. Today, please remember in your prayers Rachel Campbell, Karen Davis, Nathan Garrett, and Vinh Hoang.

Righteousness and Firstfruits in the Covenant

Seminary professor Andy Naselli has offered “12 Reasons You Should Pray Scripture.” These include “because God’s people in the OT and NT did,” “because Jesus did,” “because it helps you focus on what is most important,” “because it is entirely truthful,” and “because it helps you understand Scripture better.”

These are excellent reminders, especially when facing passages such as today’s reading with its miscellaneous regulations that seem far from our lives today. Tithing and firstfruits are a focus here (26:1–15). Tithing served a practical purpose because it provided food for the priests and Levites, as well as for any widows, orphans, or others in need. Firstfruits was a sign of faith—when the Israelites brought in the harvest, they were to offer the first portion to the Lord. Humanly speaking, it would seem more prudent to wait until the harvest was finished to make sure they had enough.

You are his people,
his treasured
possession as
he promised.

Deuteronomy 26:18

Offering firstfruits was therefore an act of worship, an acknowledgement that God provided daily bread and gave covenant blessings. The firstfruits were not to be offered ritually or grudgingly, but joyfully and in a context of remembrance, accompanied by a historical narrative about how God had worked in the life of the nation.

An overall impression concerning Israel’s covenant obligations and responsibilities is that the Law was for everyday life. There were no “big” or “small” issues in God’s eyes. He organized justice at the individual level (25:1–3) and the social level (25:17–19). Even weights for market scales were important to Him, because they indicated honesty and integrity (25:13–16). Moses ended his second sermon in Deuteronomy by exhorting the people to obey God’s commands and to act according to their identity as His covenant people (26:16–19).

Apply the Word

God still cares about the details of our lives, and we should live in a way that is consistent with our identity as His redeemed children. Would others describe us as people of integrity? Are we joyful in using our resources for God’s work? Do we extend care and compassion to those in need around us? These chapters challenge us to examine our daily lives for God.

Pray with Us

As we continue to pray for the Food Service at Moody in Chicago, please add Hoa Lam, Joseph Lee, Carlos Perez, and Martin Rios to your prayer list. We are grateful for the nutritious meals they make for our students, staff, and guests.

Collectively Affirming the Covenant

In *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, Jean Leclercq advocated reading Scripture aloud. Traditionally, learning “by heart” meant “to pronounce the sacred words in order to retain them.” He explained that learning the Word “by heart” involves “one’s whole being: with the body, since the mouth pronounced it, with the memory which fixes it, with the intelligence which understands its meaning, and with the will which desires to put it into practice.”

Reading Scripture aloud can be a valuable spiritual discipline. It was commanded as part of the covenant between God and Israel. Deuteronomy 27 and 28 record the third sermon or discourse of Moses in this book. Keeping the form of an ancient Near Eastern treaty or covenant, this section typically set forth the consequences of keeping or breaking the covenant: blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. In today’s chapter, these consequences are presented as public, collective affirmations.

You have
now become the
people of the
LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 27:9

Setting up memorial stones on Mount Ebal would be a culturally familiar way to remind people about the covenant (vv. 1–8; see Joshua 8:30–35). The altar that was to accompany it alluded to an altar built by Abram in the same location long before (Gen. 12:6–7). This would not

have been lost on the Israelites, who understood that God was reminding them again that He would keep His promises.

The two mountains made an impressive natural setting for staging this ceremony. Half the tribes

would recite covenant curses from Mount Ebal, and half would recite covenant blessings (in the next chapter) from Mount Gerizim, two miles away. The curses here focus mainly on violations of the Ten Commandments (vv. 15–26). Saying “Amen!” signified formal acceptance of or agreement with these terms of the covenant.

Apply the Word

Have you ever read Scripture aloud in your personal devotions? You might choose a beautiful natural setting for this. Imagine watching the sun set while reading Psalm 19 aloud! Or perhaps you and a friend might read Bible verses back and forth to one another. Reading the Word aloud (or listening to reading aloud) helps us to slow down and pay attention.

Pray with Us

Concluding our prayer time for the Food Service staff, thank the Lord for the faithful service of Rebecca Williamson, Jeffery Williams, Jonathan True, and Gregory Dickson. Ask the Father to give them strength, peace, and encouragement in their busy days.

Blessings and Benefits of Covenant Obedience

British chef Jamie Oliver has championed better nutrition as a way to improve students' academic achievement. He urges schools to cut back on high-fat, high-sugar meals and to serve more whole grains and fresh fruit. Studies in the United Kingdom and the United States have found that where such advice is followed, students are more able to focus on learning and score higher on standardized tests, especially math tests.

