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THE 66-BOOK 8-WEEK GROUP BIBLE STUDY SERIES • BOOK 05 OF 66

דְּבָרִים

DEUTERONOMY

Devarim — "Words" • An 8-Week Group Bible Study

By Greg and Kayla Gibson

WEEK 1 OF 8 • GENERAL / MIXED GROUP EDITION

Remember and Take Care — Deuteronomy 1:1–4:43

Scripture Scope: Deuteronomy 1:1–4:43 (ESV) • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

PARTICIPANT STUDY EDITION

Synchronized Section-by-Section with the Leader Guide Edition · Includes Group Reflection Workspace

Deuteronomy — 8-Week Group Bible Study (Participant Study Edition)

Week 1: Remember and Take Care (Deuteronomy 1:1–4:43)

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- **The title:** The Hebrew title is Devarim, "words," from the opening phrase 'elleh ha-devarim, "These are the words" (1:1), so from its first verse the book presents covenant words for Israel to hear and keep. "Deuteronomy" comes from the Greek Deuteronomion, "second law," drawn from the Greek rendering of 17:18 ("a copy of this law"). It is not a different law but the covenant restated and preached to a new generation.
- **The setting:** The plains of Moab, east of the Jordan, on the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year after the exodus (1:3–5). Numbers closed in exactly this place (Numbers 36:13). The whole book unfolds in about a month.
- **The speaker and audience:** Moses, in farewell speeches to the second generation, the children of those who refused the land at Kadesh (Numbers 14).
- **The structure (four speech headings):**
  - First speech: "These are the words" (1:1–4:43), remembering the journey and calling Israel to listen.
  - Second speech: "This is the law" (4:44–28:68), the Ten Words, the Shema, the law code, and the blessings and curses.
  - Third speech: "These are the words of the covenant" (29:1–30:20), covenant renewal and the call to choose life.
  - Final words (31–34): Joshua commissioned, the Song of Moses, Moses' blessing, and his death.
- **The shape of a royal treaty:** The book's overall shape resembles ancient Near Eastern treaties between a great king and his subject people: preamble, historical prologue, stipulations, public reading, witnesses, and blessings and curses. Here the great King is the LORD.
- **The big themes:** Remembering and not forgetting; listening that becomes obedience; wholehearted love for the LORD; one God and one people; the land as gift; teaching the next generation; blessing and curse; the heart's need for God's work (10:16; 30:6).
- **Why it matters:** Deuteronomy closes the Torah and sums up the covenant from Genesis through Numbers. It is the Old Testament book Jesus quotes most often, including all three answers in the wilderness temptation (Matthew 4:1–11) and the Shema as the greatest commandment (Mark 12:28–30).

How This 8-Week Study Works

Designed for weekly small groups, mini-churches, and community gatherings (75–90 Minutes per session) rather than daily homework checklists, each week of Deuteronomy invites you to slow down and work through Moses' great covenant sermons together through six repeatable sections:

- **Section X.1 — Opening:** Sets the scene, the Week at a Glance, Head, Heart, and Hands objectives, the Opening Frame, and the Opening Entry Question.
- **Section X.2 — Historical & Literary Context:** Places the week's chapters inside the structure of Deuteronomy and the ancient Near Eastern world.
- **Section X.3 — Movement 1:** The week's first guided passage: Guided Scripture Reading, Anchor Verses, Teaching Narrative, and Group Discussion Questions.
- **Section X.4 — Movement 2:** The week's second guided passage, following the same flow.
- **Section X.5 — Canonical Horizon:** Traces how the passage echoes across Scripture and finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

- **Section X.6 — Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer:** Moves the week's study into everyday life, previews next week, and closes in prayer.

Key anchor verses are printed in each section for quick reference. Longer focal passages are read aloud together from the ESV.

Choosing a Bible Translation: Top 5 Translations Compared

Every English Bible translation falls along a spectrum between two primary approaches: word-for-word translation (formal equivalence, which prioritizes literal accuracy to the original phrasing and sentence structure) and thought-for-thought translation (dynamic equivalence, which prioritizes immediate modern readability by translating idioms and ideas into natural contemporary expressions). Here is how five widely used English translations compare:

