Loved First

Deuteronomy: Choose Life | Week Twelve | Deuteronomy 11:1–32

THE BIG IDEA

Before Moses hands Israel a single law, he answers the question underneath every command: why do we love God, and why do we obey him? He points them to what God has done, what God is giving, and what God will do, and every answer comes back to love. We do not obey in order to be loved. We obey because we have already been loved, and God's grace holds us at every step of the way.

01 Share life

Take a few minutes to catch up with one another before you open the passage.

1. What was a high point and a low point from your week?
2. Where have you seen God at work recently, and where has it been hard to see him?
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 11 is the last stone in the foundation. Everything from chapter 1 through chapter 11 has been Moses' introduction, and starting in chapter 12 the detailed laws begin. So before he gives Israel a single regulation, Moses stops and answers the question every command depends on: why should we love God, and why should we obey him? He answers it the only way he knows how, by telling the story again. What God has done in Egypt, at the sea, and in the wilderness. What God is giving them in a land watered from heaven. What God will do if they stay faithful, and what will happen if they turn aside. This week closes the section of our series called Love, and it lands exactly where that section began: we love God because he loved us first.

03 Read the Word together

Read this passage aloud together, slowly. If you can, read it twice, with a different person reading each time.

DEUTERONOMY 11:1-32 CSB

Open your Bibles together and read Deuteronomy 11:1 through 32. Have three readers take a section each: 11:1–7, 11:8–17, and 11:18–32.

First impressions

4. What word, phrase, or image stood out to you as you read?
5. What did you notice, or what surprised you, about how Moses talks to Israel here?

04 Study the Scripture

The sermon walked through this chapter with three questions: what has God done, what is God giving, and what will God do. Work through each one in order, and reread the verses as you go.

WHAT GOD HAS DONE Read verses 1 to 7 again.

Moses opens with words Israel has heard before: love the Lord and keep his commands. Then he retells the story. Egypt, the sea, the wilderness, and even the judgment on Dathan and Abiram. He does not give them the highlight reel. He gives them the whole story, because Israel's obedience rose and fell across forty years, but God did not change. He remained the God with the strong hand and outstretched arm, the one who saves, provides, and judges rightly.

6. Why do you think Moses includes the hard parts of the story, like Dathan and Abiram, and not only the rescue at the sea? What does remembering the whole story do that remembering only the good parts cannot?
7. When you tell the story of your life with God, which parts do you tend to leave out? Looking at both the good and the painful, what has God done for you?

WHAT GOD IS GIVING Read verses 8 to 17 again.

The land is not like Egypt, where you watered your crops by your own foot. It is watered by rain from the sky, a land the Lord himself cares for. The gift is anchored in a promise Israel did not earn and cannot cultivate on their own. Along with the land, God gives them his commands, not as the demands of a strict teacher but as the way of life that leads to flourishing. And he warns them: a good land can lull a heart into turning aside.

8. Egypt was watered by human effort. Canaan was watered from heaven. What is the difference between a life you keep alive by your own hand and a life that depends on God for the rain? Which one are you living right now?

9. The sermon said God's commands are a loving invitation into the good life, not a checklist for earning his approval. Where have you experienced obedience as a burden, and where have you experienced it as a gift?

WHAT GOD WILL DO Read verses 18 to 32 again.

God promises rain, harvest, and victory, and then he sets a blessing and a curse before them. Covenants in Moses' world usually made the curses long and the blessings short. God flips it and puts the blessing at center stage, because his heart is for his people to live. Yet he also knows their hearts. We know the rest of the story: Israel forgot, turned to idols, and lost the land. And we know what God did about it. He sent Jesus, who kept the covenant we could not keep and took the curse we earned.

10. God anticipates Israel's disobedience and still writes the blessing first. What does that tell you about him? How does it change the way you hear his warnings?

Verses 18 to 21 show how the story was meant to travel. Imprint these words on your heart. Teach them to your children. Talk about them at home and on the road. Write them on your doorposts. Loving God was never a private matter. It was the DNA of a whole community, and it only survived if one generation passed it to the next. That work belongs to all of us, not only to parents.

11. Who is one person, in your home or beyond it, that God is asking you to pass his story on to? What is one concrete way you could do that this week?

05 Back to Jesus

This is not an extra step. It is where the whole passage has been heading.

Israel crossed the river, settled the land, and forgot. The curses of chapter 11 fell on them, not because God stopped loving them but because they stopped loving him. So God did what only he could do. He sent his Son. Jesus is the true Israelite who loved the Father with all his heart, soul, and strength, and obeyed all the way to a cross. There he took every curse we earned so that every blessing he earned could be ours. That is what God has done. That is what God is giving. And because the same Jesus is coming back to bring us home, that is what God will do.

12. If Jesus has already taken the curse and secured the blessing, what changes about why you obey God this week? What would it look like to obey out of love instead of fear or duty?

APPLICATION

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

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06 Pray together

Share one request with the group and pray for one another, naming the step each person wrote down above.

Prayer requests

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A PRAYER TO CARRY WITH YOU

Father, you loved me before I ever loved you. You brought me out, you carried me through, and you have given me more than I could earn. Forgive me for treating your commands as a burden and your gifts as my own doing. Water my life with your grace this week, and teach me to obey you because I love you. Help me pass your story on to someone who needs it, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Before we gather again

Three simple things to carry into the week.

- Read Deuteronomy 11 again on your own and ask God what he is saying to you.
- Take the one step you named above and tell someone in the group you did it.
- Reach out to the person God brought to mind in question 11. We will talk about how it went next time.

07 Notes and reflections