A better diet leads to better test scores, and obedience leads to blessing. Today's passage begins and ends with this reminder: The conditions for receiving God's covenant blessings are full obedience and careful following of all His commands (vv. 1–2, 14). What were these blessings? The land itself, as we've already heard. God would keep His promises to the Patriarchs and to Israel and they would conquer the Promised Land. In the land they would find a home, peace, and a good life. They

would have victory in war and protection from their enemies (v. 7). The land would yield abundant harvests and provide for their needs (v. 8). Israel would be secure and occupy a place of leadership among the nations (vv. 12–13).

To what dimensions of life would these blessings apply? They would be received across the board (vv. 3–6). The blessings and benefits of covenant obedience were to affect crops, livestock, parents, and children in all contexts, circumstances, and activities (vv. 3–6, 11).

What was the larger purpose of these blessings?

The motivation was intrinsic, not extrinsic. Obeying God was not a means to the "real goal" of blessings. A close and joyful relationship with God was the greatest blessing of all! The purpose, therefore, was to be established as His "holy people" and so to glorify His name among the nations (vv. 9–10).

All these blessings
will come on you
and accompany
you if you obey the
LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 28:2

Apply the Word

Though we, too, are part of God's story of redemption, the church doesn't live under the Mosaic covenant. Instead, there is a "new covenant" founded on the blood of Christ (Luke 22:19–20). This covenant, like the former one, offers blessings, specifically forgiveness, freedom from sin and its death penalty, and eternal life (Heb. 9:14–15). These blessings are also for the glory of God!

Pray with Us

We invite you to pray for Dr. Paul Nyquist, Moody's president, asking God for His guidance as well as His supporting power in Dr. Nyquist's ministry—in both strategic decisions and in his day-to-day responsibilities.

Curses and Consequences of Covenant Disobedience

For many years, Eastman Kodak dominated the world of photography. It was the company that invented the first hand-held camera. Its film was used to capture everyday memories, make movies, and send the world the first pictures from the moon. Left behind in an era of digital cameras, however, Kodak filed for bankruptcy in 2012.

Kodak's fall demonstrates that "security" is relative. God never wanted the Israelites to feel so "secure" that they stopped obeying Him. So in addition to covenant blessings, Moses also listed covenant curses, the consequences of disobedience (v. 15).

The logic is exactly reversed from yesterday's blessings: If action A led to a blessing, then action not-A led to a curse on that same topic. Instead of plentiful harvests, the people would suffer disease, drought, famine, and plagues (vv. 21–24, 38–42). Instead of victory, Israel would endure defeat in war (vv. 25–26, 45–48). Instead of peace and wellbeing,

there would be physical and psychological suffering (vv. 27–29, 34–35). Instead of national prosperity and strength, there would be a loss of wealth and power (vv. 43–44).

Just as the blessings applied across the board, so did the curses. The consequences of covenant disobedience would affect crops, livestock, parents, and children in all contexts, circumstances, and activities (vv. 16–19, 30–33). There would be "confusion and rebuke in everything you put your hand to" (v. 20). Instead of a close relationship with the Lord and glory for His name, the idolatrous nation would become an object of contempt (vv. 36–37).

Why are the curses so much longer than the blessings? God was trying to warn Israel. He knew they would fail to keep the covenant, and He gave Moses a prophecy of their future conquest and exile (vv. 49–68).

If you do not obey
the LORD your God
. . . all these curses
will come on you
and overtake you.

Deuteronomy 28:15

Apply the Word

An interesting New Testament passage to compare with Moses' third sermon is Jesus' Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:17–26). Moses spoke of blessings and curses for covenant obedience or disobedience, and Jesus spoke about blessings and woes on different actions and characteristics. Read and meditate on Christ's words throughout the rest of this week. Seek to live in a way that brings God's blessings to you and others.

Pray with Us

Kenneth Bugh and Walter McCord from Stewardship represent Moody to our donors across the country. Today, pray that the Lord would grant them wisdom, stamina, and traveling safety, as they forge relationships within the Moody community.

Summary Exhortation to Faithfulness and Obedience

In the collection of the American History Museum in Washington, D.C., is the compass that belonged to Captain Meriwether Lewis. He paid \$5 for the silver-plated, mahogany-boxed instrument that helped to guide the landmark Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804–1806) seven thousand miles from St. Louis west to the Pacific coast.

