



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
LEWISVILLE

Session 3

Preparing to Follow God

Summary and Goal

God led the people of Israel toward Jericho through miraculous means but called them to faith, preparation, and obedience in advance of His work.

Main Passages

Deuteronomy 34; Joshua 3-4

Session Outline

1. Transition of Leadership (Deut. 34:1-12)
2. Flood Stage Obedience (Josh. 3:1-17)
3. Standing in Awe (Josh. 4:1-24)

Theological Theme

God leads us to leave a legacy that points others to faith and obedience.

Christ Connection

Jesus is a better Joshua, leading the people of God into God's rest.

Missional Application

Our commitment to follow God's leadership impacts others for Christ, even long after we are gone.

Historical Context of Deuteronomy

Purpose

Though the initial covenant between the Lord and Israel was made at Sinai, the generation that received it had largely died out in the thirty-eight years since that event. Now the younger generation needed to affirm their commitment to the covenant (4:1–8). Moreover, the transition from a largely nomadic existence in the desert to a sedentary lifestyle in Canaan required a covenant revision and expansion suitable to these new conditions. The purpose of Deuteronomy is to provide guidelines for the new covenant community to enable them to live obediently before God and to carry out his intentions for them.

Author

The book itself asserts that Moses is the principle source and author for the material (1:1), as do subsequent OT texts (Jos 1:7–8; 1Kg 2:3; Ezr 3:2) and NT texts (Mt 19:7; Ac 3:22; Rm 10:19). This attribution remained virtually unchallenged until the advent of modern rationalism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Structural similarities between Deuteronomy and Near Eastern treaty texts from the second millennium BC support the unity and antiquity of the book. That Moses is the primary author of Deuteronomy is the most reasonable view for the person who accepts the testimony of Scripture.

Setting

The exodus probably occurred in 1446 BC, whereupon Israel set out for Canaan, the inheritance God had promised his people. Because of their rebellious spirit, the Israelites were forced to wander in the desert for forty years (2:7) until at last they arrived in Moab, just opposite Jericho (32:49). It was there that Moses put pen to parchment to compose this farewell treatise (31:9, 24).

Special Features

The title of this book of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy, comes from the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) and means “second law” or “repetition of the law.” The phrase is actually a mistranslation of 17:18, which reads “a copy of this instruction.” It is still a fitting title since much of the book contains repetitions of the laws found in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.

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Condensed Leader Guide

Preparing to Follow God

Introduction

- ? Imagine you were planning a vacation to a destination several hundred miles away from your home. What steps would you take to prepare for the journey?
- ? If we expect God to move in our lives in a mighty way, how do we prepare to follow God's leading in that journey?

God was about to do some amazing things for the people of Israel. But before God fulfilled His promises, He called the people to faith and obedience through preparation for His future work. Moses had built a godly legacy that would live on long after he was gone. Now Joshua would continue leading God's people in obedience. The transition of leadership from Moses to Joshua and the events around that transition inform our current transition at First Baptist Church Lewisville. If we wish to see God continue to work in our future, we must take the initiative to prepare today.

1. Transition of Leadership (Deut. 34:1-12)

Moses was denied the privilege of entering the promised land (see Num. 20:12), but the Lord permitted him to see the land of promise that had been his goal for the last forty years. Had Moses chosen to pursue his own goals (see Heb. 11:24-27), he would never have seen God's purpose fulfilled through his life's work. When we choose to follow God's purposes over our own we can make an impact on others that has eternal results.

- ? Why do you think the Lord permitted Moses to see the promised land from Mount Nebo, even though he would never enter it? How do you think Moses felt as he looked over the land?
- ? Why did the Israelites listen to Joshua when he became their new leader? What does verse 9 say to us about our responsibility to the leaders God gives us here at First Baptist Church Lewisville?

? For Further Discussion

Is there a promise from God that should drive us today as the promise of Canaan drove Moses and the Israelites during their forty years in the desert? If so, what?

