



Pursuing God

HIGHLIGHTS FROM
THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

Bible Studies

APRIL & MAY, 2024





PURSUING GOD: HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY TERM 2 MORNING TEACHING SERIES

PRIMARY AIM

To be encouraged to pursue God through faithful obedience.

SUBSIDIARY AIMS

- To explore Deuteronomy by examining key passages.
- To grow in our understanding of God and how God pursued Israel.
- To understand our response to God's revelation and purposes for our own situation.
- To gain a deeper understanding of the continuity between the Old and New Testaments and to understand Jesus within this broader narrative. .

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND PASTORAL CONSIDERATIONS

Over the course of each year we engage with an Old Testament book, in addition to a Gospel and a NT Epistle. This year in the morning we are exploring Deuteronomy which is foundational for understanding the rest of the Bible. Deuteronomy is essentially a sermon preached to Israel to encourage faithful obedience, and so this sermon can serve as an encouragement to pursuing God through faithful obedience to God as well. It helps us understand who God is and his grace, and it provides guidance on how to appropriately respond to God in our lives. It's important to recognise that the Christian church differs from the nation of Israel. Therefore, we must carefully consider how to apply laws in our context, considering the teachings and ministry of Jesus, as well as our current position in salvation history.

It has been a while since we have spent time in a large body of Old Testament text. Some in our congregation, who find the New Testament more accessible/relatable may struggle to see the relevance of this book or the rationale for studying it. See the "Further Detail" section for importance of grounding messages in the broader

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biblical narrative. Others may wish to draw parallels between predictions of rebellion and the present conflict in and around the Holy Land. Our congregation represents the breadth of perspectives on this issue and so pastoral sensitivity and care will be needed to prevent misinterpretation.

In line with the St Hilary’s Strategic Vision 2022-2025, this series provides opportunities to reflect on several values, principally discipleship and worship.

STRUCTURE AND TOPICS

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READING
1	Apr-14	Proclaiming God’s Faithfulness	Dt 1:1-46
2	Apr-21	The Uniqueness of Yahweh	Dt 4:32-40
3	Apr-28	What does the Lord require?	Dt 4:44-5:33
4	May-05	Love the Lord your God	Dt 6:1-25
5	May-12	Should Christians celebrate Mother’s Day?	Dt 5:1-22
6	May-19	God’s blessings for all people	Dt 16:1-12 & Acts 2:1-24
7	May-26	Assessing the Consequences	Dt 28:1-62
8	Jun-02	Restoration beyond Exile	Dt 30:1-20
9	Jun-09	Rebellion Predicted	Dt 31:1-29
10	Jun-16	A Song of Warning	Dt 31:30 – 32:47
11	Jun-23	How to Finish Well	Dt 33:48-52; 34:1-12

RESOURCES

Deuteronomy (The NIV Application Commentary) by Daniel I. Block
 Deuteronomy (The New American Commentary) by Eugene H. Merrill.
 Deuteronomy (New Bible Commentary), by J. Gordon McConville.
 Deuteronomy (TOTC) by J. A. Thompson.

1 **Deuteronomy 1:1-14**

PROCLAIMING GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

1. Share a time in your life when someone has been faithful to you, even when you didn't deserve it.
2. Pray, and read Deuteronomy 1:1-46.
3. Look at verses 1-5. Why might these verses have been included? Why the comment about 11 days?
4. What is the command in verses 6-8? What is the significance of God saying, 'I have given you this land'?

5. Why do you think the story about Moses appointing leaders was included (9-18)?

6. The Israelites take the direct route to Kadesh Barnea and send out spies into the land (19-25). What was the source of the Israelites fear and was it justified (26-28)?

7. According to Moses, what evidence did the Israelites have to help them choose to not act out of fear (29-33)?

8. What was God's response to Israel's lack of trust (37)? Where is God's grace in his judgement (38-40)?

9. Why did he treat Joshua and Caleb differently (cf. Num. 13:30; 14:5–10)?

10. Why didn't God support the Israelites' first attempt at entering the land (41-44)?

11. What do we learn about God's faithfulness to Israel, and Israel's faithfulness to God in this history?

12. What is your response to God's faithfulness to you, both in your own past, and as you think about what Jesus achieved through his death and resurrection?

