

From Generation to Generation

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[0 : 00] What a book, right? What an opening. What a world that we have been thrown into. Don't worry if you can't pronounce Kadesh Barnea or Mount Seir and all these place names.

! That's what it's like when you visit a foreign country, isn't it? So let us help each other out as we go through this book together. But far more importantly, let us look to the Lord.

Let's ask Him for help as we come face to face with His Word. So would you pray with me? And we'll begin. Gracious Father, the Lord Jesus once said that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from your mouth.

Even as we journey through this book of the Bible across the whole church, be with us. Open up our eyes to see wondrous things in your law. We pray and ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.

It's been a pretty big week for most of us. Recently, our family, we've been pretty excited about this thing called the Artemis 2 Moon Mission.

[1 : 11] Any of you guys heard about what's going on with NASA sending four astronauts to the moon? They launched on the 1st of April, just as we were entering Easter weekend.

And went all the way, you know, their spaceship went all the way around the moon, including around the far side of the moon, getting some amazing pictures, doing a lot of incredible science. And actually, just earlier today, you know, this weekend, we splashed down back to Earth safely. What an incredible journey. And actually, this is obviously not, for some of you, this is not, some of you might know this is not the first time that actually that humans have been to the moon. But it's actually been a while since we've tried this as a species, as a race. Actually, the last time there was a mission to the moon was in the 60s and 70s, before I think most of us were born. Such a momentous achievement, right? And actually, this time around, you know, it's been great to see this mission live streamed and to see lots of updates and everything just looking very incredible.

[2 : 26] And this mission sets a foundation for future journeys, maybe to the moon again, maybe to other planets beyond. But all in all, this was a one-and-a-half-week journey, right?

You know, 1st of April till today. One-and-a-half weeks of travel, but a journey that was decades in the making. Maybe space travel was not your thing.

Maybe some other kind of travel is your thing. Or that you're interested in other journeys. Can I suggest, though, that here in the book of Deuteronomy is another one-and-a-half-week journey that was decades in the making.

Let me show you what I mean, right? Look carefully again, actually, in your Bibles at verse 2 of Deuteronomy chapter 1. It takes 11 days to go from Horeb to Kadesh Baneah by the Mount Seir road.

But then in the next verse, it says, And it came to pass in the 40th year, on the first day of the 11th month, Moses spoke to the people of Israel according to all that the Lord had given him in commandment to them.

[3 : 35] Hang on. Let that sink in a bit. A journey that should have taken 11 days took 40 years. What would you say if that kind of delivery service from Temu or Amazon?

Or what would you say if you were sitting there listening to Moses? You were part of the next gen, as it were, of God's people who have been wandering in the wilderness for that long, watching the generation before them disappear.

And now they're about to embark on a risky, dangerous mission together. What would you say to a group of people like that? Even to us. Welcome to Deuteronomy.

This book of the Bible, which is kind of like the gospel according to Moses. As we've heard in the opening verses, this is a book full of the words of Moses.

And so over the next half year, as we kind of walk through this book, take them in fairly big chunks. It's 34 chapters, so we won't spend all the time on it. As we walk through this book, our sermons are focused on a sermon, right?

[4 : 50] Words of Moses. And our sermons will try to expose the riches of Moses' teaching. In chapters 1 to 11, I think we hear about the gospel according to Moses.

What is the good news that God's people need to remember and to respond to in obedience and love? And then chapters 12 to 26, it draws us into life under God's gracious rule.

And yes, there are rules. There are laws. There are different ways of living that is laid out for us. And then the final few chapters of Deuteronomy points us, well, to a grace that God gives that comes beyond Moses.

And of course, for us who live under Jesus' rule, we know this grace in far richer detail. But because many of us, myself included, are quite unfamiliar with the culture and background of this Old Testament book, it makes sense for us to help each other out to get our bearings.

And so if you were in an unfamiliar place, some of you would appreciate, you know, dialing up your phone, right, seeing a map of the place. So here's a kind of brief map. This is kind of the Middle East region around the time of Deuteronomy.

[6 : 03] We'll use this map by Mark Barry as a helpful reference in the weeks ahead. You can kind of trace where they've been and where they end up. But for today, I just want to share with you three reasons why it matters that we journey through this book in 2026.

