

Life lessons from Deuteronomy

It was almost time for the people of Israel to cross the Jordan River and conquer Canaan, But God refused to let Moses lead them into the land. Instead, Moses had been told that he was going to die on the eastern side of the Jordan. So, Moses gave several farewell speeches to the people of Israel in which he repeated many of God's laws.

Because Moses was giving these laws to Israel for the second time, the book is now called "Deuteronomy," which comes from a Greek phrase meaning "second law."

Moses also reminded the Israelites of the past forty years. God had rescued them from Egypt and taken care of them in the desert, but they had not always been faithful or obedient to him.

Moses told the Israelites that if they kept their agreement to worship and obey the Lord, they would be a successful and powerful nation. But if they broke their agreement and worshiped idols, the Lord promised to put terrible curses on the people. They would be defeated by their enemies and lose their land and their lives.

Much later, when Jesus was asked which one of God's commands was the most important, he answered by quoting one of the commands from Deuteronomy:

Listen, Israel! The LORD our God is the only true God! So love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, and strength. (6.4, 5)

Here are 19 Lessons from The Book of Deuteronomy

Don't Hold Back Now!

1 # Short Commentary & Lesson from Deuteronomy 1. 19-21

God granted Canaan to the Israelites and instructed them to take ownership of it. They hesitated and by staying outside of the land, they were not obeying God's instructions.

Sometimes, when God presents us with opportunities we shrink back because we have doubts. Or, maybe we are afraid of failure or defeat. But if God opens a door for us, we need to go through it boldly. We need to take advantage of opportunities to grow and show our faith. Don't hold back when God shows you the way.

A Heart for God

2 # Short Commentary & Lesson from Deuteronomy 5.28-30

God told Moses he was pleased when the Israelites obeyed him because they wanted to, not because they had to. God doesn't make us obey him - it is our choice.

Yes, we should have respect for God and a healthy fear of his anger, but God is not honored when we do what he says simply because we are afraid to do otherwise. The LORD wants us to obey him because we love him.

It is out of this desire to please God that we do what he says. How can you show God you love him?

It Doesn't Seem Fair

3 # Short Commentary & Lesson from Deuteronomy 7.1-15

Why would God command the Israelites to destroy their enemies without mercy? Does he hate some people and love others? No, God is loving and merciful, but he is also just so he doesn't permit evil to continue without being punished and corrected.

God's command to destroy these nations was his judgment upon them for the wicked things they had done for many years. His command was also a dramatic warning to the nation of Israel that God's people should beware of being overcome by the evil practices of their enemies.

Do not ever think that God is too kind to do anything about sin. Because he is holy and just, as well as merciful and loving, he must punish wrong actions and attitudes. God also rewards obedience.

The Hand that Feeds You

4 # Short Commentary & Lesson from Deuteronomy 8.10-19

God had promised the Israelites that if they obeyed his laws and teaching, he would bless them with food, shelter, and land. But with this promise, he also gave a warning that we should remember.

When things are going well in family, career, or any other area of life, we are tempted to become proud. It is easy to think that our hard work and ingenuity have gotten us where we are.

We should think again! It is God who gives us the ability to work and who blesses us with more than we need. He also requires us to be good caretakers of what we have been given. We must always give God the credit for our health, riches, and well-being.

A Promise Is a Promise

5 # Short Commentary & Lesson from Deuteronomy 9.4-6

God made a promise to the Israelites - he would be their God, take care of them, and bless them. On the other hand, the Israelites had promised to obey God. This agreement was never to be broken and was intended to last forever.

Unfortunately, the Israelites broke their promise to God. He, however, has never broken a promise to his people. God did punish the people several times for their disobedience, but he always remained faithful to them. God restored the Israelites even though they continued to turn against him.

God loves us even when we do things that go against his commands. It is important for us to understand that God's love for us never ends. He wants us to turn back to him.

