Worship that Remembers and Rejoices

Deuteronomy: Choose Life | Week Seventeen | Deuteronomy 16:1–17

THE BIG IDEA

God built remembering into Israel's calendar because he knew how quickly his people forget. Passover looked back at the rescue, the Festival of Weeks looked around at his daily provision, and the Festival of Shelters looked ahead to a joy he will complete. We did not break our own chains, and we do not have to carry ourselves now. In Jesus, our Passover Lamb, God remembers us, provides for us, and will bring us home.

MEMORY VERSE **Deuteronomy 16:12 CSB**

Remember that you were a slave in Egypt; carefully follow these statutes.

01 SHARE LIFE

Before we open the Bible, take a few minutes to catch up on life. Give everyone a chance to share.

1. What was a high point and a low point from your week?
2. Where have you seen God at work lately, 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

We are now in the Worship section of Deuteronomy, where Moses shows Israel how worship shapes a whole community. Last week we saw how God turns a people toward open hands through tithes, shared meals, and the release of debts. Chapter 16 now shapes their calendar. Three times a year, all Israel was to travel to the place God would choose and keep a festival before him: Passover in the spring, the Festival of Weeks at the grain harvest, and the Festival of Shelters (also called Tabernacles or Booths) at the end of the harvest in the fall. Moses knew that a people settled in a good land would be tempted to forget the God who brought them there. These festivals were God's built-in rhythm of remembering: one looking back at what he had done, one looking around at what he was doing, and one looking ahead to what he would complete.

03 READ THE WORD TOGETHER

Open your Bibles to Deuteronomy 16:1-17. Have one person read the passage aloud, slowly, while the rest of the group follows along. The verses for each part of the study are printed in the sections below.

First impressions

4. What word, phrase, or image stood out to you as the passage was read?

5. What did you notice about how often this passage talks about remembering and rejoicing? What surprised you?

04 STUDY THE SCRIPTURE

This passage walks through three festivals, and each one teaches Israel to remember God in a different direction: the rescue behind them, the provision around them, and the joy ahead of them. Reread the verses as you go.

PASSOVER: REMEMBER THE RESCUE

Read verses 1-8 again.

DEUTERONOMY 16:1-3 CSB

1 Set aside the month of Abib and observe the Passover
to the LORD your God, because the LORD your God
brought you out of Egypt by night in the month of Abib. **2**
Sacrifice to the LORD your God a Passover animal from
the herd or flock in the place where the LORD chooses to
have his name dwell. **3** Do not eat leavened bread with it.
For seven days you are to eat unleavened bread with it,
the bread of hardship, because you left the land of Egypt
in a hurry. Do this so that you may remember for the rest
of your life the day you left the land of Egypt.

Israel had suffered for generations under forced labor in Egypt, and they could do nothing to free themselves. God acted when they were helpless, and the blood of the Passover lamb spared their lives. Every spring, God told them to stop everything and look back. The bread of hardship tasted like the night they ran for their lives.

The danger was not that Israel would deny the story. It was that a few generations later they would quietly start to believe they had earned their freedom. Passover was God's remedy for spiritual amnesia. It reminded them every year that redemption is God's work of grace and not their achievement.

6. According to verses 1-3, what exactly is Israel supposed to remember, and how does the meal itself help them remember it?

7. What happens to us when we forget what God has rescued us from? Where do you notice yourself drifting toward the idea that you earned what you have?

WEEKS: RECOGNIZE THE PROVISION

Read verses 9-12 again.

DEUTERONOMY 16:10-12 CSB

10 You are to celebrate the Festival of Weeks to the LORD your God with a freewill offering that you give in proportion to how the LORD your God has blessed you. **11** Rejoice before the LORD your God in the place where the LORD your God chooses to have his name dwell, you, your son and daughter, your male and female slave, the Levite within your city gates, as well as the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow among you. **12** Remember that you were a slave in Egypt; carefully follow these statutes.

Seven weeks into the grain harvest, with the barns filling up, Israel was to bring a freewill offering in proportion to how God had blessed them. Picture a farmer looking out over a full field. The natural instinct is to say, "Look at what I built." This festival gently corrects that instinct. God sent the rain and gave the soil. The harvest was a gift before it was ever an accomplishment.

Notice that verse 12 ties the harvest offering back to slavery. People who remember they once had nothing hold what they have now with open hands. God does not need our gifts, but our hearts need to give, because our hearts follow our treasure.

8. Why do you think God connects a harvest celebration to the memory of being a slave in Egypt (verse 12)?

9. What would it look like for you to give "in proportion to how the LORD your God has blessed you" in this season, with your money, time, or attention? What makes that hard?

SHELTERS: REJOICE IN THE PROMISE

Read verses 13-17 again.

DEUTERONOMY 16:13-15 CSB

13 You are to celebrate the Festival of Shelters for seven days when you have gathered in everything from your threshing floor and winepress. 14 Rejoice during your festival, you, your son and daughter, your male and female slave, as well as the Levite, the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow within your city gates. 15 You are to hold a seven-day festival for the LORD your God in the place he chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, and you will have abundant joy.

The Festival of Shelters came at the end of the harvest and lasted a full week. The people lived in temporary shelters to remember their years in the wilderness, when God was their only security. Verse 15 looks forward: God will bless the work of their hands, and their joy will be abundant. This is joy that rests on trusting what God has promised to finish.

Look at who is invited. Sons and daughters, servants, Levites, foreigners, the fatherless, and widows are all named. In God's family no one is left outside the celebration. A people who remember God's grace become a people who make room at the table for others.

10. Read the list in verse 14 slowly. Who is included, and why do you think God names each group one by one?

11. Who in your neighborhood, workplace, or circle of friends might feel left out of the celebration? What is one way our group could make room for them?

05 BACK TO JESUS

How does this passage point us back to Jesus?

Every one of these festivals finds its fulfillment in Jesus. On the night before he died, Jesus sat at a Passover table, took the bread and the cup, and told his disciples to do this in remembrance of him. He is our Passover Lamb, and his blood sets us free from a slavery to sin we could never

break on our own. Just as Israel needed to gather in order to remember, we need one another to keep our eyes on him. And the Festival of Shelters points to the day when people from every nation will stand before God's throne in complete and unbroken joy. Jesus promised that his joy would be in us so that our joy would be full. We could not save ourselves then, and we do not have to save ourselves now.

12. Jesus turned the Passover meal into the Lord's Supper. How does knowing that he is our Passover Lamb change the way you come to the communion table, and the way you face the things you are still trying to carry yourself?

APPLICATION

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

_____

_____

06 PRAY TOGETHER

Share one prayer request with the group, including the step you wrote down. Then take time to pray for one another.

Prayer requests

_____

_____

_____

_____

A PRAYER TO CARRY WITH YOU

Father, I forget so quickly. Thank you for breaking chains I could never break and for providing everything I have, even when I pretend I built it myself. Teach me to remember your rescue, to hold your gifts with open hands, and to make room for others at your table. Fill me with the joy that only comes from trusting what you have promised to finish. In Jesus' name, Amen.

BEFORE WE GATHER AGAIN

Carry this week's study into the days ahead.

- Read Deuteronomy 16:1-17 again on your own and ask God what he is saying to you.
- Take the one step you named and tell someone about it.
- Reach out to the person God brought to mind. We will talk about how it went next time.

07 NOTES AND REFLECTIONS