Okay? Three reasons. Firstly, it's a great reason to go through this book. Firstly, because Deuteronomy is actually a story of grace from generation to generation.

A story of grace from generation to generation. Titles. Okay. Titles can help to make sense of our years, even here at PCBC.

I mean, I'm surrounded, in this space at least, by all these banners, right? They're kind of like titles for each year at PCBC, right? 2022, the title for our year was How Firm Our Foundation, all right? And then 2023, our title was To Be Built Up in Him. 2025, our title for the theme for our church was To Be United in Service.

[7 : 23] And now, on the front page of 2026, what do we see? We see a new title. This is the direction of our church this year from generation to generation.

This is a theme for us as a church to be far more than just, I don't know, a lounge room for a family. We want to be far more than just a waiting room for getting into heaven.

No, we want to be a mission station, one where we command God's works from one generation to the next. It's the only purpose for PCBC that will last and matter beyond our lifetimes, right?

It's the only purpose, right, that will matter for eternity. And so, titles are important. The theme that drives our church is an important theme for our own lives as well.

Now, on the note of themes and titles, well, I want to suggest that Deuteronomy, right, the book of Deuteronomy, doesn't have a great title. Anyone know what Deuteronomy means?

[8 : 29] It doesn't come from English. The original language, it means something like second law, right? But depending on the languages that you understand, there are other titles.

But second law isn't the best way to describe Deuteronomy. Because as we've seen in the structure of the book, only a third of the book is actually law. And even then, it's actually sandwiched between lots of preaching, lots of prophecy, lots of history.

There's even a bit of poetry in Deuteronomy. This is a rich book that is more than just a book of rules, as Fran reminded us earlier. A better title, right, comes from the original Hebrew, which in the first few words says, these are the words, right?

Verse 1, verse 1. Chapter 1, verse 1. These are the words Moses spoke. These are the words. So, I want you to think about these as the words for your year.

But not just any words. These are actually the final words from Moses. We'll see by the end of the book, spoiler alert, that Moses dies. So, these are final words from a dying shepherd about to pass on to a people about to enter God's promised place.

[9 : 46] And I don't know if you've been around older people who are dying. No one dares to ask the question, what will we do when they're gone? But that's the question in everyone's minds.

You see, Moses already knows he cannot cross over with God's people into Canaan. It's the price of his own failure in the wilderness. And we hear about that in chapter 1 next week.

And so here, in this book, Moses is preaching the final words of his life. And more specifically, right, we see verse 5. He is expounding this law.

He's making plain, right, all of what's in this book. All of what comes from God's instructions. As you'll see, what follows is not just rule book, rule book, rule book.

It's a history lesson. That's how it starts, right? We're going to see how Moses retraces the story of God's rebellious people sustained by God's grace.

[10:48] And that's the story, not just of Deuteronomy, but of every part of the Bible, right? Ordinary rebellious people shaped and sustained by God's grace.

And we see that so clearly in the book of Deuteronomy. In fact, Gary Miller, he's an Old Testament scholar, he puts it this way. Deuteronomy is the pivot on which the theology of the whole Old Testament turns.

You want to understand the whole Old Testament. You need to get to grips with Deuteronomy and everything that's in this book. Now, look, if the Old Testament was just a bunch of rules and morals, a story of God's undeserved grace to sinful people would not be what you and I expect.

But you think about what comes before Deuteronomy, that's what we see, right? Book after book after book. Think about how the Bible begins in the book of Genesis.

We see the pinnacle of God's creation, the God who made the heavens and the earth and people. And yet people who plunge into sin and death.

[11:54] And yet God graciously shows grace and mercy to the sinful people. He shows his favor and kindness to an undeserving people. And then whether in the Garden of Eden or whether rescuing the people out of Egypt, whether it's, you know, shaped worship life around a special tent in Leviticus, whether they're stuck in the wilderness, God's grace is the backdrop to everything, right?

God's grace to a sinful people. And every book of the Bible so far up to Deuteronomy is telling the same story. From one generation to the next, God is gracious.

