

Fine Print or Wedding Vows

Deuteronomy: Choose Life | Week Three | Deuteronomy 4:1-14

THE BIG IDEA

God's commands are not the fine print of faith. They are the vows of a covenant love. At the border of the promised land, Moses reminds Israel that the God who rescued them has spoken, and that his words are the path to life, a witness before the watching world, and an inheritance to hand down. We do not keep his word to earn his love. We keep it because his love has already claimed us, and God's grace holds us at every step.

01 Share life *about 15 minutes*

Before we open the Bible, take a few minutes to catch up on life. Give everyone a chance to share. This guide is designed for about 85 minutes, and the times beside each section are suggestions, not rules.

1. What was a high point and a low point of your week?
2. What is one promise someone kept to you that you have never forgotten?
- 3. When we last met, we each named one step to take. How did it go, and what got in the way?

02 Setting the scene

Deuteronomy is a series of sermons Moses preached on the border of the promised land, and our series is walking through it under the banner Choose Life. For three chapters Moses has been retelling Israel's story, reminding a new generation of everything God has carried them through. In chapter 4 the book turns from remembering to responding. Moses calls Israel to listen to God's statutes and ordinances, not as a burden but as the path to life. The key word sits in verse 13, where Moses says God declared his covenant to Israel at the mountain. A covenant is not a contract full of fine print. It is closer to wedding vows, the language of a love that binds itself to another person. Israel's part is to keep the vows, to live them out where the watching nations can see, and to hand the story down to their children and grandchildren.

03 Read the Word together *about 10 minutes*

Open your Bibles to Deuteronomy 4:1–14. Have one person read the passage aloud, slowly, while the rest of the group follows along. If your group reads in another language, have someone read it again from their own Bible. The verses for each part of the study are printed in the sections below.

MEMORY VERSE | DEUTERONOMY 4:7

For what great nation is there that has a god near to it as the LORD our God is to us whenever we call to him?

First impressions

4. What word, phrase, or image stood out to you as the passage was read?
5. What did you notice, or what surprised you, in how God speaks to his people here?

04 Study the scripture *about 35 minutes*

The sermon walked through the passage in three moves: keep the vows, wear the ring, and tell the story. The verses for each part are printed below, so reread them as you go. The first question in each part asks what the text says, the second asks what it means, and the third asks what it changes. If time is short, keep the questions marked with an orange dot.

KEEP THE VOWS

Read verses 1–4 again.

Deuteronomy 4:1–4 CSB

1 “Now, Israel, listen to the statutes and ordinances I am teaching you to follow, so that you may live, enter, and take possession of the land the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. **2** You must not add anything to what I command you or take anything away from it, so that you may keep the commands of the LORD your God I am giving you. **3** Your eyes have seen what the LORD did at Baal-peor, for the LORD your God destroyed every one of you who followed Baal of Peor. **4** But you who have remained faithful to the LORD your God are all alive today.

LEADER NOTE

Someone in your group may ask what happened at Baal-peor. Numbers 25 tells the story: Israel joined the worship of Moab's gods, and a plague followed. Keep it brief and keep it at the level of the sermon. The point in verse 4 is that the ones who held on to the LORD lived, and the word for held on is the same word Genesis uses for a husband bonding to his wife. If the conversation runs long, offer to talk more after the meeting and move on.

Moses opens with the word listen. In Hebrew, hearing and obeying are the same idea, so listening that never reaches your hands is not really listening. Notice the order of grace: God is giving the land before he gives a single command. The commands are not how Israel earns God's love. They are how a loved people lives. That is why verse 2 warns against editing God's word, either by adding rules on top of it or by quietly subtracting the parts that cost us something.

Verses 3 and 4 point back to Baal-peor, where Israel drifted into idolatry and it ended in death. The phrase translated remained faithful literally means held on, and it is the same Hebrew word Genesis 2:24 uses for a husband bonding to his wife. Holding on to God is not gripping a rulebook. It is staying close to someone you love.

6. Look at verses 1 and 2. What is Israel told to do with God's word, and what two things are they told never to do to it?
7. The survivors at Baal-peor were not the strongest people but the ones who held on. What helps you cling to God in a season of drift, and what tends to loosen your grip?
- 8. Where are you most tempted to edit God's word, either adding extra rules or quietly deleting what costs you? What makes that area hard to surrender?

WEAR THE RING

Read verses 5–8 again.

