

FORWARD

Week Two | January 14, 2018 | Moving Forward in Our Faith, Part 2

PREPARATION

GETTING READY:

Before your group meets next time, spend some time alone in God's Word reading through Deuteronomy 1:19–38. Pray that God, through His Spirit, would bring to life the truths of this text and how it applies to your life.

THIS WEEK

KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

Instead of shrinking back in fear, we can move forward into challenging circumstances as we remember God's promises, deeds, and character.

THEOLOGY APPLIED

God gives us His promises, His deeds, and His character to empower us with fresh faith for difficult seasons of life. When we don't remember these things, we will cower from the challenges ahead.

MEDITATE

"The Lord your God who goes before you will himself fight for you, just as he did for you in Egypt before your eyes, and in the wilderness, where you have seen how the Lord your God carried you, as a man carries his son, all the way that you went until you came to this place."(Deuteronomy 1:30–31)

GETTING STARTED

+ Use this section to prepare your heart and mind for the truths of this week. This section will help to introduce the focus of this week's lesson.

Q: *What types of situations make you tremendously fearful? Why?*

Q: *What do you usually do to calm extreme fears?*

In the beloved Disney movie, *The Lion King*, Prince Simba has been away from the kingdom far too long. In his absence, horrible animals have taken over the land, practicing terrible things, and robbing the kingdom of its true glory. Simba is faced with a choice. He can take possession of the kingdom promised to him by his father, Mufasa, or stay in the wilderness with his friends, ignoring the reality of what he has been called to do. His wise monkey-friend brings him to a place where he can remember his father and his family history. He had forgotten so much! Remembering motivates Simba to go back to the land that was his to take.

At this point in Israel's history, the people are facing a similar choice—to take possession of a land they had been promised years before or to cower in fear and stay in the wilderness. Moses, like Simba's monkey-friend, leads the people in remembering their family history to motivate them to make the right choice. The only difference is that Simba's dad offered the right example to follow, while Israel's parents displayed the wrong one. Moses hopes that reminding the people of their parents' past failures, as well as a few things God wants them to know, will encourage them take up the call to enter the land and possess it as their own, bringing it to the glory it was always meant for.

Q: *What reasons do you usually give for not stepping up to difficult tasks God has called you to?*

Q: *Share about a time in your life when God pushed you through your fears, and saw you through to the other side? What did He offer you to move you forward?*

II UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

The beginning of Deuteronomy (1:6–4:40) serves as an historical review for the people. As they embark on the difficult task of obtaining the promised land, God wants to remind them (through his servant Moses) of a few things before they start, beginning with a story from their own family history. Through Moses' words, we discover that we

are empowered to move forward in faith instead of shrinking back in fear during challenging circumstances. In life's difficult seasons, we must fight fear and move forward in faith by:

- 1. REMEMBERING GOD'S PROMISES**
- 2. REMEMBERING GOD'S DEEDS**
- 3. REMEMBERING GOD'S CHARACTER**

GOING DEEPER

+ This next section will help show what God's Word says about this week's particular focus. Read through the Scripture passages and connect the text to this week's biblical truth.

REMEMBERING GOD'S PROMISES

DEUTERONOMY 1:19–28 AND GENESIS 13:14–17

- Q:** *What does it mean to “learn from someone else’s mistake”? Have you ever altered a decision you were going to make based on the way it played out in someone else’s life?*
- Q:** *What are some of your favorite promises found in Scripture?*
- Q:** *Why is it difficult to remember God’s promises when we face a dark or challenging season in our lives?*

As God's people prepare for the challenge of obtaining the promised land, they gather to hear from the Lord through His messenger, Moses. To help them move into this tough task with great faith, Moses tells them a story from their history for motivation. Moses recounts for them how their parents' generation handled the Lord's command to take possession of the promised land. He wants to make sure the people don't make the same mistake as their parents, so he takes time to paint the picture of what happened all those years ago. Moses wanted to remind the current generation of something along the lines of, "We've been here before, not even a generation ago! Can you remember how it went?"

About thirty-eight years earlier, God's people came to the border of the promised land, in a place called Kadesh-barnea. As the people shook in fear of their enemies, the Amorites, Moses reminded them of God's promises. First, he reminded them that the land they are going to obtain was "set before you" by the Lord. It was God's land, not the Amorites'. Next, he reminded them that the land was actually a place God commanded them to acquire. They were to take possession of it, not out of greed or dominance, but "as the Lord has told you." It wasn't just God's land, it was God's idea and command for them to have it.

