

Love From All Generations

A Study in Deuteronomy

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The word Deuteronomy comes from the Greek *deuteronomion*—"a second law." But this isn't a sequel or a hidden code. It's God coming back around, digging deeper. The first giving of the law focused on what it meant for Israel to live with God in the wilderness. This second giving focuses on what it means for God to live with us—in our homes, in our daily rhythms, in the promised land. Moses writes it for a new generation standing at the edge of promise, but his words reach backward and forward at the same time. The book breaks into four movements: Remember (chapters 1–4), Love (5–11), Live (12–26), and Choose (27–34).

And underneath all of it runs a single, urgent question: Will you pass on what you've learned—or will the next generation have to learn it the hard way?



I. The Setting — Covenant Renewal

Deuteronomy 1:1–5

"These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan in the wilderness... In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses spoke to the people of Israel according to all that the LORD had given him in commandment to them." — Deuteronomy 1:1, 3

Moses is old. The wilderness years are almost over. Most of the original generation—the one that left Egypt—has passed away. Only Moses, Joshua, and Caleb remain. And now Moses stands before a crowd of their children and grandchildren, people born in the wilderness, people who grew up in tents but are about to inherit houses.

Before they cross the Jordan, God presses pause. This is a covenant renewal—a ceremony to remember. God is saying: Before you step into comfort, remember faithfulness. Remember the commitments I made to you and the commitments you have made to me. Wholehearted love and life in the land.

We tend to be obsessed with generational differences—boomers, Gen X, millennials, Gen Z—and those distinctions can be helpful. But Moses is going to teach us something deeper. **The great divide between generations is not what one values over another. It's that one generation forgets what the other generation learned.** The first generation's responsibility is to pass it on. The next generation's responsibility is to receive it. And the thing that must be passed on and received? Love the Lord your God.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

1. *What is one thing about God's faithfulness that an older generation taught you—or that you wish someone had passed down to you? How did receiving (or missing) that shape your faith?*
2. *Think about the spiritual "inheritance" you've received—lessons, warnings, examples from those who came before you. What has stuck? What got lost along the way?*
3. *Is there someone in a younger generation you could be more intentional about passing your faith to? What would that look like practically this month?*



II. Tent Life — When Fear Shrinks God

Deuteronomy 1:26–32

"You murmured in your tents and said, 'Because the LORD hated us he has brought us out of the land of Egypt, to hand us over to the Amorites, to destroy us.'" — Deuteronomy 1:27

Moses turns to the story of the spies. Twelve men explored Canaan; ten came back terrified. The land was good, but the giants were bigger. And the people—rather than trusting the God who had sent ten plagues, parted the sea, and dropped manna every morning—went back into their tents and murmured.

Paint that picture for a moment. These are ex-slaves. They grew up in Egypt under a miserable existence with no work-life balance, no dignity, no agency. Now they're in the wilderness, and while it may look like salvation from the outside, they're living in tents. In the ancient Near East, that's essentially a homeless encampment. Dirt. No cultural framework to hold on to. No social stability. Just this guy Moses who claims he talks to Yahweh.

And here's what fear does to people who've only ever known crushing authority: *ex-slaves can only believe that every authority out there is there to crush them*. So they take everything—the bad report, their history of suffering, their miserable tents—and they murmur. And what is the murmur? It's a theology. They're telling a story: **God hates us**. "Because the LORD hated us he has brought us out of Egypt to destroy us."

When you're in the wilderness and your situation is miserable, you can't help but translate hardship as hatred. If God loved me, I wouldn't be in a tent—I'd be in a house. If God loved me, my relationships would be okay. If God loved me, I'd have something to show for it. Fear takes the real pain of your circumstances and rewrites the character of God.

But Moses won't let the story end there. He reminds them: "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" (Deuteronomy 1:30–31).