Deuteronomy 4:5-8 CSB

5 Look, I have taught you statutes and ordinances as the LORD my God has commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to possess. **6** Carefully follow them, for this will show your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the peoples. When they hear about all these statutes, they will say, 'This great nation is indeed a wise and understanding people.' **7** For what great nation is there that has a god near to it as the LORD our God is to us whenever we call to him? **8** And what great nation has righteous statutes and ordinances like this entire law I set before you today?

Israel's obedience was never a private arrangement. When they lived God's word, the surrounding nations would see two things they could not explain: a God near enough to hear his people whenever they call, and a community whose shared life was marked by righteousness, especially toward the vulnerable. Their life together was the display window of their God. The same is true for us. Our coworkers and neighbors are not reading Deuteronomy this week. They are reading us.

9. Look at verses 6 to 8. What two things would the watching nations notice about Israel, according to Moses?
10. Who are the watching peoples in your life right now, and what are they learning about God from how you handle pressure, loss, or unfairness?
- 11. What is one deliberate thing you could do this week that makes no sense unless God is real and near?

TELL THE STORY

Read verses 9–14 again.

Deuteronomy 4:9–10, 13–14 CSB

9 “Only be on your guard and diligently watch yourselves, so that you don’t forget the things your eyes have seen and so that they don’t slip from your mind as long as you live. Teach them to your children and your grandchildren. 10 The day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, the LORD said to me, ‘Assemble the people before me, and I will let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days they live on the earth and may instruct their children.’ 13 He declared his covenant to you. He commanded you to follow the Ten Commandments, which he wrote on two stone tablets. 14 At that time the LORD commanded me to teach you statutes and ordinances for you to follow in the land you are about to cross into and possess.

Verse 9 gives two commands in one breath: guard your own memory, and teach your children and grandchildren. The order matters, because you cannot hand down what you have let slip. Israel's faith rested on an event, a day when God actually spoke at Horeb and declared his covenant, so passing it on was not sentiment. It was telling the truth. Faith is like a family recipe that lives only in a grandmother's hands. Nobody decides to lose it. It is simply never handed on.

That is the quiet strategy of God in verse 14. The LORD taught Moses, Moses taught Israel, and Israel would teach the generations coming behind them. Every believer stands inside that relay, carrying a story meant to outlive them, in their home, their friendships, and the places they go all week.

12. Look at verse 9. What two commands does Moses give in one breath, and in what order?
13. Is your faith mostly inherited, mostly firsthand, or somewhere in between? What has God done that your own eyes have seen?
- 14. Who is one younger person God has placed in your life, and what specific story of his faithfulness could you put in their hands this week?

05 Back to Jesus *about 10 minutes*

How does this passage point us back to Jesus?

Israel took the vows at the mountain and broke them within a generation. If the story ended there, this passage would only crush us, because we have edited the vows too. But in Jesus, God stepped into the covenant from both directions. As God, he kept every promise made to us. As man, he kept every vow we ever broke, holding fast all the way to the cross. The near God of verse 7 took on flesh and moved into the neighborhood, and on the night he was betrayed he lifted a cup and called it the new covenant in his blood. Every time we take communion, we are not signing fine print. We are renewing vows that have already been kept for us.

- 15. How does knowing that Jesus kept the vows for you change the way you approach obedience this week, compared to simply trying harder?

APPLICATION

What is God telling me to do today? Write down one specific step you will take this week.

06 Pray together *about 15 minutes*

Share one request with the group and pray for one another. As you pray, name the step each person wrote down and ask the Holy Spirit for the courage and power to take it.

Who has God brought to mind this week?

Someone who needs what you have been talking about. Write their name here and pray for them by name.

Prayer requests

A PRAYER TO CARRY WITH YOU

Father, thank you that your commands are not fine print but the vows of your covenant love. Teach me to listen with my hands, and to hold on to you the way a husband holds on to his wife. Let my ordinary life this week make someone curious about the God who is near. Help me tell the story, so that what my eyes have seen becomes someone else's inheritance. I cannot keep these vows on my own, so I rest in the One who kept them for me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

At home this week

Deuteronomy 6 tells parents to talk about God's words at the table and on the road. If there are children in your home, ask at dinner this week: **What is one rule at our house, and why do we have it?** Then read Deuteronomy 4:7 together. God's rules are not fine print. They are how a loved family lives close to a God who is near.

Before we gather again

Three things to carry into the week.

- Read Deuteronomy 4:1-14 again on your own this week, and ask God what he is saying to you through it.
- Take the one step you wrote down, and tell someone once you have done it.
- Reach out to the person whose name you wrote in Pray Together. We will talk about how it went next time.



Scan to answer two quick questions after your meeting: which question landed, and which one fell flat.