The language here is purposeful. Moses is intentionally wording things to remind them of a prior promise about this land, a promise found in Genesis 13:14–17. God had already guaranteed that the land was theirs for the taking, if they'd only obey. Moses wants them to be reminded that God's promises can always be taken to the bank. Though their parents' generation didn't believe and ran away in fear, they could be the generation that believed God and, in great faith, inherit the land. Instead of focusing on the strength of the enemy as their parents did, Moses wants them to trust in the strength of God's promises.

Moses, by recounting this story, pushes the people to trust that God's promises will always be fulfilled, no matter what dark or difficult circumstance they face. With Him on their side, they can overcome any obstacle. The same goes for us. In Christ, all of God's promises are ours for the taking (2 Corinthians 1:20). We, too, can face any difficulty when we trust in God's many promises found in Scripture. Instead of shrinking back in fear as this generation did in Israel, we can follow Moses' instructions and move forward in faith that God's promises are true and trustworthy (Hebrews 10:39).

- 🕒: *What types of things do you fear the way the Israelites feared the Amorites? Why do you think you assume these things are stronger than God's promises?*
- 🕒: *Share about a time a certain promise in the Scriptures gave you strength during a difficult season.*
- 🕒: *How would your relationships look different if you trusted in God's promises more than you feared other people?*

REMEMBERING GOD'S DEEDS

DEUTERONOMY 1:29-33

- Q: *Share about some moments in your own life that God clearly provided for you or fought a major battle in your life. How did this build your faith?*
- Q: *Point out some of the various deeds God has done for Israel according to these verses. Why do you think Moses reminds them of these things in particular?*

After reminding the people of God's promise, Moses also reminds them of many deeds God has accomplished for them up to this point. Just like us when facing a terrifying task, Israel sometimes forgot all God had done for them. More than that, because of how daunting the current moment is, they assume (just like we do sometimes) that God must hate them to put them here! Moses knows they need fresh faith, so he spells out various acts God had already done on their behalf.

Moses doesn't just bring up random acts of God; he recounts the ways God has given the people victory against very steep and very scary odds. He wants them to remember that many of their previous experiences were just as fearsome as the Amorites (i.e., Egyptian oppression and the threat of starvation), yet God miraculously intervened on their behalf. Moses paints God as a Divine Warrior, Israel's ultimate fighter, who broke the bonds of Egyptian slavery "before your very eyes." He also paints God as a compassionate Shepherd or Father, who guided His little ones "in fire at night and in the cloud by day." On the terrifying battlefield and in the warmth of their own homes, God had always taken care of them.

Though the previous generation did not believe it, God's past deeds proved that He'd show up for them again now, with the Amorites. Knowing God's past deeds, the people could move forward in full faith. They could be brave in the face of danger, unlike those who had gone before them. If God could get them through the terrors of both Egypt and the wilderness, He could certainly get them through this challenge as well!

Just like Israel, we sometimes need to be reminded of God's past deeds in our life, whether that be the way He fought a major battle for us or lovingly provided for us as a Father in moments of fear and uncertainty. We, too, need to recall all the ways God has acted on our behalf in the past as we walk in faith toward challenging circumstances. If He has seen us through the worst of times before, we can move forward in faith that He will certainly show up this time too!

Q: *Which past deeds of God are you quickest to forget?*

Q: *Explain why we lose faith when we forget that God actually moves among His people.*

Q: *Which do you struggle most to have faith in, God as your Divine Warrior or as your compassionate Father/Shepherd? Why?*

REMEMBERING GOD'S CHARACTER

DEUTERONOMY 1:34-38

Q: *What various characteristics of God can you see in this passage?*

Q: *How does this passage show both justice and love in the character of God?*

Though they knew God's promise and His miraculous deeds on their behalf, the previous generation still ran from God's call to the promised land due to unbelief. Moses tells the current generation what God decided to do in the face of His peoples' outright unbelief and disobedience. He forbade them to enter the land. If they would not go obtain it in faith, according to His command, they would not experience it at all. This must have been a difficult moment for the people listening to Moses, as they likely hung their heads, remembering parents who had either died or were now forbidden to go with them.

Moses takes a moment to commiserate with them. He too is banished from the land. The leader and the people together were required to face the consequence of unbelief. Here we see God's divine justice. There are consequences for disobedience and unbelief, and Moses would not be a good leader if he did not tell them this truth.