Don't Be So Stubborn

6 # Short Commentary & Lesson from Deuteronomy 10.12-21

Stubbornness is characteristic of human nature, but that doesn't mean God likes it. He was not pleased when the Israelites insisted on returning to their sinful practices.

In this passage, Moses encouraged the people to make a real effort to consider their promise to God and to allow him to wash away their sins. This request is one we should follow, too.

Flee from Evil

7 # Short Commentary & Lesson from Deuteronomy 12.29-31

God made it very clear to the Israelites that he did not want them to get mixed up in the false religious surrounding them. Idolatry-the worship of handmade statues or images - was everywhere in the land. No doubt, it was very easy to be lured into practices that appeared to be harmless on the surface but were deadly in the end.

Sometimes curiosity and the attempt to learn more about evil things can harm our spiritual growth if those evil things become too attractive to us. It is always best to stay as far away from evil as we can.

Ignore False Prophets

8 # Short Commentary & Lesson from Deuteronomy 13.1-3

Moses warned the Israelites about the false prophets who would encourage them to worship other gods and idols. Just because someone can perform a "miracle" or predict the future doesn't make them authentic. If their teachings and their lifestyles do not line up with God's word, stay far away from them!

Not everyone who claims to speak and act on God's behalf is truly doing so. Some people may be deceiving themselves. Others may be trying to trick us. In any case, God's Word is the one true standard against which all activities show be judged.

Giving Generously

9 # Short Commentary & Lesson from Deuteronomy 16.16, 17

The LORD had Moses instruct the Israelites that every man must attend the three special, religious festivals every year. For these celebrations, they were reminded to take a gift for God, according to what they had received from him.

How much we give to God is not what matters. We are blessed when we give with a cheerful heart. Our gifts show how much we appreciate God's kindness. No matter how much we give back to God, we should give it joyfully and thankfully.

Downhill from Here

10 # Short Commentary & Lesson from Deuteronomy 17.14-20

Years after Moses gave these instructions for kings, Israel's rulers refused to listen to this word of creation. As a result, each of them experienced a downhill slide.

King Solomon, for example, was very successful at first. But he turned away from God after he had accumulated great wealth and built a huge army. Because of Solomon's disobedience, Israel became a divided nation, and many of the Israelites turned away from God.

God's laws and commands are practical - he knows what can cause us to start trusting ourselves instead of him. Refusing to obey God's instructions always brings defeat.

Greater Is He

11 # Short Commentary & Lesson from Deuteronomy 20.1-4

Moses reminded the Israelites that the same God who had rescued them from slavery in Egypt could help them defeat an enemy, no matter how strong their opponent was. Similarly, God has already saved us from our worst enemy - slavery to sin.

Sometimes we are faced with big problems or strong opposition. Confronting an enemy always causes a certain amount of fear, but with God, on our side, we can be confident of victory. We can read in the Bible how God has helped his people again and again with their problems. We can remind ourselves of the many times he has helped us, our family, and our friends. God is honored when we trust him to help us meet any situation.

Looking Out for Others

12 # Short Commentary & Lesson from Deuteronomy 20.1-4

God gave the Israelites specific instructions for returning lost animals because they were valuable possessions. Aside from that, though, God's people should have an attitude of wanting to help others instead of trying to take advantage of someone else's loss.

It is important for us to have God's attitude about someone else's property, and not to allow the attitude of the world to rub off on us. Having the proper attitude helps keep us from becoming greedy and selfish. Our respectful behavior sets a good example for others.

Sex for Sale

13 # Short Commentary & Lesson from Deuteronomy 20.1-4

Moses warned the Israelites about staying away from prostitutes because immoral sex was strictly forbidden by God's law. This was doubly important in biblical times because many of the pagan religions surrounding Israel made prostitution a regular part of their religious ceremonies.

God's people are to have a much different view of sex. It should be an expression of intimacy between husband and wife within marriage. Prostitution - and any other form of sexual immorality - ruins the fabric of the family.