He's faithful. He's faithful to the God of, he's faithful to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, and to Israel as they're about to cross into the promised land.

Despite their failure, despite their unworthiness. You know what, if this is a story of God's people back then, I think this is a story for God's people today as PCBC, right?

The backdrop for each of us here at PCBC must follow this same pattern. In the Garden of our Lord Jesus Christ, you and I, we are treasured possessions.

[13:13] Despite our past failures. Despite our present unworthiness. Do you believe this? Is this the story that anchors your life? Do you know for sure you are kept by grace from generation to generation?

You are loved by the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Moses, of Joshua. Remember, we have been kept by grace as an English service, all right? For years.

We've been preserved by grace as PCBC here in East Auckland. For decades. So as we listen to these words, we're also reminded, right?

We're reminded of a story that sits thousands of years before us. That tells us of a legacy of God's grace from generation to generation. What a story that we share in by faith in Christ.

A reason two, though, why trekking through Deuteronomy is worth it. Well, this book is not just a story of grace from generation to generation. It's also an urgent call to love God from the heart.

[14:23] Now, this week, who got that message from on your phones, right? Emergency alert. So loud. So obnoxious. Happened for me at about 150-something.

Urgent call, right? Cyclones coming. Get supplies. Stay inside. Don't do any unnecessary things. Well, we'll see who follows that this weekend. Deuteronomy is an urgent call, right?

Through this book, we're going to see time and time again, he says, Moses is preaching, right? And he says things like, choose to love the Lord today or this day.

Choose whom you'll serve. In fact, the word today or this day appears 58 times in Deuteronomy and so many in chapter 4. Let me read you an example, right?

Deuteronomy chapter 4, 39. Acknowledge and take to heart today that the Lord is God in heaven, above and on the earth, below. There's no other. Or listen to this one.

[15:22] This one might be familiar to you. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love your Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.

You see, Moses is sending out an emergency alert, as it were. Time and time again, he's saying, love the Lord from the heart.

Not just, you know, out of words. From the heart. These are some of the conversations that happen in our house. Dad, Dad, look at this spaceship that I built.

Oh, that looks so nice while I'm still reading my book. Or maybe this has happened to you before. Hey, you want to hear something amazing? Yeah, sure. What is it? While you're still messaging someone else.

I mean, just like most of us, it's hard to be present in two places at once. God's people cannot have one foot in the promised land and one foot in the surrounding nations and all the things that they love and treasure.

[16:26] That's why Moses, speaking east of the Jordan River, he's, you know, on the plains of Moab. They're about to cross over to a foreign country, as it were.

He urges them, this day, choose to obey the Lord. Choose to trust the Lord. Give your hearts to Him alone and not anything else that you will encounter.

Love the Lord and no other. Now, that's the theme that just drums throughout the whole of this book. In fact, Pastor Matt Fuller, he's a pastor in the UK, he illustrates the flow of Moses' sermons, right?

The whole book of Deuteronomy in this way, right? Choose today either to love the Lord from the heart or to follow other gods with your heart. Choose today to love from the heart in obedience or to follow other gods in disobedience.

Now, depending on what you choose today, the end result is either blessing or a curse. Now, to rely on our obedience as proof that we are in a relationship with the Lord, that's foolish, right?

[17:29] Actually, we hear in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul, he makes it plain in places like Galatians 3, verse 10. You rely on observing the Lord, you are under a curse. Well, that's why Christ redeemed us, right?

He redeemed us from the curse of the law. He became a curse for us. And yet, the life we live in response to God's grace, it tells everybody, it tells God and himself what our relationship with him is like.

And time and time again, Deuteronomy is full of Moses preaching to his spiritual children. He's saying, choose life over death. Choose blessing over curse.

Choose Yahweh, the Lord, over the gods of the nations, over the other things that tempt your hearts. You could almost say throughout Deuteronomy, we just get given two ways to live.

Either to love and revere the Lord in all of life and be blessed, or to forsake him for the idols of this world and be cursed. And so we shouldn't be surprised if Deuteronomy is so foundational and so important that when Jesus, when he kind of gets up on a mountain and he begins his ministry, right?