13. Share one insight from your time thinking about this chapter. How might this encourage you in your daily pursuit of God?

14. Pray for each other.

2 Deuteronomy 4:1-40

THE UNIQUENESS OF YAHWEH

1. Share one thing about unique about yourself, that others might not know.
2. Pray and read Deuteronomy 4:1-40.
3. What does God promise the Israelites for following his laws (v.1)?
4. What is Moses' concern in verse 2? What ways do people today do this with God's Word (cf Rev 22:18-19) and how do we safeguard against this from happening?

5. Look through 4:5-40 and list out all the ways that Israel's God is unique or special compared to all others. You could do this work in either pairs or triplets, and then report your answers back to the group.

4:5-8

4:9-14

4:15-20

4:21-24

4:25-31

4:32-34

4:35-40

6. The Israelites were on the verge of crossing into the promised land. Why is focusing on God's character and his past action important for Moses to emphasise?

7. What is the answer to the questions Moses asks in verses 32-34 and why were the Israelites shown these things by God (v.35, 37-38)?

8. What are the Israelites asked to do in response to God's actions towards them (v.39-40)?

9. As Christians we are now part of the new covenant in Jesus, but obedience is still important. Discuss the place of obedience in your faith and how is this expressed during your daily life.

10. Which aspects of God's unique character are you most thankful for?

11. Spend time in prayer praising God for who he is and what he has done.

12. Pray for each other.

3 Deuteronomy 4:44-5:33

WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE?

1. Can you remember the Ten Commandments without looking them up? If so, then have a go at sharing it now as a group.
2. Pray and read Deuteronomy 4:44-5:33.
3. The word 'law' (torah) is mentioned in verse 44 and usually refers to the whole Pentateuch (first 5 books of the OT). Here it is used to describe the 'stipulations, decrees and laws Moses gave them' (v.45). In broad terms, how did the previous chapters 1:6-4:43 prepare the Israelites to listen more carefully to the recounting of the covenant law by Moses (esp. 4:39-40)?

4. How does verse 6 relate to verse 7?

5. Look at the Ten Commandments (v.7-21). Briefly list out the principle(s) that a) undergird each commandment, b) the sin it guards against, and c) who it protects.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

6 _____

7 _____

8 _____

9 _____

10 _____

6. There are two minor differences between the Ten Commandments in Exodus and in Deuteronomy. The first different is who the Sabbath rest benefits (cf. Ex 20:10) and the other is what the Sabbath is grounded in (cf. Ex 20:11). Compare and discuss why Moses may have made the changes.

7. OT scholar Eugene Merrill states that the Ten Commandments, *'function as the essence of divine standards and expectations against which every conceivable human attitude and conduct is to be measured. They are, in fact, expressive of the very character of God himself and for that reason alone are timeless and universally applicable.'*
Discuss.

8. Why might the Lord have written the commandments on stone tablets (v.22), as opposed to parchment or papyrus?

9. Why does God say, 'I have heard what this people said to you. Everything they said was good.' (v.28), in response to what the Israelites said in verses 24-27?

10. Optional: Think about how Jesus teaches using the ten commandments (cf. Mt 5:21-22, 27-28; 15:3-6; Lk 18:18-27). What do you notice?

11. Share one insight and one thing that you'd like to put into practice during the week (this could include picking one verse to memorise or meditate on).

12. Pray for each other.

4 Deuteronomy 6:1-25

LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

1. Pray and read Deuteronomy 6:1-25.
2. Explore the meaning of the phrase 'milk and honey' (v.3; cf Ex 3:8). What does this phrase communicate about what God is promising the people of Israel?
3. Love for God (v.5) is paired with God's commandments (v.6). Why require love? Why doesn't God just command people to do what he says? Discuss.
4. The Israelites are to teach and pass down the commandments to their children (v.2). They are to 'impress them on your children' (v.7). What is the significance of mentioning the requirement to teach children?

5. What do you notice about the different ways of teaching these commandments in verses 7-9?

6. What is your own reaction to the kind of devotion called for in learning God's law? Are we called as Christians to the same level of devotion? If so, then what parts of the New Testament might you find to support this?

7. List out the different dangers the Israelites need to be careful of in verses 10-17. Which of these dangers might be present in our own day and pose a threat to our faith in God?