2. Flood Stage Obedience (Josh. 3:1-17)

Everything God's people had experienced led them to this point. God created a people for Himself through the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God used Jacob's son, Joseph, to safely bring His people into Egypt to protect them from the coming famine. God's people flourished and multiplied in Egypt until there arose a king over Egypt who did not know Joseph. This king enslaved and oppressed the Israelites for many years until God rescued them from slavery through His servant Moses. Once out of slavery, the people disobeyed God and were forced to wander in the wilderness, until this moment where Moses' successor, Joshua, was ready to lead them out of the wilderness and into God's promised land. It took longer than many had hoped, but God was faithful to them.

- ? What did the people of Israel expect God to do once they crossed the Jordan? What do you expect God to do as He leads First Baptist Church Lewisville in the days ahead?
- ? What had God called Joshua to do, and what role did the community play in God's plan?

3. Standing in Awe (Josh. 4:1-24)

Large stones were often used to build altars as monuments to the Lord. These altars were landmarks reminding all who passed of what had happened in that place. Picking up twelve stones was representative of each of the twelve tribes of Israel. This was a significant event in Israel's history, like the parting of the Red Sea, and needed to be remembered in a significant fashion.

- ? The Israelites were to remind one another of God's presence in their midst, and in so doing, spur one another on in faith. How do we spur each other on in faith within the church?
- ? In the action of the priests carrying the ark of the covenant, God went before and behind the people of Israel. How does that encourage you in regard to God's leadership at First Baptist Church Lewisville?
- ? What promise to Joshua did God fulfill in verse 14?

Conclusion

- ? If you had one final opportunity to address the people of our church, what qualities and acts of God would you want to recall for them?
- ? How are you deliberately living to create a godly legacy?
- ? God asks all of us to follow Him in obedience. For Joshua and the Israelites, that meant crossing the Jordan. What does obedience look like for you at this time in your life?

? For Further Discussion

What did God promise the people He would do if they followed the Ark of the Covenant in obedience? How do you think this moment served to build further faith for the people of Israel?

? For Further Discussion

How does the fact that the water started flowing again as soon as the priests stepped out of the river remind you of God's continual work in our lives?



Expanded Leader Guide

Preparing to Follow God

Introduction

- Imagine you were planning a vacation to a destination several hundred miles away from your home. What steps would you take to prepare for the journey?
- If we expect God to move in our lives in a mighty way, how do we prepare to follow God's leading in that journey?

Think of all the preparation that goes into taking a short trip with your family—reservations for lodging, directions to your destination, travel arrangements, clothing and other necessities—and this list doesn't include all that you have to plan for when you arrive at your destination. Taking a trip requires lots of diligent planning, but if we are not careful, we will give more planning to our vacations than to planning for God's work in our lives.

God was about to do some amazing things for the people of Israel. But before God fulfilled His promises, He called the people to faith and obedience through preparation for His future work. Moses had built a godly legacy that would live on long after he was gone. Now Joshua would continue leading God's people in obedience. The transition of leadership from Moses to Joshua and the events around that transition inform our current transition at First Baptist Church Lewisville. If we wish to see God continue to work in our future, we must take the initiative to prepare today.

1. Transition of Leadership (Deut. 34:1-12)

- Why do you think the Lord permitted Moses to see the promised land from Mount Nebo, even though he would never enter it? How do you think Moses felt as he looked over the land?



Is there a promise from God that should drive us today as the promise of Canaan drove Moses and the Israelites during their forty years in the desert? If so, what?

Moses was denied the privilege of entering the promised land (see Num. 20:12), but the Lord permitted him to see the land of promise that had been his goal for the last forty years. Had Moses chosen to pursue his own goals (see Heb. 11:24-27), he would never have seen God's purpose fulfilled through his life's work. When we choose to follow God's purposes over our own we can make an impact on others that has eternal results.



Why did the Israelites listen to Joshua when he became their new leader? What does verse 9 say to us about our responsibility to the leaders God gives us here at First Baptist Church Lewisville?

Moses had laid his hands on Joshua, symbolizing the transfer or delegation of power and authority. It indicated to the community that Joshua was Moses' legitimate successor. God's agenda is much bigger than any one leader. (See 1 Cor. 3:5-9.) God's work will continue after we are no longer personally available to carry it out. Teaching and training others to take your place is a gift you give to the next generation.