[18:45] Many, many years later, he starts with a sermon, doesn't he? He starts with a sermon, an urgent call. Blessed are the poor in spirit. He says then, now choose the narrow road, not the wide one.

Do it today. Jesus, in that sermon, of course, he exposes all the idols of our heart, the gods of the other nations. He calls for radical obedience.

He wants us to have a joined up life before God today. He wants us to walk the way of the cross, not the wide road to destruction. But before Jesus' sermon on the mount were these sermons from Moses, doing the same thing to a different group of people.

And so that's actually the context for, I think, what's probably the hardest part of this series, okay? And we don't get into it straight away, but when we get to chapters 12 through to 26, man, there's some hard, difficult words in there.

Is there not? If you've read through the book of Deuteronomy, you can do it in three hours on audio. You're going to come across some very, very weird verses.

[19:54] And as pastors, we'll try and chat more about some of this when we get there. But some of the case laws, they seem foreign to us, at times troubling. Because we live 3,000 years on from some of these cultural situations.

But I want to encourage you, before you get scared off by, you know, all the stuff about animal sacrifices and bodily hygiene, there's even a verse about, you know, digging your poop, what do we do with all that?

It may help to think of these crazy chapters, as it were, as a step-by-step explanation and application of what's known as the Ten Commandments.

Anyone know the Ten Commandments, right? Just ten words from Yahweh, principles of how to relate to Him rightly. All right? You shall not have other gods before me.

Things like, remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. All right? I think verses 12 to 1226 is fleshing that out for the people of Israel back then. And applying them to that generation about to enter a land that hadn't been cleansed of the Canaanites yet, of this foreign worship and the foreign people.

[21 : 06] But of course, for our generation, 2026, we're going to have to apply God's word differently to us. Because if I said to you, don't covet your neighbor's horse, you'd be like, I don't know.

It doesn't matter to me. He doesn't have a horse. But I could explain, rather, don't covet your neighbor's car or phone or gamer profile, perhaps. Instead, find your satisfaction and worth in someone else.

Of course, if I said to you, remember the Sabbath day, you've got to keep it holy. You might say, oh, well, I don't live in ancient Israel. Does that mean it doesn't apply to me? And yet the principle of rest rather than overwork still applies, right?

Of blessing rather than burnout. That's so relevant to us today. Of breaking from your screens rather than using your screens till your mind breaks.

While Christians today will follow the same moral principles that we see, the urinary flashes out, we're going to learn a lot still by going through what life under God's gracious rule looks like back then.

[22 : 11] And so we do this, though, of course, as people in pursuit of Jesus. And Jesus, he came not to abolish the law, but he came to fulfill the law and all righteousness. How?

He did it by his perfect life and example. And he gives us, through the Holy Spirit, the power and the pattern to obey it and follow. And, you know, personally, I think one thing that struck me as I listened through and heard the whole of Deuteronomy this week was to realize how often the words remember and rejoice run through even those tricky chapters in the middle.

If you can remember and rejoice, all right, you're in the right direction for a living relationship with the Lord. Remember what you once were. Rejoice in what God has done for you.

There's a sense even in all the rules about mixed fibers and what you can't eat and so on, that for the redeemed people of God, obeying his instructions in all of life was a joy, a delight, something to rejoice in.

After all, why wouldn't you listen to the God who rescued you from slavery, who led you all the way in the wilderness these 40 years, who's about to bring you into a good land?

[23 : 28] Church, there's no doubt we've been through some hardships over this past year. And maybe for you, I mean, this cyclone's nothing compared to stuff that's going on in your lives right now.

Sorry about that. It's hard right now. But let the book of Deuteronomy remind each of us, whatever the future holds, we can still make a choice this day, today, to love God from our heart, to hear and delight in his gracious law, to follow his good words for us.

So today, will you make that choice? Will you hold fast to our gracious God? Will you choose life in his ways, not your ways? Because imagine the impact in your life.

You turned, like Jesus did, to every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. I mean, could even these 34 chapters be something that transformed your life this year?

So if you haven't read through Deuteronomy yet, I encourage you, taste it. See it for yourself this week. Experience the power of God's word. Now choose life, as Moses would say.