Q: *Why is God good for giving us consequences for sin? What would happen if we never gave our own children consequences for wrongdoing?*

Q: *Moving beyond just these few verses, what can you observe about God's character throughout this entire passage?*

Though the story of Israel's past generation was bleak, Moses does not leave people with bad news. In His justice, God rightly banished an entire "evil" and unbelieving generation from the promised land. But in His justice and love, He also kept His eye and His favor upon the few who did believe, namely, the families of Caleb and Joshua. They would be the examples and the leaders of this new generation who, if they move forward in faith, would experience the promised land. We see that God's character was still spotless when fulfilling His promise. The land would go to His people, the people who truly believed Him.

But why did God spare them? Why were they allowed to go in the land so many were banished from? Moses tells us it's because they "wholly followed the LORD" in the midst of a generation that did not. God simply wanted the people to trust in His promises, His deeds, and His character. When they moved forward believing these things instead of fearing people, He considered this whole-hearted faith.

On top of being just and loving, we can note many other things about God's character as seen in this entire passage. Through these verses, we can easily observe that the Lord is faithful, fair, loving, provisional, present, strong, authoritative, all-powerful, compassionate, discerning, and directional over His people. He is the God who is able to fight for His people, the Divine Warrior who always comes through, the One who can speak into our most difficult experiences, and the Lord who always gives us what we need. Instead of shrinking back in fear, Israel is able to move through a challenging season by trusting in these characteristics of God. The same goes for us. When we trust in God's character, we can abandon our fears and move forward in faith.

Q: *Why do we doubt God's character during seasons of trial?*

Q: *Which part of God's character in this passage challenges you most? Encourages you most? Why?*

NEXT STEPS

+ *Connect the truths from God's Word to your daily life. Process how what you've learned this week will impact the way you live beyond today and into the future.*

- ♀: *While you already know some favorite promises of God in the Bible, which new promises can you search out in the Scripture this week in order to move forward into faith instead of fear?*
- ♀: *How can you keep a running log of the past deeds God has accomplished in your life? What habits can you build in order to remember the miraculous ways God has worked in your life?*
- ♀: *Think through the parts of God's character you usually forget during challenging circumstances. How can you remind yourself of these as you move forward into this new year?*
- ♀: *Who in your life needs help moving forward in faith? How can you remind them of God's promises, deeds, and character this week?*

PRAY

+ *Use these prayer points to connect your time in prayer to this week's focus.*

- God, thank You for all the precious promises You give me in Scripture. Help me run to them for fresh faith in moments I want to shrink back in fear.
- God, remind me of all the mighty deeds You've done for me, and let them wash my soul in confidence as I enter this new year.
- God, help me remember Your great character on a daily basis so I don't doubt You.
- God, bring to mind a person (or people) You'd have me encourage this week, reminding them of Your promises, Your deeds, and Your character.

DEUTERONOMY 1:19 Moses intentionally brings the people to a specific place. The people stood at the “hill country of the Amorites,” namely, the central part of Canaan, which formed the very heart of the promised inheritance. If the people will not step up and take the land for themselves here, at the heart of it all, then they will get no peripheral portion of it.

DEUTERONOMY 1:20 Depending on the version, verse 20 can say “the land your God is giving you” or the “land your God has given you.” The second phrase is closest to the original language. Though it seems strange for God to say He has already given the land to the people, though they have not entered to possess it yet, the point is clear. Moses is telling the people that according to God, the deed is as good as done. They simply have to trust in His promise.

DEUTERONOMY 1:26–28 A parallel account in Numbers 13:27–32 helps us understand why the previous generation of Israelites were so fearful of the Amorites. When they went to get the “lay of the land,” so to speak, they saw fearsome things. While the land was bountiful, it was also populated by enormous, powerful people. These people lived in large and impenetrable cities. In the mind of the spies, surely these gigantic Amorites could not be overcome by the weaker people of Israel. They made up their minds that the land of Canaan “devours those living in it” (Numbers 13:32). While their fear makes sense on a human level, their decision to disobey the Lord was considered treason. They considered these powerful Amorites to be mightier than God Himself, and thus showed where their faith really lay, in man.

**All exegetical content and commentary resourcing for this lesson was provided by the ESV Study Bible Commentary Notes and the New American Commentary.*