- **ESV (English Standard Version) — Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Follows the wording and sentence structure of the original Hebrew and Greek closely while using modern English; well suited to close study.
  - Cons: Because it tracks the original sentence structure, some phrasing can feel more formal than everyday speech.
- **NIV (New International Version) — Balanced (Between Word-for-Word and Thought-for-Thought)**
  - Pros: Widely read; balances accuracy to the original languages with natural, everyday readability.
  - Cons: Because some idioms are rendered as modern expressions, a few literal wordplays or technical terms can be less visible.
- **NLT (New Living Translation) — Thought-for-Thought**
  - Pros: Warm and conversational; reads smoothly aloud and helps readers follow the big picture of long passages.
  - Cons: Because it prioritizes meaning over literal phrasing, it can be harder to use for close word study.
- **CSB (Christian Standard Bible) — Optimal Equivalence (Balanced)**
  - Pros: Stays close to the original words where possible while smoothing awkward phrasing into natural modern English.
  - Cons: Because it is a newer translation, some well-known verses may sound different from the wording many readers remember.
- **KJV / NKJV (King James Version & New King James Version) — Traditional Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Historic cadence that shaped English literature and church history; the NKJV updates archaic pronouns ("thee/thou") while keeping the classic rhythm.
  - Cons: Often reads like older English poetry, with complex sentences and archaic or formal vocabulary that can be harder for modern readers to follow.

This study quotes the ESV.

Greg & Kayla's Recommended Study Bibles

Having a trusted study Bible on hand is one of the best ways to go deeper as you read through Deuteronomy:

- **Greg's Favorite Study Bible:** The MacArthur Study Bible (ESV), which contains extensive explanatory notes beneath almost every verse, ideal for detailed study.
- **Kayla's Favorite Study Bible:** The ESV Study Bible, containing over 20,000 study notes, articles, and explanations.

The 8-Week Deuteronomy Study Map

Deuteronomy is organized around Moses' speeches, each opened by its own heading ("These are the words," "This is the law," "These are the words of the covenant"). Our eight weeks follow those natural breaks from the plains of Moab to Moses' death on Mount Nebo:

Week	Title & Passage	Movement 1 / Movement 2	Canonical Horizon
1	**Remember and Take Care** (1:1–4:43)	Remembering the Journey (1:1–3:29) / Hear and Take Care (4:1–43)	Memory, Horeb, and the God who speaks
2	**Love the LORD Your God** (4:44–11:32)	The Ten Words and the Shema (4:44–6:25) / Circumcise Your Heart (7:1–11:32)	Loving the LORD with all the heart: Jesus and the Shema; circumcision of the heart
3	**Worship in the Land** (12:1–16:17)	The Place the LORD Will Choose (12:1–14:29) / Sacred Time: Release and Feasts (15:1–16:17)	The true place of worship: Christ and the temple
4	**Justice and Leadership** (16:18–21:23)	Justice, Kings, Priests, and Prophets (16:18–18:22) / Refuge, War, and Household (19:1–21:23)	The prophet like Moses and the just King
5	**A Holy People** (22:1–26:19)	Neighbor-Love in Daily Life (22:1–25:19) / Firstfruits, Tithes, and a People Holy to the LORD (26:1–19)	Neighbor-love fulfilled; living sacrifices
6	**Blessing and Curse** (27:1–28:68)	Gerizim and Ebal (27:1–26) / Blessings and Curses (28:1–68)	Christ became a curse for us
7	**Choose Life** (29:1–31:29)	Covenant Renewed and Choose Life (29:1–30:20) / Joshua Commissioned; the Torah Written (31:1–29)	The word is near you; the new-covenant heart
8	**The Song, the Blessing, and Moses' Death** (31:30–34:12)	The Song of Moses (31:30–32:52) / Moses Blesses Israel and Dies (33:1–34:12)	The greater Prophet; the Transfiguration; the hope of rest

WEEK 1 OF 8

WEEK 1 SESSION GUIDE · DEUTERONOMY 1:1–4:43

Week 1: Remember and Take Care

Scripture Scope: Deuteronomy 1:1–4:43 (ESV) • Focal Passages: Deuteronomy 1:29–33; 3:23–28; 4:1–9; 4:32–40 • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

Section 1.1

Opening: Remember and Take Care (Deuteronomy 1:1–4:43)

Passage **Deuteronomy 1:1–4:43**

Opening

Israel is camped on the plains of Moab, across the Jordan River from Jericho. Forty years have passed since the LORD brought his people out of Egypt. The generation that refused to enter the land at Kadesh has died in the wilderness, and their children now stand at the edge of the promise, looking across the river toward the land God swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Before they cross, Moses stands up to preach. He will not cross with them, and he knows it. So his first sermon does two things. It looks back over the long road from Horeb, the mountain where God gave his covenant, and it tells that story honestly, failures included. Then it turns to a single urgent call: listen, and take care that you do not forget. This week we work through that whole first sermon together.

