

## The Gospel of the Kingdom

### Week 3 - Day 4: Stop and Remember

After leaving mount Sinai and spending forty years in the desert, we learn of Israel's constant grumbling and rebellion due to their sin. Yet, God shows his mercy by intervening, instructing, reminding and proving His faithfulness to His kingdom people. As they approach the territory promised to Abraham long ago, Moses pauses to speak to God's covenant people before they enter. This is where the book of Deuteronomy begins. A huge theme in this book is for God's people to never forget what God had done for them.

**Deuteronomy 8:1-3; 11** Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land that the LORD promised on oath to your forefathers. Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands ... Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day.

Because of the rebellion of God's people throughout their journey in the desert, an entire generation died off as part of God's judgment. Now, at the end of forty years, Moses finds himself leading an almost entirely new generation of people about to enter the promised land who hadn't had the experiences of the previous generation. So now, on the precipice of entering the promised land, Moses delivers a series of messages to bring this new generation up to speed as to God's expectations both toward his promises to bless obedience and his warning of what will happen if they disobey.

**Deuteronomy 30:19-20** This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Ironically, Moses himself is part of that generation who wasn't allowed to enter the promised land because of his own careless ways before God as recorded in Numbers. With all the instruction offered in the book of Deuteronomy, perhaps the important lesson for us is to pause and reflect over what God has revealed to us—and to assess whether we are engaged sincerely in the life he offers or if we are forgetting all He has done for us.

#### ***It's Easy to forget***

It's easy to forget some of the most important and memorable events in our lives. A parent of a teenager in a moment of disappointment or frustration, might easily forget the incredible

blessing of their child's birth and the sense of gratitude that came when welcoming a new life into the world. A spouse may have forgotten that his vows offered in the presence of a pastor, family, friends and more importantly God, were meant for a lifetime instead of trading it all in for an illicit affair. The job you always wanted and which allowed you to wake up daily, eager to make a difference in the company has now become a drudgery—you find yourself anxiously looking for something different to do with your life. Life is full of experiences that were once powerful and seemingly unforgettable, but over time have somehow lost their sense of significance.

Sometimes things fade because we make unhealthy choices. Other times, experiences fade simply because we don't renew their significance in our lives. Celebrating one's wedding anniversary is one way a married couple pauses to remember their past. Birthdays are also a subtle and intentional reminder of the value and blessing someone is in our lives. There are various celebrations and ceremonial events that are intended to bring us back—to cause us to remember and value something in our past. When we take time to remember, we set ourselves up for improving things in the present while ensuring a more promising future.

This is the lesson of Deuteronomy. God is telling his people—a new generation—to not forget what He has said and done.

Considering this reminder is given to a generation of people who hadn't experienced certain significant demonstrations of God's instructions and interventions speaks of the importance of both learning the things we need to and then, making sure we don't forget. This is one of the reasons parents are instructed in this book, to pass along God's instruction to their children in every way possible. In what's known as the *Shema* (which means "to listen"), God reminds his people:

**Deuteronomy 6:4-9 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commands that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.**

God reminds them to do this otherwise it's likely that they, along with their children, may one day forget the Lord (v.12).

God doesn't want us to forget where we've come from and the work he has done in our lives either. He wants us to remember his commands and his faithfulness. He wants us to remember that there is *salvation* coming from the tribe of Judah, the one who would defeat the serpent. But if we are not careful, very important things we once held precious can be relegated to those spaces in our memories that don't mean as much as they once did. We can drift into new ways of living and dealing with life's challenges. In short, if we aren't careful, we can lose our way and forget about God or live as those who have.

The name of Deuteronomy literally means, “second law.” Deuteronomy is essentially a retelling of what God had already told His people. God wanted His people, and specifically, the new generation who would enter the promised land to remember what he had once said to them—and how he worked to deliver them from Egypt to bring them to the promised land. In this collection of messages given by Moses under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, this newer generation would be thoroughly equipped to know the God who had delivered them. Moses serves up a powerful crash course of God’s work beginning from when they departed from Sinai and wandered in the desert. He details the rebellion of the people throughout their wanderings in the desert and how even he had disqualified himself from entering due to his sin.

But Moses also refreshes this younger generation in the terms of God’s loving rule of law, the keeping of God’s moral and ceremonial law, and the feasts God called His people to celebrate including Passover. He instructs on the rules for the priests and Levites in carrying out duties of worship in the temporary shelter of God’s dwelling. With great detail, Moses reviews the many instructions God had given for his people to remain “separate” from the nations of the world. And finally, at the end of these detailed sermons, he reminds this generation that if they obey the LORD, blessings will follow. But if they rebel and disobey, they can expect God to send his wrath on them.

**Deuteronomy 30:15-18 See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. <sup>16</sup> If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you today, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. <sup>17</sup> But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, <sup>18</sup> I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess.**

Moses concludes by urging them toward the right path and to remain true to it. Moses announces his successor, Joshua and then, as with most sermons, a song that Moses has written is introduced to be taught to the people. The song of Moses as recorded in chapter 32 is a beautiful and emotional recitation of God’s salvation work in his Covenant people. But it was also a prophetic word to warn Israel of their propensity to sin and disobey the Lord. It’s as if God wants to teach them this song so that they will be reminded in times of disobedience that God, even though knowing of this beforehand, would also remain faithful to them. Moses predicts:

**Deuteronomy 31:27 For I know how rebellious and stubborn you are. Behold, even today while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the Lord. How much more after my death!**

Then, shortly after the people learned this song, Moses goes up to Mount Nebo and dies. The first five books of the Old Testament closes on a minor key. Good days are ahead for God's people—but also many tests and trails.

Will God prove faithful to all he has promised? Would there ever be another Moses-like figure to bring salvation to God's people from the kingdom of the serpent into God's kingdom?

**Deuteronomy 34:10-12 And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, none like him for all the signs and the wonders that the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, and for all the mighty power and all the great deeds of terror that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.**

Just like Israel does in Deuteronomy, at this point we would like to invite you (and your group) to pause this study and reflect on what you have learned so far.

Perhaps plan an extended time of prayer where you can express gratitude to God for His blessings while also calling on Him for his help for the things you are trusting Him to provide. (Do this in a setting where you can be undistracted as much as possible and also without time constraints.) Allow God to use the first 5 books of the Bible to speak truth to you and encouragement into your life as we wait to see how God will fulfill all of His promises!

Take your time with this pause! Maybe answer any questions you have missed or spend some more time reflecting on a portion of scripture that didn't make sense or spoke to you! Perhaps take a week to reflect on this section with your group before moving on!

**Psalm 1:1-2 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.**

-Larry Vold

**Share the Gospel:** It's so easy to forget some of the most important and memorable events that God has orchestrated in our lives. Through Moses' last words, God is reminding a new generation of His people to not forget what He has said and done so that they might be blessed in the promised land.

Personal Observations, Reflections, and Prayers: