

Small Group Guide CHOOSE TO LIVE

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

June 22, 2014

Deuteronomy

Use this resource as a tool to help Christ-followers move forward in their spiritual growth. To do this well requires that the Small Group Leader is building a relationship with the individuals in the small group and has identified where the people are in their relationship with God. Are they Christ-followers? Are they growing in Christ? If so, in what areas do they need to grow further? As disciplinarians, Small Group Leaders shepherd people to know the truth of Scripture, to understand why it matters, and to apply it to their lives. Small Group Leaders come alongside those whom they disciple to discover how loving God, loving each other, and loving those not yet in the Kingdom should shape how they live. The structure of this resource coincides with moving people from knowledge (Main Truth) to understanding (Why It Matters) to application (Now What Do We Do?). Utilize this Small Group Guide as a flexible teaching tool to inform your time together and not as a rigid task list.

GETTING STARTED

Before Small Group

Readings for June 23-29, 2014

Deuteronomy 28:20-34, Joshua 1, and Psalm 119:25-122

Where We Are In The Story ~ Old Testament (Deuteronomy)

Background of Deuteronomy: Deuteronomy picks up with Moses' word from the Lord to the Israelites at Mount Horeb at the end of their forty years of wilderness wanderings. Deuteronomy presents the Law (much of what is in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers) in a preached format, and it contains three of Moses' sermons to the people of Israel that both rehearse their history and instruct them in how they are to live as God's people in the Land of Promise. While Moses wrote this book, the end of the Pentateuch (Genesis-Deuteronomy) has an unnamed author since Moses did not write about his own death in Deuteronomy 34.

Structure of Deuteronomy:

- Deuteronomy 1:1-4:49 reviews Israel's history from Mt. Sinai through their wilderness wanderings.
- Deuteronomy 5-28 rehearses God's covenant with Israel and exhorts the people to keep the covenant.
- Deuteronomy 29-30 records a renewal of the covenant between God and Israel.
- Deuteronomy 31-34 reports Joshua's succession of Moses, Joshua's commission, a song of Moses, and the death of Moses.

This Week in Deuteronomy: We pick up in Deuteronomy 28 with the curses God establishes for Israel should they disobey Him. These things later took place in the nation and resulted in the Assyrian Captivity (722 B.C.) and the Babylonian Captivity (587 B.C.). While the consequences of disobedience may appear harsh, they highlight the magnitude of the offense of infidelity to God, and while punishing the guilty, God offers grace and mercy when His people repent. All of this describes how Israel's prosperity in the land stemmed from God's provision and blessing, which hinged on the covenant faithfulness of the people.

Deuteronomy 29 begins Moses' third message in the book, and in Deuteronomy 29-30, he exhorts the people to "choose life" (30:19) by determining to love and obey God. He calls them to renew their commitment to God. In Deuteronomy 31, Moses commissions Joshua as his successor in leading the people, and he encourages the people of Israel to "be strong and courageous" and not to fear the people of the land because God would go with them and would not forsake them (31:6). Such encouragement was needed in light of the epic fail of the nation forty years earlier. Then Moses offers the same instruction specifically to Joshua in front of the nation as he takes over leadership of the people.

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God led Moses to write the words of the Law for the people to read them every Sabbath Year (31:9-13) as well as the words to a song of praise (31:30-32:43). During the Sabbath Year, the people were not to work the land, and instead, the proclaimed Law of the Lord was meant to remind them that God and His Word is their life and satisfaction. Deuteronomy 32 -34 closes with God's instructions to Moses regarding his death, Moses' final blessings on Israel, and his death on Mount Nebo, in modern-day Jordan. From this mount, even today, one can see the Promised Land, the Dead Sea, and Jerusalem to the west. While prohibited from entering the land because of his own sin, God did permit Moses a panoramic view of the Promised Land that Israel would inherit.

Where We Are In The Story ~ Old Testament (Joshua)

Background of Joshua: While authorship of this book is unknown, the book's name derives from the name of its main character, Joshua, who was Moses' successor in leading the people of Israel. His name means "Yahweh delivers" or "Yahweh saves," which is an apt title of the book since it describes God's work in defeating the nations of the Promised Land and giving the land to His people. Joshua presents the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give their descendants the land of Canaan, and it describes the military conquests that brought this to pass. Written as a historical book for Israel, Joshua also emphasizes God's sovereignty, omnipotence, and faithfulness to His word, and Joshua 21:43-45 provides a fitting summary of God's character as One who keeps *all* of His promises.