Like this compass, the covenant was to be a spiritual guide and direction-setter for the nation of Israel. This is the beginning of the fourth and final sermon by Moses in Deuteronomy. In this discourse, he reviewed the basic features of the covenant and delivered a final song and blessing before his death. Today's reading is a summary exhortation to faithfulness and obedience.

Because of their history, the Israelites knew the greatness of God. He had freed them from slavery and provided for them through decades of wilderness wanderings. Therefore, they had no excuse for

idolatry! Yet, Moses lamented that their hearts remained hard (v. 4). The very people they were driving out of the land served as an object lesson of the consequences of paganism. If Israel imitated their practices, the results would be "bitter poison" (vv. 16–18).

Carefully follow
the terms of this
covenant, so that
you may prosper.

Deuteronomy 29:9

Moses reminded them that as a nation, they had affirmed the covenant and their obligations and responsibilities in it (vv. 9–15). From the least to the greatest, they were committed to obeying God's commands and to being His people. This relationship was the key to the covenant. If they thought they could rebel

and still receive His blessings, they would be deceiving themselves (vv. 19–21). Despite God's patience, the consequences of disobedience would surely catch up with them (vv. 22–28). Moses' final comment encouraged the Israelites to obey what God had revealed to them and trust Him for what remained unknown (v. 29).

Apply the Word

Moses was speaking to a new generation of Israelites who had come of age wandering in the wilderness. But figuratively, they were the same people (vv. 2–3). What God had done to liberate the nation and bring them to the Promised Land was part of their history and identity. Do we see biblical and church history in this way? What differences would it make if we did?

Pray with Us

We ask that you bring Christine Gorz, vice president of Marketing Communications, to the top of your prayer list today. Please pray that communications on behalf of Moody from teams, led by Christine, would always be informative, consistent, and godly.

Covenant Relationship Is a Matter of Life and Death!

Theologian Timothy George asked: “Why do so many Christians shrink from any thought of the wrath of God?” We would rather focus on His love, but ignoring His just wrath misses much of the story of redemption. “God’s love is not sentimental; it is holy. It is tender, but not squishy. It involves not only compassion, kindness, and mercy beyond measure . . . but also indignation against injustice and unremitting opposition to all that is evil.”

Because of who God is, obeying His commands is a matter of life and death (vv. 11–20; cf. John 10:10)! This isn’t rocket science or some unfathomable spiritual mystery. It’s straightforward: Obedience leads to life, while disobedience leads to death. Obedience is an expression of trust in God, whose love and power were clearly part of Israel’s history. Disobedience is faithlessness.

Moses solemnly urged the people to “choose life” and faithfulness to the Lord

(vv. 19–20). In other examples of ancient Near Eastern treaties or covenants, a list of “gods” was typically summoned as witnesses. But given the Author and content of this covenant, this literary convention was replaced here by calling all creation to witness the nation’s faithfulness or unfaithfulness to the terms of the

covenant, that is, in their relationship with God. Against the temptations of idolatry, they were to love Him, listen to His voice, and obey His commands.

Israel would fail to do so, but there is always another page to turn in God’s story. At the end of chapter 29, Moses had prophesied

exile and pictured the land as a “burning waste of salt and sulfur” as a result of their disobedience. But opening the next chapter, he prophesied that they would return to the Lord. He would bring them back to the land and “circumcise your hearts” (v. 6).

I set before you
today life and
prosperity, death
and destruction.

Deuteronomy 30:15

Apply the Word

God’s love may not be “squishy,” but it is long-suffering. He is patient, merciful, and gracious. Israel would blow it, Moses foretold, but he also foretold that they would return to the Lord, whose love never fails. The same is true for us! No matter how far you’ve wandered, today is the day to return to Him. He’s waiting to welcome you back (Luke 15:11–32)!

Pray with Us

Financial Aid Office employees—Anna-Marie Adams, Eugenia Jones, Alan Mincy, and Heather Shalley—provide a valuable service to our students, helping them receive a Moody education debt-free. Would you bring them before the Lord in prayer today?

Joshua and the Leadership Transition

Joshua had been part of the story all along. He had been a slave liberated in the Exodus. He had been partway up Mount Sinai. He had spied out the land and supported Moses in numerous crises. He had led the Israelites into battle. He had wandered in the wilderness with the rest of the nation. He had lived the history and the covenant and been mentored by the greatest leader in Israel's history.

In today's reading Joshua assumed a new role by taking Moses' place as the leader of Israel. Three public events marked this leadership transition. First, there was a public transfer of authority (vv. 1–8). This part of the transition was done by Moses. The people needed to know that the leadership baton was being passed on in an orderly, responsible manner. They needed to be reminded again of the sin that was preventing Moses from entering the Promised Land and to see his faith in submitting to God's judgment. The Lord would lead

them to victory, no matter which human leader was in charge.