8. Optional: In verse 25, does Moses mean that keeping the covenant law is the basis for righteousness or does it mean that keeping the law is the expression of faithful devotion? (cf. Rom 4:1-5)
Discuss.

9. What strategies do Christians use today to teach children about God and how to follow Jesus? How can we as individuals and as a church encourage and support this?

10. Pick a verse from chapter 6 that you will commit to think about and memorise this week.

11. Pray for each other.

5 Deuteronomy 5:16; Psalm 139:7-18

EXPLORING MOTHER'S DAY

1. Pray.
2. People have different traditions around Mother's Day, anywhere from making it a big deal to not doing anything at all on the day. Share about what you normally do or don't do in your household.
3. Discuss what you find helpful or not helpful about how our society practices Mother's and Father's Day.
4. Read Deuteronomy 5:16.

Is this command to 'honor your Father and Mother' an attitude or involve more than this? What do you think the command might have looked like in practice in Moses' day?

5. Why do you think God is concerned for children to honor their parents?

6. Read Ephesians 6:1-3.

Paul comments on the fifth commandment and says it is the 'first commandment with a promise'. Does this promise also apply to us today? If so, how might this promise relate or flow out of obedience to God's command?

7. Over the course of our lives, in what ways does honoring our parents change or remain the same?

8. Read Proverbs 1:7-9.

What critical role does a parent play in a child's life? What things does the writer of Proverbs want the reader to avoid in their life?

9. Read Psalm 139:7-18.

This Psalm beautifully captures God's involvement in our beginnings. What do we learn about God in these verses?

10. What are some ways that we as a society can place unrealistic expectations on our Mothers?

11. Not everyone finds Mother's Day easy. Relationships can be complicated, and our experience may not line up with our expectations as a child or as a Mother. Is it possible to celebrate and give thanks for our Mother's if we or others we know have a difficult relationship? Discuss.

12. What is one thing about your Mum that you can thank God for?

13. Give thanks to God for these things and pray for each other.

14. Pray for each other.

6 Acts 2:1-24; Deuteronomy 16:9-12

GOD'S BLESSINGS FOR ALL PEOPLE

1. Pray for the Spirit to guide your thinking and provide insights into his Word. Read Acts 2:1-22.
2. What reason did the believers have for staying in Jerusalem (cf. 1:4-5)?
3. In verses 2-4 the Spirit's coming is described in three different ways: audible, visual and speech.

a) Audible

Wind often accompanies God's presence in the OT.

Look up 1 Kings 19:11, Isaiah 66:15, Ezekiel 37:9-14.

What is it about the writer's description of the wind here in Acts 2:2 that speaks to what God is doing and his character?

b) Visual

Fire also often accompanies God's appearance in the OT.

Look up Exodus 3:2; 19:8; 1 Kings 18:38-39; Ezekiel 1:27.

What is distinctive about the fire in Acts 2:3 compared to those mentioned?

c) Speech

What is the significance that 'All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit' and 'they began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them' (v.4)?

4. What did the crowd hear in verses 6-11? What was the miracle?
5. Jews would customarily eat at 'the fourth hour', and especially so on a feast day. So at 9am, (literally 'the third hour', v.15), it was the time for prayer, not drinking wine.

What is the reason Peter gives, drawing on the prophet Joel, for the Spirit's coming and what it points to (v.16-21)?

What action is Peter calling the crowd to (v.21)?

6. The backdrop to the events in Acts 2 was the Feast of Weeks, which always fell fifty days after Passover (cf. Lev 23:16), on a Sunday. Also known as Pentecost (fifty in Greek), it was the second of the three great harvest festivals of Judaism, coming between Passover and Tabernacles.

How was this festival to be celebrated, according to Deuteronomy 16:9-12?

7. How could the backdrop of this Festival perhaps enrich our understanding of God's work at Pentecost and our own response to his abundant blessings in Christ?

8. What role(s) did the Holy Spirit play throughout this Acts 2 Pentecost event?

9. A large emphasis in the way that the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost is that God's Spirit will be poured out on all people (2:17).

Does knowing God's purpose motivate your day-to-day witness of Jesus to those around you of different backgrounds?

If there was a next step you could take to grow in your capacity or desire to witness to others, what might that be?

10. Pray for each other.

FEEDBACK?

*To share your ideas and feedback
on how to improve our bible study series,
follow the link QR code:*



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