Structure of Joshua:

- Joshua 1-5 describes Israel's preparations before taking the Promised Land.
- Joshua 6-12 depicts the military conquests of the nation.
- Joshua 13-21 explains the distribution of the land among the tribes, highlighting the fulfillment of God's promises to His people.
- Joshua 22-24 records Joshua's final instructions and exhortations to the nation before his death.

This Week in Joshua: Joshua 1 includes both God's encouragement to Joshua as he prepared to lead the nation into the Promised Land as well as the nation's affirmation of his leadership. While placing on him the responsibility of leading His people, God promised to be with Joshua, and no matter Joshua's fears or skills, God's promises *His* sufficiency. The linchpin of Joshua's success and the nation's triumph is found in God's charge to Joshua verses 7-8 when God directs him to meditate on His law and to adhere to it. In the Old Testament era, meditation would have involved focusing upon God's character, works, and words, and reminding one's self of these things by reading or reciting them aloud. Inundating himself with God's Word would be paramount for Joshua to lead effectively.

Where We Are In The Story ~ Old Testament (Psalms)

Background & Structure of Psalms: God used many different writers to write Psalms: David, Moses, the sons of Korah, Asaph, etc. The book is arranged in five parts, and this arrangement occurred after the people of Israel returned to the land after the Babylonian exile. A doxology concludes each book or arrangement of psalms (Psalm 41:13 for Book 1, Psalm 72:18-19 for Book 2, Psalm 89:52 for Book 3, Psalm 106:48 for Book 4, and Psalm 150:6 for Book 5), and the entire book of Psalms climactically ends with a grand doxology of several psalms (Ps. 146-150).

- Book 1: Psalms 1-41
- Book 2: Psalms 42-72
- Book 3: Psalms 73-89
- Book 4: Psalms 90-106
- Book 5: Psalms 107-150

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This Week in Psalms:

- The longest psalm in the book, **Psalm 119** consists of 176 verses that are arranged in twenty-two stanzas of eight verses with the stanzas arranged in alphabetical order and with every line of the stanza starting with that letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The entire psalm focuses on the subject of God's law, and it includes many features of a wisdom psalm.
- **Psalm 120** begins a series of fifteen pilgrim psalms (Psalms 120-134) called the Songs of Ascent. As the Israelites traveled to Jerusalem for the yearly feasts (Passover, Pentecost, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles), they sang these psalms as they journeyed. In light of this context, Psalm 120 contrasts the heathen who surround the pilgrim and records the traveler's desire for peace and his prayers for God's deliverance.
- **Psalm 121** proclaims the pilgrim's trust in the Lord as he journeys. The psalmist reiterates the word "keep" six times in this short psalm, emphasizing God's preservation of His people and His loving care for them.
- The pilgrim would sing **Psalm 122** upon his arrival in Jerusalem, and in this psalm, the psalmist calls for the people to pray for Jerusalem's security and for peace.

During Small Group

Welcome – Incorporate time for greeting one another, enjoying any refreshments, and making announcements. If guests are visiting, make introductions and help them feel welcomed. Ask for their contact information, so you can follow up with them.

Looking Back – Provide an opportunity for small group members to share what God is teaching them, how they are applying what they are learning, and how He has given them opportunities to share the gospel with others. This can be done as a whole group or in smaller groups. Do the people know each other well enough to share more than surface level information? How can time together be used to foster deeper relationships among those in the small group? Also, what are the struggles and needs of the people in the small group? How can the people in the small group sacrificially serve each other?

Looking Up – Hold prayer as fundamental to small group time rather than supplemental to it. Give adoration and thanksgiving to God in prayer. Submit yourself to Him, confessing sin. Petition God for personal needs and other requests. Pray for the disciple-making efforts of those in the group and for the salvation of the lost in each other's families, spheres of influence, and in the world. The Weekly Prayer Focus below can also be incorporated in the group's prayer time.