Week 1 At a Glance

Scripture Scope	Deuteronomy 1:1–4:43 (Moses' first speech)
Focal Passages	Deuteronomy 1:29–33; 3:23–28; 4:1–9; 4:32–40
Literary & Structural Anchor	The first speech moves from historical retrospect (chapters 1–3, the journey retold as a sermon) to exhortation (chapter 4), hinged on the treaty-style turn "And now, O Israel, listen" (4:1). Chapter 4 is framed by listening, keeping, and living long in the land (4:1, 40), with Horeb, a voice and no form, at its center.
Big Idea	The LORD who carried Israel through the wilderness has spoken his word, not shown an image; his people remember what he has done, listen to what he says, and take care to pass it on.

Week 1 Learning Objectives (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD **Know the Story Behind the Sermon:** Understand how Deuteronomy retells the journey from Horeb to Moab, why the Kadesh refusal sits at its center, and why Horeb (a voice, no form) grounds the ban on images.

HEART **Trust the God Who Carries:** Recognize the LORD as the God who fights for his people and carries them "as a man carries his son" (1:31), and who stays merciful after failure (4:31).

HANDS **Remember and Pass It On:** Practice remembering God's past faithfulness out loud and passing it on to the next generation, within the family and across the church.

Opening Frame: From the Wilderness Story to the Wilderness Sermon

Numbers ended with Israel camped on the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho (Numbers 36:13). Deuteronomy opens in exactly the same place, with no gap of time or travel between the two books. What changes is the way the story is told. Numbers told the wilderness years as they happened. Deuteronomy retells them as a sermon to people who were children at Kadesh, or were not yet born. Moses even speaks to them as if they had stood at Horeb themselves: "the LORD spoke to you" (4:12). Notice one small detail in the opening verses. The trip from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea takes only "eleven days" (1:2), yet Moses is speaking in the fortieth year (1:3). An eleven-day road became a forty-year journey. So before we open the text, consider the question underneath this whole week: what does a people need to hear before stepping into what God has promised? Moses' answer begins with memory. Before we read together, take a moment to share with the group:

Opening Entry Question (Icebreaker)

> **1.1 Q1 (Opening Entry Question):** Think of a family or personal story you have retold to someone who was not there. What made it worth telling, and what did you want them to take from it?

Section 1.2

Historical & Literary Context: A Sermon on the Edge of the Land (Deuteronomy 1:1–4:43)

Passage **Deuteronomy 1:1–4:43**

Entering the World of Deuteronomy

1. Historical Background

Deuteronomy is set in the fortieth year after the exodus, on the plains of Moab east of the Jordan (1:3–5). Its first hearers are the second generation; most of the adults who left Egypt have died in the wilderness (2:14–16). Moses, nearing the end of his life, gives a series of farewell speeches before Israel crosses into the land without him.

The book presents itself as Moses' speeches, written down by Moses (31:9, 24). The account of his death (chapter 34) and a few "to this day" notes (2:10–12, 20–23; 3:14) come from a later hand. Jesus quotes Deuteronomy as Scripture, including all three of his answers in the wilderness temptation (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10).

2. Cultural Setting: The Shape of a Royal Treaty

In the ancient Near Eastern world, a great king who made a covenant with a subject people often set down the agreement in a recognizable form. Deuteronomy follows that familiar shape, with the LORD as the great King:

Treaty Element	Where It Appears in Deuteronomy
Preamble (names the great king and the setting)	1:1–5
Historical prologue (the king's past kindness)	1:6–3:29
Stipulations (what loyalty looks like)	Chapter 4 and the law code
Deposit and public reading	31:9–13
Witnesses	Heaven and earth (4:26; 30:19)
Blessings and curses	Chapters 27–28

In these treaties, the great king's past kindness gave his people reasons for loyalty. Deuteronomy's prologue does the same, with one striking difference: it honestly includes Israel's failures alongside God's faithfulness.