2. Flood Stage Obedience (Josh. 3:1-17)




What did the people of Israel expect God to do once they crossed the Jordan? What do you expect God to do as He leads First Baptist Church Lewisville in the days ahead?


Everything God's people had experienced led them to this point. God created a people for Himself through the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God used Jacob's son, Joseph, to safely bring His people into Egypt to protect them from the coming famine. God's people flourished and multiplied in Egypt until there arose a king over Egypt who did not know Joseph. This king enslaved and oppressed the Israelites for many years until God rescued them from slavery through His servant Moses. Once out of slavery, the people disobeyed God and were forced to wander in the wilderness, until this moment where Moses' successor, Joshua, was ready to lead them out of the wilderness and into God's promised land. It took longer than many had hoped, but God was faithful to them.

 What had God called Joshua to do, and what role did the community play in God's plan?

God had called Joshua to lead the people into the promised land, but this was not something Joshua could do alone. All the directions in this passage are given within the context of the community of the people of Israel. God's work didn't merely involve Joshua, but officials, priests, and every person of Israel. God works through individuals, but more often, God works through vibrant communities of faith that are committed to knowing Him and pursuing Him together. When we commit to God's work in the church, we commit to prepare for what He has called us to do.

 What did God promise the people He would do if they followed the Ark of the Covenant in obedience?

God promised to do wonders among His people if they simply followed Him in obedience. The command of God to stand in the Jordan was no small task. Further context in verse 15 tells us the Jordan would have been at its most chaotic during this time. God was asking the priests to trust Him with their very lives. However, God was not calling the people to move forward recklessly, but to trust Him and remember His faithfulness from the past. Even in their failures, God had shown himself to be faithful throughout generations. As the priests were called to step into the Jordan, God called them to stand on His promises.

 How do you think this moment served to build further faith for the people of Israel?

The priests acted in obedience to the instruction of God through Joshua. As God promised, the water of the Jordan stood still. Not only did the water stand still, but also the land was dry for a significant distance. Often, God responds to our obedience with abundance. Though we may be fearful of following God, He often provides more than we can ask or imagine.

3. Standing in Awe (Josh. 4:1-24)

Large stones were often used to build altars as monuments to the Lord. These altars were landmarks reminding all who passed of what had happened in that place. Sometimes the people would rename the place or make sacrifices because of the significant event. Abraham built several altars in the land of Canaan when he arrived. (See Gen. 12:7-8; 13:18.) After his vision of the Lord, Jacob set up the stone that was his pillow, while running away from Esau. (See Gen. 28:18; 35:7.) What the twelve men did here follows the same idea. Picking up twelve stones was representative of each of the twelve tribes of Israel. This was a significant event in Israel's history, like the parting of the Red Sea, and needed to be remembered in a significant fashion.

- ❓ The Israelites were to remind one another of God's presence in their midst, and in so doing, spur one another on in faith. How do we spur each other on in faith within the church?

The Israelites obeyed what Joshua said, taking the stones as commanded from the river. The Ark still stood in the middle of the river, the presence of God still keeping the waters of the flooding Jordan at bay. Joshua also went into the Jordan River to build a separate monument of stones—a marker for where the Lord held back the water for His people.

- ❓ In the action of the priests carrying the ark of the covenant, God went before and behind the people of Israel. How does that encourage you in regard to God's leadership at First Baptist Church Lewisville?
- ❓ What promise to Joshua did God fulfill in verse 14?
- ❓ How does the fact that the water started flowing again as soon as the priests stepped out of the river remind you of God's continual work in our lives?

God promised to exalt Joshua in the sight of Israel. This was fulfilled in verse 14. The priests stepped out of the river and the water immediately began to flow again. This reminds us of the ever-present work of God in our lives. There is not one moment of life that God is not working on behalf of His people, even if it is not always so obvious.

The meaning of the altar is repeated at the beginning and end of this chapter of Joshua. Repetition in the Bible usually means that something is important or to be remembered. The repeated command to remember this day means that the reader is to remember this as well. We can rejoice in the Lord for the things He has done in the past, what He is doing now, and expectantly wait for what He will do in the future.