Weekly Prayer Focus (from Our Worship Guide)

- *Pray for Our Lives: Praise God for the gift of His Law, which points us to our need for Christ. Express your love for God and ask Him to grow your love for Him. Thank God for His love for us. Confess your dependence upon God and submission to His will. Ask God to grow your faith as you follow Jesus wherever He leads. Praise God for His gift of eternal life, our ultimate reward.*
- *Pray for Our City: Serving You Ministries is a new partner with The Church at Brook Hills and helps to serve those in need throughout the greater Birmingham area. Serving You Ministries opened their doors in 2009 to individuals and families in the eastern section of our city who need food, clothing, and help paying their bills. In the first year of ministry, 150 families were helped. Each year since then, Serving You*

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Ministries has ministered to over 1,000 families. By God's grace, He has equipped and provided resources through local churches who join together and offer benevolent services to many in need. Today, the doors are opened each week at two different ministry sites where volunteers and staff assess and help provide for the physical and spiritual needs of those who visit. Join us this week as we pray for Serving You Ministries (servingyou.org). We are also praying for North Park Baptist Church and Bill Wilks, Pastor.

- *Pray for Our World: This week we are praying for Brook Hills Field Partner, Global Gates in NYC. Global Gates is a church-planting center that exists to bring the gospel to unreached and least-reached people groups residing in New York City. Brook Hills partners with Global Gates by sending Short-Term teams to engage the lost in the city and by collaborating in training Long-Term church planting teams. Join us this week as we pray for Global Gates and the work God is doing through their ministry. This week we are also praying for our Short-Term teams serving in Ecuador and New York City.*

MAIN TRUTH

Message Outline

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The Commands in Deuteronomy...

- Love the Lord.
 - He is all-sovereign.
 - He is sovereign over all history.
 - He is sovereign over our salvation.
 - He is sovereign over every nation.
 - He is worthy of all surrender.
 - Worship Him with holy fear.
 - Serve Him with wholehearted obedience.
- Hear the law.
 - It is not a burden to bear.
 - It is not a means of merit.
 - It is a gift of grace.
- Take the land.
 - An earthly inheritance.
 - An eternal home.
- Choose life.

The Key Difference...

- The prophet Moses was unable to pay for Israel's sin.
- The greater prophet Jesus is uniquely able to pay for our sin.
 - He enables us to love the Lord.
 - He gives us a new law.

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- He leads us into new land.
- He offers us eternal life.

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Message Summary

The book of Deuteronomy is the most referenced and quoted book in the entire Bible. Deuteronomy means, "second law" and is where Moses recounts all that God had originally said and done in the history of His people. Deuteronomy demonstrates that God relates to His people primarily through love, and one way we demonstrate our love is through obedience to His commands.

God is sovereign over history, salvation, and the nations, and in His sovereign grace, He chooses His people. We did not save ourselves; He saved us through the cross of Jesus Christ. He is worthy of wholehearted surrender, which is the essence of what it means to relate to God and love Him through obedience to His commands. God has commanded His people to hear and respond to the law of mercy. He has commanded His people to take the land that is good because He is there. He has commanded His people to take the message of His Son for salvation to the nations and to make disciples for His glory. Finally, God has commanded us to choose life.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

As the leader, there are at least three directions the small group can take in light of the current Bible reading plan. Knowing the people in the group, prayerfully consider what would be the best route to help those in your group grow. The group's meetings could also vary with each week, so if one week's sermon prompts a lot of thought and discussion, option one could be what the group does that week while the next week could be different. As the leader, feel the freedom to take all or just some of the content in this guide and do what is best for your group.

- *Using the discussion questions below, the small group time can focus on discussing the sermon and how to apply it.*
- *The group can discuss the Bible readings from the past week. If choosing this route, ensure that the group does not simply discuss information but also focuses on how to apply what they have learned from the Bible readings. The information in the "Where We Are in the Story" section can assist the leader in knowing the background and context for the readings.*
- *Using the REAP (read, examine, apply, pray) outline for studying Scripture, the group can take one or both passages from that day's readings and discuss them. So if the group meets on Monday, then you could pick one or both of the passages for Monday. This also helps those who are new to*

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studying the Bible or who struggle with reading it learn how to do so. To assist the group with REAP questions, download the Guide to Personal Worship from brookhills.org.