3. Literary Structure of the First Speech

- **Heading and setting** (1:1–5)
- **Leaving Horeb and appointing judges** (1:6–18)
- **Kadesh: the spies and the refusal** (1:19–46)
- **Wilderness years and peaceful passage past Edom, Moab, and Ammon** (2:1–23)
- **Victories over Sihon and Og** (2:24–3:11)
- **Land east of the Jordan** (3:12–22)
- **Moses' plea** (3:23–29)
- **"And now, O Israel, listen"** (4:1–40)
- **Three cities of refuge** (4:41–43)

4. Key Themes

- **Sermon, not chronicle:** Moses retells history selectively and personally, so that the retelling shapes the hearers' choices today.
- **"You" collapses the generations:** Moses addresses the second generation as the ones who refused at Kadesh and stood at Horeb (1:26; 4:10–12). The covenant is always present tense.
- **Listen, keep, do, teach:** The book wants history that was seen to become obedience that is kept and taught.
- **Remembering versus forgetting:** The great danger is not ignorance but forgetting what God has done.
- **The land as gift that must be taken:** The LORD gives the land, yet Israel must step out in trust and take possession of it.

5. Theological Considerations

- **Horeb is Sinai:** Horeb is Deuteronomy's usual name for Sinai. They are the same mountain.
- **God reveals himself by his word:** At Horeb Israel heard a voice and saw no form. God makes himself known by speaking, not by an image.
- **The LORD rules every nation:** He gives lands to other peoples too (2:5, 9, 19), so he is not a local god of one territory.

6. Relevant Scholarly Insights

Many critical scholars date much of the book to the seventh century BC and link it to the scroll found in Josiah's day (2 Kings 22–23). Evangelical scholars generally hold to Mosaic origin with later editorial notes, pointing among other things to its close fit with second-millennium BC treaty form.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.2)

> **1.2 Q1:** Moses retells history the group already knows from Numbers, but as a sermon to a new generation. Why might a people need its story retold before a big step forward?

1.2 Q2: Deuteronomy takes the shape of a treaty between a great king and his people, beginning with what the king has already done. What does it say about God that he starts with his past kindness before he gives his commands?

1.2 Q3: Moses speaks to the second generation as if they had stood at Horeb themselves. In what ways is God's covenant word still addressed to "you" today?

Section 1.3

Movement 1: Remembering the Journey (Deuteronomy 1:1–3:29)

Passage **Deuteronomy 1:1–3:29**

Guided Scripture Reading

Open your Bible to **Deuteronomy 1**. Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries from the leader between readings:

- **Reader 1: Deuteronomy 1:1–8** — The heading, setting, and command to leave Horeb and take the land sworn to the fathers.
- **Reader 2: Deuteronomy 1:19–33** (focal passage 1:29–33) — The spies, the refusal at Kadesh, and Moses' reminder of the God who fights and carries.
- **Leader summary of Deuteronomy 1:34–3:22** — The oath against the unbelieving generation; the failed presumptuous attack; peaceful passage past Edom, Moab, and Ammon; victory over Sihon and Og; land east of the Jordan.
- **Reader 3: Deuteronomy 3:23–28** (focal passage) — Moses pleads to cross; God says "Enough" and sends him up Pisgah to look.

Anchor Verses (ESV)

Deuteronomy 1:30–31: 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 3:26–28: But the LORD was angry with me because of you and would not listen to me. And the LORD said to me, 'Enough from you; do not speak to me of this matter again. Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes westward and northward and southward and eastward, and look at it with your eyes, for you shall not go over this Jordan. But charge Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he shall go over at the head of this people, and he shall put them in possession of the land that you shall see.'

Teaching Narrative: The Road from Horeb to Moab

1. Eleven Days, Forty Years (Deuteronomy 1:1–8)

Deuteronomy opens with a heading, "These are the words" (1:1), and a string of place names that locate Moses' sermon east of the Jordan. Then comes a detail that is easy to pass by. The journey from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea takes eleven days (1:2), yet Moses is speaking in the fortieth year (1:3). A trip of less than two weeks became a journey of forty years, and the rest of chapters 1–3 explains why: unbelief.

Moses begins his retelling at Horeb, where God told Israel, in effect, that they had stayed long enough at this mountain (1:6). It was time to move. God set the land before them and told them to go in and take possession of what he had sworn to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their offspring (1:8). From its first lines, the book leans forward toward the land, and the promise to the fathers in Genesis stands behind every step.

2. Shared Leadership (Deuteronomy 1:9–18)

Before the people left Horeb, Moses admitted that he could not carry them alone (1:9–12). God had multiplied them, just as he promised, and the weight of their disputes was too much for one man. So Moses appointed wise leaders and judges from among the tribes (1:13–15; compare Exodus 18). His charge to them was simple and searching: judge fairly, treat the small and the great alike, and fear no one, because the judgment belongs to God (1:16–17). A people on the move toward God's promise needs faithful leadership shared among many.