Second, there were to be public readings of the Law every seventh year, during the Festival of Tabernacles (vv. 9–13). To this end, Moses entrusted a written copy of the Law to the priests and Levites, who placed it in the Ark, at the symbolic center of the nation's spiritual life. God's covenant mattered more than the gifts or abilities of any one leader. One leadership transition was less important than passing on a godly heritage to the next generation.

The LORD himself
goes before you
and will be
with you.

Deuteronomy 31:8

Third, there was a public commissioning service (vv. 14–29). This part of the leadership transition was done by God Himself. On this occasion, He taught Moses a song that warned of Israel's future rebellion and faithlessness. Even so, He Himself would keep His promises and remain faithful and loving to His people.

Apply the Word

"Be strong and courageous" (vv. 6–7) is a theme that extends into Joshua chapter 1. This is an excellent theme for any transition, whether it's a leadership transition in a church or ministry or the transitions that come our way throughout our lives. No matter what the circumstances are around us, we can be strong and courageous when we know that ultimately God is in charge.

Pray with Us

Today, please express appreciation in prayer for the faithful service at Moody of Lloyd Dodson, vice president of Human Resources. Ask for God's blessing on his ministry.

The Farewell Psalm of Moses

Clarinetist Stanley Drucker played with the New York Philharmonic for sixty years. By the time he retired in the summer of 2009 at age 80, he had played in more than 10,000 concerts in sixty countries. One of his signature pieces was Aaron Copland's *Clarinet Concerto*, which he performed about sixty times. Making music has truly been his life's passion!

Nearing the end of his life, Moses, too, made music. Both a farewell and a prophecy, the "song of Moses" seems to have been composed by God Himself as a witness to the covenant (Deut. 31:19, 22). The introduction calls all creation as witness, affirms the life-giving nature of the teaching in the psalm, makes it clear that the Lord is its central theme, and contrasts Israel's faithlessness with His faithfulness (32:1–6).

Moses went on to recap the history of the relationship between God and Israel

(32:7–18). God chose them not because of their merits, but in the way an adoptive parent finds an orphan. Like an eagle caring for her young, He rescued and blessed them, but they had repeatedly rebelled and turned to idolatry despite His great love. As a result, God planned to reject and discipline them (32:19–27).

Let my teaching
fall like rain and
my words descend
like dew.

Deuteronomy 32:2

Israel's disobedience was sheer foolishness, as dumb as drinking poison instead of wine. Having trusted in "gods" who could not save, they would be helpless before the just wrath of the Lord (32:28–38).

In the end, though, they would acknowledge the one true God (32:39–43). He would arise, come to their rescue once again, and "make atonement for his land and people" (32:43). In conclusion, Moses urged the people to "take to heart all the words" of this song (32:44–47).

Apply the Word

Psalm 90 begins, "Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations" (v. 1). We do not know when Moses composed this prayer, but based on its themes it appears to have been written in the latter part of his life. We recommend this psalm for your attention today, as it reflects in a more personal way the lessons learned by Moses on his faith journey.

Pray with Us

We invite you to pray for the Procurement Services staff, Paul Brackley, Brenda Crump, Ed Jordan, and Stephen Richardson, who provide Moody ministries with all the necessary supplies. Pray for the love and joy of the Lord to be with them every day.

The Farewell Blessing of Moses

Michelangelo's sculpture of Moses, over eight feet tall, shows him sitting on a marble chair in the pose of a prophet and teacher. His right hand lifts his long beard and rests on the tablets of the Law. His face is both thoughtful and angry—the work depicts him finding the Israelites worshipping the golden calf. Michelangelo felt that this statue was among his best artistic works.

Moses' life was a God-ordained masterpiece! As his life drew to a close, it became clear that his death demonstrated both God's justice and His grace (32:48–52). Because he had publicly disobeyed the Lord at Meribah (Num. 20:1–13), Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land—that's the example of justice. The grace is seen in that he was allowed to see the land from Mount Nebo and to die there alone with the Lord.

Who is like you, a
people saved by
the LORD?

Deuteronomy 33:29

Deuteronomy 33 is a formal, tribe-by-tribe blessing given to the nation by Moses before he died. The prelude addresses God's blessing to the nation as a whole: His love for His people and His gifts of the Law and the covenant (33:1–5). These were the major themes of all four of Moses' sermons in this book. The conclusion circles back to this theme (33:26–29): The Lord is their "shield and helper." He is their refuge, protector, and blessing!