The quote below is one from Charles Spurgeon that Pastor David referenced in his sermon. Read the quote as a form of reflection and conviction about the sovereign grace of God.

“When I was coming to Christ, I thought I was doing it all myself, and though I sought the Lord earnestly, I had no idea the Lord was seeking me. I do not think the young convert is at first aware of this. I can recall the very day and hour when first I received those truths [of the doctrine of election] in my own soul—when they were as John Bunyan said, burnt into my heart as with a hot iron, and I can recollect how I felt that I had grown on a sudden from a babe into a man—that I had made progress in Scriptural knowledge, through having found, once for all, the clue to the truth of God. One week-night, when I was sitting in the house of God, I was not thinking much about the preacher’s sermon. The thought struck me, ‘How did you come to be a Christian?’ I sought the Lord. ‘But how did you come to seek the Lord?’ The truth flashed across my mind in a moment—I should not have sought him unless there had been some previous influence in my mind to make me seek him. I prayed, thought I, but then I asked myself, ‘How came I to pray?’ I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. ‘How came I to read the Scriptures?’ I did read them, but what led me to do so? Then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all, and that he was the Author of my faith, and so the doctrine of grace opened up to me, and from that doctrine I have not departed to this day, and I desire to make this my constant confession, ‘I ascribe my change wholly to God’...I believe the doctrine of election, because I am quite certain that, if God had not chosen me, I should never have chosen Him; and I am sure He chose me before I was born, or else He never would have chosen me afterwards; and He must have elected me for reasons unknown to me, for I never could find any reason in myself why He should have looked upon me with special love. So I am forced to accept that great Biblical doctrine.”

How can we identify with Spurgeon when it comes to the sovereign grace of God to save His people? What does Spurgeon’s statement indicate about God’s character?

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to help review the application of God’s Word to our Head (What does God want me to know?), to our Heart (What does God want me to desire/value?), and to our Hands (What does God want me to do?).

- When you look at your current relationships and focuses in life, in what ways is there evidence that you love God more than your spouse, your children, your job, your interests, etc.? In what ways is it clear that God is not the primary loving relationship or focus in your life? If this is the case, what steps can you take this week to make God primary in your life?
- The Lord warned His people in Deuteronomy 6:12, “Take care lest you forget the Lord.” What causes us to forget God as we go about our daily lives? How can we avoid this tendency?
- Discuss the difference between loving God and loving His gifts. How can you distinguish between the two? How can we love the gift and forget the Giver?
- Read Deuteronomy 6:14-15. What does it mean for God to be jealous? How is His jealousy different from man’s jealousy? In what ways can you relate the kind of loving jealousy that God has for His people with the covenant of marriage?
- What hinders your love for God? Why does our love for God sometimes grow cold? How can we prevent this? If we find ourselves in a place where we are apathetic in our relationship with God, what would it look like to begin to renew our love for Him?

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- Read Deuteronomy 4:32-39. What is God teaching us about Himself in these verses?
- Read Deuteronomy 1:26-33. How can this recounting of Israel's rebellion against God's sovereign grace be a warning to us today? In what ways do we rebel against God?
- Read Deuteronomy 9:6; 7:6-8. Why did God choose to love the people of Israel and to lead them out of slavery in Egypt?
- Read Deuteronomy 10:15; 14:1. Discuss the pure sovereign choice of God to love His people and the mystery of human responsibility to love and chose Him as well. How would you explain this doctrine to a new believer or to someone who has questions about this topic?
- Why is it so humbling that the primary reason that we are saved is simply because God loves us and chose us?
- Read Deuteronomy 6:2, 24. What does it look like to fear God for our good? Describe a healthy fear of God. Why is it important to fear the Lord?
- If the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, in what areas of our lives can we apply a good fear of God for wisdom?
- What does it look like in your life to serve the Lord wholeheartedly this week? What does this look like in your relationships? Is there anything you need to give up? Is there anything that you need to step up and do?
- In what ways is the Word of God *not* a burden to bear or a means of merit? What leads us to view the commands of Scripture as a burden? How can we avoid this in our thoughts and hearts?
- What does "choosing life" look like for us each day as Christ-followers? What implications does this command have for how you live your life this week?