3. Kadesh at the Center (Deuteronomy 1:19–46)

The heart of Moses' retelling is Kadesh-barnea. After crossing the wilderness, Israel reached the edge of the land. The people proposed sending men ahead to scout it, and Moses agreed (1:22–23). The spies came back with fruit in their hands and a clear report: it is a good land that the LORD our God is giving us (1:25). The evidence was right in front of them. Yet the people refused to go up. They murmured in their tents and reached a shocking conclusion: the LORD had brought them out of Egypt because he hated them (1:26–27). The cities were walled, the people were taller, and their hearts melted (1:28).

Notice what Moses names as the real problem. It is not simply that the people felt afraid; walled cities and strong enemies are frightening. The problem is that they refused to trust God despite everything they had already seen him do. Moses answered their fear with the character of God: the LORD goes before them, he will fight for them as he did in Egypt, and in the wilderness he carried them "as a man carries his son" (1:30–31). Even so, they did not trust him (1:32).

The consequences were serious. The LORD swore that this generation would not see the good land, except Caleb and Joshua (1:34–38). Then, when the people realized what they had lost, they swung to the opposite mistake. They armed themselves and attacked the hill country after God had told them not to go, and they were routed (1:41–46). Action without God's word proved just as empty as fear without trust.

4. The God of Every Nation (Deuteronomy 2:1–23)

After Kadesh, Israel spent many years circling the hill country of Seir, and during those years the old generation died out, just as the LORD had sworn (2:1, 14–16). Then God turned his people north with careful instructions. They were not to take land from Edom, the descendants of Esau, or from Moab and Ammon, the descendants of Lot, because the LORD himself had given those nations their lands (2:5, 9, 19). Short notes in the chapter even describe earlier peoples who once lived in those territories (2:10–12, 20–23).

The point is easy to miss but important. The LORD is not a local god who cares only about Israel's territory. He gives lands to other peoples too. He rules every nation.

5. Victory at God's Word (Deuteronomy 2:24–3:11)

Next Israel came to the kingdom of Sihon, king of Heshbon. Moses first sent him words of peace, asking only to pass through and to pay for food and water (2:26–29). Sihon refused, and the text says the LORD hardened his spirit (2:30). Israel defeated Sihon, and then Og, king of Bashan, whose oversized bed Moses mentions as a memorable detail (3:11). These chapters describe the battles in the hard language of ancient warfare, including towns "devoted to destruction" (2:34; 3:6). They were specific, time-bound commands tied to God's promise of the land, and they raise real questions a group can acknowledge honestly.

Moses' main point, though, is a contrast. In chapter 1 Israel attacked without God's word and was defeated. In chapters 2–3 Israel went at God's word and won. The difference was not the army's strength. It was trust and obedience.

6. Moses' Plea (Deuteronomy 3:12–29)

The land east of the Jordan was given to Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, on the condition that their fighting men would cross over with the rest of Israel (3:12–20). Joshua was told not to fear, because the LORD would fight for his people (3:21–22).

Then Moses shares something deeply personal. He pleaded with God to let him cross over and see the good land beyond the Jordan (3:23–25). God's answer was no: "Enough from you" (3:26). Yet God did not leave Moses empty-handed. He told him to climb to the top of Pisgah and look at the land in every direction, and to charge, encourage, and strengthen Joshua, who would lead the people in (3:27–28). Moses would see the promise even though he would not enter it.

The chapter ends with a quiet but loaded detail: Israel remained in the valley opposite Beth-peor (3:29). That was the place of Israel's painful sin with the Baal of Peor (Numbers 25), and Moses will raise that memory in his very next breath (4:3–4).

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.3)

1.3 Q1: At Kadesh the people saw a good land and still concluded that God hated them (1:27). How can a person look at real evidence of God's goodness and still read his intentions wrongly?

1.3 Q2: Moses describes God as carrying Israel "as a man carries his son" (1:31). What does this picture add to your understanding of the wilderness years?

1.3 Q3: The failed attack (1:41–46) and the victories over Sihon and Og (2:24–3:11) look like similar actions with opposite outcomes. What made the difference?

1.3 Q4: Moses pleads honestly, and God says no while still showing him the land and providing Joshua. What do you notice about how God answers Moses?