All of us need to listen to God's warnings about sex outside of marriage. Young people should be informed of the consequences that are sure to follow when God's instructions are ignored. Adults need to be encouraged to remain faithful to their spouse.

Beyond Being Fair

14 # Short Commentary & Lesson from Deuteronomy 24.10-13

The Lord's careful instructions to the Israelites about making and collecting loans show how concerned he is for those who are in need. God has these same concerns today, and he expects us to be not only fair but also kind and considerate in our dealings with those who seek our help.

We should never take advantage of people in need. And just as the LORD told the Israelites that he would notice if they did "the right thing," he notices us when we do the right thing.

We Are His People

15 # Short Commentary & Lesson from Deuteronomy 28.1-14

Moses let it be known that from this day on, the Israelites were God's people, so they needed to obey God's instructions. Possibly, Moses wanted to remind the new generation that had grown up during the desert wandering that they, too, were God's chosen people. It could be that since they were getting ready to enter the land God promised to them, Moses was announcing the formation of the nation of Israel. In either case, it was a new start for the people.

When we chose to believe in God, we are also given a fresh start. We are citizens of a new nation, a heavenly kingdom. As such, we should begin to obey God's commands and follow his ways. Our behaviour reveals what we truly believe in our hearts.

Two Choices

16 # Short Commentary & Lesson from Deuteronomy 30.1-7

The Israelites were given two choices: obey God's commands and live good lives, or disobey them and face death and disaster. God had made his laws very clear and understandable so the people could not claim they were impossible to obey - they simply had to decide what they would do.

We have the same choice as God's followers. If we are slaves to sin we choose to go our own way; but when we become God's followers, he gives us the freedom, as well as the strength and courage, to follow God's way.

His Word Is Life!

17 # Short Commentary & Lesson from Deuteronomy 30.1-7

Moses summed up his song by once again stressing to the people the importance of knowing God's Law, applying it to their lives, and teaching it to younger generations.

It is not enough to merely read the Bible or hear a sermon. We should constantly ask, "What is God saying to me through this? How does he expect me to respond?"

God's Word is powerful. It tells us what we need to know about God and how he wants us to live. It is the manual for life!

True Security

18 # Short Commentary & Lesson from Deuteronomy 33.24-29

Moses knew that he was about to die, so before he left the people, he blessed them. In this song of blessing, Moses reminded the Israelites that God was their only true, safe place of security.

We need to be reminded of that same truth many times today. God is our only true security- not the government, not our educational system, not money, power, or other people. Only God cannot be shaken when the earth seems to crumble beneath us. God never changes, so we can always depend on him.

Obey the Father

19 # Short Commentary & Lesson from Deuteronomy 34.4-10

Moses did not get to enter Canaan because he had disobeyed God. Sometimes we think that a small bit of disobedience is no big deal to God, but sin always has consequences.

When we disobey God, he will forgive us if we turn away from our sin and turn back to him. We still must live with the consequences of that sin, though. God forgave Moses because of his trust in God, but Moses missed one of the greatest goals of his life - living in the land God had promised the Israelites.

Promises for us

When a pilot wants to take his private plane up for a ride on a sunny afternoon, he goes through a pre-flight check-list. A commercial airline pilot about to take a 747 loaded with passengers from New York to Los Angeles talks his crew through a much more elaborate preflight ritual. The astronauts flying a space shuttle mission endure days of preflight preparation. Pilots gladly endure all of these precautions in order to fly and land safely at their destinations. Deuteronomy is like a preflight check-list for one of the most important adventures in biblical history. Moses led Israel through everything they needed to know to live successfully in Canaan. Then he warned them about the extreme dangers associated with deviating from the plan.

There is a plan that we can use for our lives. It begins when you "love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, and strength" (6.5). Putting God first in our lives is the best preflight plan we can have.