[24 : 39] Now that's a quote to us too, all right? Of course, in the Lord Jesus Christ. And finally, briefly, as we journey through Deuteronomy this year, the third reason why I think it's so powerful to go through this book is that we're going to see that Deuteronomy is a firm foundation to understand our own salvation story in Christ.

Some of us might think, why spend time in an Old Testament book? Why not just go to the book of Romans or some other nice New Testament book where everything is laid out really clearly for us? Well, it becomes clear as we get through to the end of Deuteronomy that there's kind of not just two ways to live, as we talked about, but two contrasting tunes that Moses seems to have in his head.

Like one tune is really happy and joyful and optimistic, right? Things are going to get better, right? He is for you. He is for you. But then he also speaks like someone who's a real pessimist. You're going to fail. You're going to fail. You're going to fail. What do we make of that contrast? How do we embrace it? It's both there, right? He speaks of both hope and despair about Israel's future. And sometimes actually in the same verse, I'll show you one. Deuteronomy chapter 30, verse 6. Maybe not that one. Just take my word for it that as you go through the book of Deuteronomy, there will be many, many times where he says, you're going to fail and go after other gods, but God will still be gracious to you, right?

[26 : 08] Two tunes. And because the ancient Israelites will fail and go after other gods, one day God, he has to bring about the change himself, right?

He's got to do something different so that his people will obey, not just externally, but from the heart. He's got to build a new people and one that's not just united by ethnicity, but united by faith in the kingdom of God.

And so one day, even Deuteronomy tells us, right? Deuteronomy chapter 30, verse 6. The Lord will one day circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul and live.

But because Deuteronomy ends and Moses dies and we don't get a clear answer to this, we have to look beyond the book of Deuteronomy to answer this question. Who, how will this come, right? This new hearts. We have to turn not to Moses, not to Joshua, not David or Solomon, but one day we must turn to Jesus, the anointed one.

[27 : 11] And so as we read through this book rightly, this Old Testament book, it will point us, it will shepherd us to see Jesus, to understand him better, to be grateful for him.

Jesus is the new and better Israel. Think about him in the wilderness, right? Satan's tempting him. And did you know that Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy each and every time when Satan tempts him?

Why does the Lord keep coming back to this book over and over again? I think it's so that we see without a doubt that Jesus fills the shadows of this book, the topics it talks about, the truths that it tells, the story, the history that we see.

We need to see how Jesus has truly fulfilled all righteousness and all the hopes and dreams of Moses. Hallelujah. He is our Savior. And you know what?

Especially when we get to Deuteronomy's curses. There's a whole chapter where he just says, cursed are you here? Cursed are you there? It's awful reading.

[28 : 20] But there's nothing quite like reading it and then realizing as a Christian. All these curses that the nation of Israel suffered because they disobeyed, Jesus endured all the curses there and more while being a spotless sacrifice for us.

Because the good news, right, is that Jesus, he hung on a tree as our curse. That's what Deuteronomy 21, 23 says. What a Savior.

Our glorious Christ. And so I want to encourage you, our church, to make space for these words of Moses this year. Once you make space for these words, we've got to understand what it means to, what even grace means, what law means, what the land means, what exile or blessing or curse, all these theological words.

Start to see them more sharply and understand them better and how they point to Jesus. And so let me close by reflecting like the author of Hebrews did.

He puts it this way. Therefore, since it still remains for some to enter that rest, since those who formerly had the good news proclaimed to them did not go in because of their disobedience, God again sets a certain day, calling it today.

[29 : 37] So today, church, if you hear his voice, will you harden your hearts or will you choose this day to love God all in, in response to his grace for you in all of your life?

Shall we pray together? Great God, you of the highest heavens, you have worked your wonders and your grace in our lowly hearts.

so we thank you and we remember how powerful your word is, sharper than any two-edged sword, able to cut through, convict us and point us to Jesus again and again.

We ask that you would do that. And it's all the uncertainties of the world that we've been praying through, that we have on our hearts and minds, the difficulties in our lives.

Show us your grace again through these gracious words from the book of Deuteronomy. We ask all these things in Jesus' name.
[30 : 43] Amen. Amen.