God fought for you. God carried you like a father carries his child. The invitation to the first generation—and to every one of us in a wilderness season—is this: Do not fear. The wilderness is not evidence that God hates you. It's the place where he carried you. Moses is saying the first generation didn't see that God loved them through the wilderness. And that they were being invited to love God | return

DISCUSSION QUESTION

1. *Have you ever been in a season where hardship made it feel like God was against you rather than for you? What eventually helped you see that differently—or are you still in the middle of it?*
2. *What “tent” are you murmuring in right now—what difficult circumstance are you tempted to interpret as God’s rejection rather than his refining? Write it down honestly.*
3. *Deuteronomy 1:31 says God carried Israel “as a man carries his son.” When in your life has God carried you—even if you didn’t recognize it at the time?*



III. House Life — When Blessing Breeds Entitlement

Deuteronomy 6:10–12; 8:11–18

“And when the LORD your God brings you into the land... with great and good cities that you did not build, and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full—then take care lest you forget the LORD.” — Deuteronomy 6:10–12

If the first generation’s danger was fear, the next generation’s danger is entitlement. Moses can see it coming. The generation raised in the wilderness is about to walk into houses they didn’t build, drink from wells they didn’t dig, and eat from vineyards they didn’t plant. They’re going to inherit the pension plan. And Moses knows what prosperity does to the human heart.

“Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth.” — Deuteronomy 8:17–18

The first generation looked at giants and said, “God can’t handle this.” The next generation looked at blessings and said, “God didn’t do this—I did.” Different sin, same root. **Whether our faith is too small or our entitlement is too big, the Christ is the same: we’ve forgotten God’s love.**

Fear shrinks God. Entitlement erases him. The tent-dweller says, “If God loved me, I wouldn’t be here.” The house-dweller says, “I don’t need God—look at what I’ve built.” But Moses’ warning is sharp: when you eat and are full, take care lest you forget the Lord. Because the moment you forget, you begin to believe the lie that your power and the might of your hand got you here.

God made a way into the promised land. God gave the power to build wealth. God provided the cities and the wells and the vineyards. The invitation to the next generation—and to anyone living in a season of comfort—is this: Do not be entitled. Love him.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

1. *Where in your life are you most tempted to say, “My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this”? What would it look like to actively remember God’s role in that blessing?*

2. *Think about something good in your life right now—a relationship, a job, a home, stability. How much of it did you truly build from scratch, and how much was given to you? Sit with that honestly.*
3. *Moses warns that fullness leads to forgetting. What spiritual practices help you stay grateful and dependent on God when life is going well—not just when it’s falling apart?*



IV. The Shema — Love for All Generations

Deuteronomy 6:4–9

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.” — Deuteronomy 6:4–6

This is the Shema—the prayer that anchors everything. It was meant to be repeated over and over, from one generation to the next to the next. Not as ritual. As lifeline.

Moses has just shown us two generations with two very different problems. The first generation lived in tents and let fear tell them God was their enemy. The next generation would live in houses and let comfort tell them God was unnecessary. Different decades, different circumstances, different temptations—but the same prescription. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your might.

The Shema doesn’t change based on your generation or your season. It doesn’t bend to your circumstances. It’s the same word for the person murmuring in the tent and the person lounging in the house they didn’t build. **Whether in the desert or in the promised land, whether in our fears or our entitlement—God’s love is what we need.**

And notice that God doesn’t just command love—he commands transmission. “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deuteronomy 6:7). Love that isn’t passed on gets forgotten. And when it’s forgotten, the generations begin to fall apart.

The generation gap isn’t about values or style or what one age group thinks is cool. The gap is forgetfulness. And the bridge is love—received from God, lived out before others, and spoken into the ears of the next generation before they have to learn it the hard way.

So whether you are in a wilderness season or a season of abundance, the invitation is the same. Receive the love of God. And then pass it on. That’s covenant life. That’s Deuteronomy. That’s the Shema echoing across every generation that has ears to hear.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

1. *The Shema calls for love with “all your heart, all your soul, all your might.” Which of those three feels most natural to you—and which one do you tend to hold back? Why?*

2. *Deuteronomy 6:7 says to talk about God's words "when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise." What would it actually look like for God's love to saturate your ordinary rhythms this week?*
3. *Who is one person—younger, older, or the same age—you could share something about God's faithfulness with this week? What would you want them to know?*