Conclusion

- ❓ If you had one final opportunity to address the people of our church, what qualities and acts of God would you want to recall for them?

- ❓ How are you deliberately living to create a godly legacy?

- ❓ God asks all of us to follow Him in obedience. For Joshua and the Israelites, that meant crossing the Jordan. What does obedience look like for you at this time in your life?

Prayer of Response

Thank God for His faithfulness to lead you through every transition in life. Ask God to help you be obedient in moments that seem overwhelming. Pray that He would prepare your heart now for His work in the future. Ask the Holy Spirit to remind you of times in the past when God has worked in unexpected ways.

Family Discussion

Family Discussion Questions For Children

- *Who is helping you understand what it means to live for Christ? What has that person taught you about following Jesus?*
- *Why do you think God uses many different people (instead of just one or two) to teach you how to follow Him?*

Family Discussion Questions For Teens

- *Who is leaving a spiritual mark, or legacy, on your life right now? How so?*
- *When you graduate from high school, what do you hope your friends remember about you?*
- *What might God be wanting you to do to influence your friends even now? What is difficult about obeying Him in that?*

For Next Week

Session Title

- God's Path for Success

Main Scripture

- 1 Kings 2

Session Outline

1. Last Words (1 Kings 2:1-4)
2. Threats and Promise (1 Kings 2:5-12)
3. Deal with It (1 Kings 2:13-46)

Memorize

“What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

— 2 Timothy 2:2

Extended Commentary

Deuteronomy 34:1-12

34:1. Mount Nebo was located in the plains of Moab east of the Jordan River and opposite the fortress of Jericho. The phrase top of Pisgah (Num. 21:20; 23:14; Deut. 3:17,27) apparently referred to the mountain range in which Mount Nebo was located. God's provision for Moses to glimpse the promised land from a distance was a unique and gracious recognition of the leader's faithfulness to a very difficult calling. The list of regions Moses saw represented a comprehensive view of Israel's future possession. It was meant to be representative of all the land the Lord promised to give the Israelites.

34:3. The region referred to as the Negev represented the southern extent of the promised land. Zoar was a village located somewhere in the valley region south of the Dead Sea. Lot was afraid to settle there after the divine destruction of Sodom and chose instead to live in a mountain cave with his surviving daughters (see Gen. 19:30), probably located south of the Dead Sea. The statement that Moses was able to see as far as the Mediterranean Sea indicates that he was given divine enablement to see farther than normal sight would allow.

34:4. The Lord reminded Moses that what he saw was the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for their descendants. Moses was allowed to see it, but he would not be allowed to cross into it. The act that prohibited Moses from entering the promised land occurred in the Wilderness of Zin and in connection with a time of desperation (see Num. 20:2-12). The sin Moses committed had earthly consequences but did not lessen the overall opinion of God's Word that he was a man of faith who was great in the kingdom of God.

34:5-6. These verses describe Moses as the servant of the Lord. There is no greater tribute than being called a faithful servant of the Lord. Moses was recognized as such despite the reality that he would not enter the promised land. With a bare minimum of detail, the text reports that Moses died there in the land of Moab facing Beth-peor. Nothing is indicated about the circumstances of his passing. Rather, his death was shrouded in mystery, as was his burial. The phrase He buried him indicates that the Lord Himself accomplished Moses' burial. The grave was unmarked; thus no one to this day knows where his grave is. Perhaps the reason for such secrecy was to prevent the burial site from ever being made into a shrine.

34:7. The description of Moses' physical condition at the time of his death also is unusual. He was 120 years old when he died and yet his eyes were not weak, and his vitality had not left him. The cause of his death was not a disease or an accident. Instead, it was simply God's chosen time for the beloved leader to come into the presence of the Lord. Moses' work was finished on earth; the people needed to move forward under new leadership. Moses had mentored that new leader.