Perhaps the most notable among the specific tribal blessings is the one for Levi (33:8–11). The Levites were commended for their commitment to God over all other priorities and relationships, as seen in their part in the golden calf episode (Ex. 32:27–29). Their zeal had won for them the privilege of leading worship and teaching the Law to the people of God.

Apply the Word

Introducing the farewell blessing, the text calls Moses simply "the man of God" (33:1). The end of Deuteronomy puts his life in perspective as one of Israel's greatest prophets and leaders (34:10–12). These are Moses' epitaphs—brief summaries of the meaning and significance of his life. What do you want your epitaph to be? More importantly, what does God want it to be?

Pray with Us

In his leadership position, Steven Mogck, executive vice president and chief operating officer, oversees numerous aspects of the day-to-day management of Moody's operations. Please uphold in prayer his ministry and ask for God's guidance for all decisions.

The Death of Moses

In 1612, the captain of a British ship died on a voyage to Canada. When the ship returned home, it flew its flag at half-mast to honor him. This is the first recorded instance of what is now an honored tradition—flying a flag at half-staff in times of grief, loss, or national tragedy.

If ancient Israel had a flag, it would surely have flown at half-staff in today's reading. Their great leader was dead. He had climbed Mount Nebo and seen the Promised Land from a distance. His vision of the land was expansive and seems to have gone beyond physical seeing. The Lord also gave him an expansive understanding of history (v. 4). Moses saw the faithfulness of God across time, from promises to Abraham and the other Patriarchs, through centuries of slavery in Egypt, to that very moment.

Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face.

Deuteronomy 34:10

Having supernaturally sustained Moses' physical health and strength so that he could complete his task of leadership, God Himself was the One who buried Moses (vv. 6–7). There would be no monument and no possibility of him becoming a minor deity or false god in future Israelite idolatry. The point of the story, as it always was, is God and His faithful love for His people. He provided a new leader, Joshua, who took up his responsibilities with a "spirit of wisdom" (v. 9).

The closing words of Deuteronomy sum up Moses' life with high praise. God had chosen to know him face to face, as a friend (see Ex. 33:11). He was the greatest leader in the history of Israel, until the coming of Jesus Christ (see Heb. 3:1–6; cf. Acts 3:17–26).

Apply the Word

As you think back through this month's devotional book study of Deuteronomy, what did God teach you? Which themes made the most powerful impression? Were there verses or passages that you chose to memorize? Spend time in prayer today thanking God for this book of Scripture and how He has revealed more of Himself through this text. Pray that you will grow in love, obedience, and holiness as a result of studying His Word.

Pray with Us

On this last day of our study of Deuteronomy this month, let's thank God for His Father's heart, teaching us every step of the way. "He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

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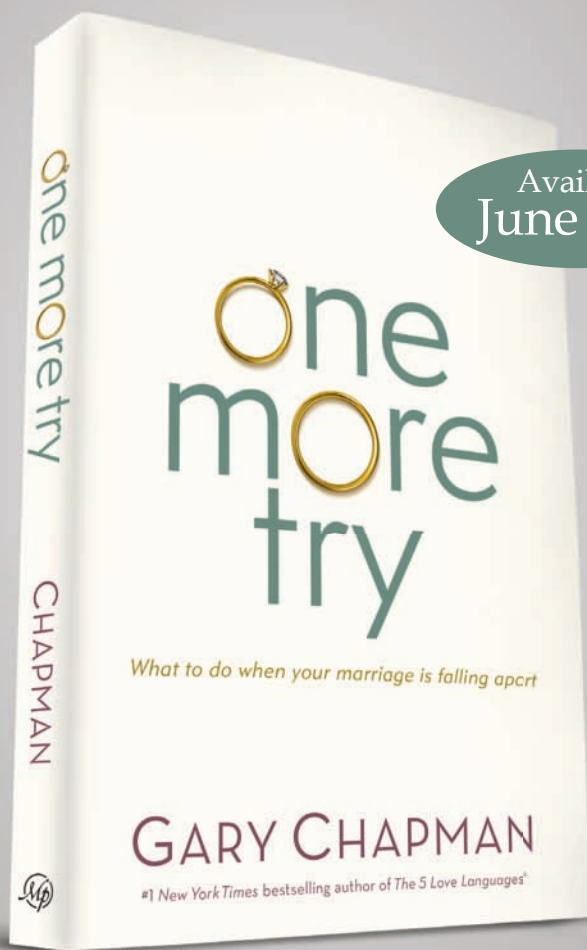
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