34:9. God provided His people with a new leader to carry on His purposes. Joshua had been one of two bold scouts who encouraged the people to obey the Lord and to enter the promised land from Kadesh-barnea (see Num. 14:6-9). Joshua proved to be filled with the spirit of wisdom as a result of Moses' commissioning, encouraging, and mentoring him. Wisdom is the ability to know and the desire to obey God's will. Joshua had learned many important lessons through watching Moses' leadership. He even served as an assistant to Moses (see Ex. 33:11). Moses had symbolically transferred leadership to Joshua when he laid his hands on him. This act visibly demonstrated the change of leadership in the eyes of the Israelites. It also indicated God's empowering of Joshua in his leadership role.

Joshua 3-4

3:2-5. The ark of the covenant was the symbol of the presence of God among His people. The considerable distance of 1,000 yards may suggest the need to remain away from the presence of God, especially as a miracle was happening. This separation of a holy God from His people occurred at Mount Sinai (Ex 19:10-25). T

3:6. Joshua's first instructions to the priests appear here. Note that the verse describes their precise obedience to his words.

3:7. God's promise of His presence with Joshua accompanied a promise to exalt Joshua (as also Abram in Gen 12:2) as a seal on his leadership over Israel.

3:8. Here is the first example of the Jordan River being used as a place where God chose to cleanse and redeem believers. Others included Naaman in 2Ki 5:10-15 and those baptized by John the Baptist (Mt 3:1-6).

3:9. This is Joshua's first speech to the Israelites. His concern that they come closer and listen suggests the importance of attention to God and His word.

3:11. The ark's passage, using the key word "cross over" (1:2), demonstrates God's leadership of His people, His presence with them, and His fulfillment of His promises. The Lord of all the earth uses a phrase identical to that charged against the spies in 2:3 ("the entire land"). While God is indeed Lord of all the earth, the expression in chapters 2 and 3 focuses on "the whole land" of Canaan.

3:12. The 12 men introduces a third group in addition to the people who will follow the ark and the priests who will carry it. The purpose of these men is explained in 4:2-3.

3:15. At spring flood, after the winter rains and during the barley harvest, the Jordan River could reach a width in excess of 100 feet and a depth of 10 feet. The priests as the leaders of the people were the first to step down into the water. Doing so was a risky activity with the river at flood stage. Carrying the ark could easily have caused them to be swept away by the current unless the promised miracle took place.

3:16-17. The priests stood on dry ground while the people crossed on dry ground. The water was completely cut off (Hb tammu) until all Israel had finished (Hbtammu) crossing the river.

4:1. The emphasis on the entire nation crossing suggests the importance of the unity pictured here. The term had finished could also be interpreted as “were finishing,” meaning the crossing and the events of verses 1-5 overlapped. The key word crossing (Hb ‘avar) occurs four times in this section.

4:3. The 12 stones represent the point of the crossing of the whole nation of Israel, all 12 tribes. This would enable future generations to understand and participate spiritually in the crossing that Joshua and the 12 tribes experienced.

4:6-7. The word sign occurs only here in Joshua. In the Pentateuch it is associated with Israel’s religious festivals and events, such as Passover (Ex 12:14; 13:9). The explanation given to future generations takes a chiasmic form. The outermost phrases designate a sign or memorial. Within that are lines referring to these stones and then how the waters of the Jordan were cut off. The central focus is that this occurred when the ark of the Lord’s covenant, the presence of God, crossed the Jordan.

4:14. That the Lord exalted Joshua indicates the fulfillment of 3:8. The connection with Moses is reaffirmed.

4:15-17. The time of the exit from the Jordan River, like the time of the entrance into the river, is determined by God.

4:18. The priests’ ascent from the river bed brings the miracle to an end. They reversed the procedure by which they began the parting of the waters (3:13-16).

4:20-23. The purpose of the 12 stones is found in the questions that the children would ask. The question and the instruction of the next generation about the divine miracles resembles Dt 6:6-9. Questions asked by sons about the significance of the Passover and the exodus are found in the Jewish Passover Seder or liturgy. Their mention here connects this Passover with the events of the crossing of the Jordan just as the earlier Passover remembered the crossing of the Red Sea.

4:24. The purpose of this miracle is to declare God’s might to all the people of the earth and to encourage Israel to always fear the Lord. Faith and commitment to God is the goal, just as with the miracles of Jesus (Jn 20:30-31).