Section 1.4

Movement 2: Hear and Take Care (Deuteronomy 4:1–43)

Passage **Deuteronomy 4:1–43**

Guided Scripture Reading

Open your Bible to **Deuteronomy 4**. Read aloud in this order:

- **Reader 1: Deuteronomy 4:1–9** (focal passage) — "And now, O Israel, listen": do not add or subtract; Baal-peor remembered; the law as Israel's wisdom; a God so near; take care and teach your children.
- **Reader 2: Deuteronomy 4:10–24** — Horeb: fire, a voice, and no form; the ban on every kind of image; the LORD a consuming fire.
- **Reader 3: Deuteronomy 4:25–31** — Warning of exile; promise that those who seek God with all their heart will find him.
- **Reader 4: Deuteronomy 4:32–40** (focal passage) — Has any people heard God's voice and lived? The LORD is God; there is no other.
- **Leader summary of Deuteronomy 4:41–43** — Three cities of refuge set apart east of the Jordan.

Anchor Verses (ESV)

Deuteronomy 4:1–2: “And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you.

Deuteronomy 4:9: “Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children—

Deuteronomy 4:12–13: Then the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of words, but saw no form; there was only a voice. And he declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments, and he wrote them on two tablets of stone.

Deuteronomy 4:29–31: But from there you will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, you will return to the LORD your God and obey his voice. For the LORD your God is a merciful God. He will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them.

Teaching Narrative: Listen, Remember, and Take Care

1. "And Now" (Deuteronomy 4:1–8)

Chapter 4 opens with two small words that turn the whole sermon: "And now" (4:1). Moses has finished retelling history; now he draws out what that history means. Because of everything God has done, Israel must listen to his statutes and rules and do them, so that they may live and take possession of the land. In the shape of an ancient treaty, this is the turn from the historical prologue to the stipulations: here is what God has done, so here is how to respond.

Moses adds a warning: do not add to the word he commands, and do not take anything from it (4:2; compare Revelation 22:18–19). Then he points to Baal-peor. Israel had seen with their own eyes what happened to those who followed the Baal of Peor, while those who held fast to the LORD were still alive that day (4:3–4). Obeying God's statutes, Moses says, will be Israel's wisdom and understanding in the sight of the nations (4:6). And what other nation has a god so near to it as the LORD is to Israel whenever they call on him (4:7)?

2. Take Care, Lest You Forget (Deuteronomy 4:9–14)

Verse 9 is a hinge for the whole week: "Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget." Keeping God's word begins with guarding one's own soul and memory. The things Israel's eyes had seen were not to slip from their hearts as the years went by. And memory does not stay private for long. Moses immediately adds: make them known to your children and your children's children (4:9).

Then he takes the people back to the day at Horeb (4:10–14). God gathered them to hear his words so that they would learn to fear him and teach their children. The mountain burned with fire, and the LORD spoke out of the midst of it. The people heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice (4:12). God declared his covenant, the Ten Commandments (in Hebrew, literally "the ten words"), and wrote them on two tablets of stone (4:13). The Hebrew phrase fits the scene: the covenant came as words to hear, not a form to see.

3. No Image of Any Kind (Deuteronomy 4:15–24)

Because Israel saw no form at Horeb, they were not to make a form of God. Moses lists every possibility: an image of a man or a woman, an animal, a bird, a creeping thing, or a fish (4:16–18). He also warns against looking up at the sun, moon, and stars and being drawn away to worship them (4:19). Read the list slowly and you may notice that it runs the creatures of Genesis 1 in reverse. Idolatry turns creation upside down, worshiping created things instead of the Creator (compare Romans 1:23).

Why does this matter so much? Across Israel's world, gods were worshiped through statues. Deuteronomy insists that the LORD makes himself known by his word, not by an object people can shape, carry, or control. Moses closes this warning with a sobering description: the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God (4:24). His jealousy is not petty envy. It is the rightful zeal of a faithful covenant partner who will not share his people's devotion with idols.

4. Exile and Return (Deuteronomy 4:25–31)

Moses then looks honestly into the future. He expects that in later generations, after Israel has grown comfortable in the land, they will make idols and provoke the LORD. If they do, they will be scattered among the nations (4:25–28). That is a sobering word to hear before the people even cross the Jordan.

But Moses does not end there. Even from exile, if Israel seeks the LORD with all their heart and soul, they will find him (4:29). In their distress they will return and listen to his voice, for the LORD their God is a merciful God (4:30–31). He will not leave them, destroy them, or forget the covenant he swore to their fathers. Israel may forget; God will not. This short passage previews the arc of the whole book (compare chapters 28–30): blessing, failure, exile, and return.

5. There Is No Other (Deuteronomy 4:32–40)

Moses invites Israel to search all of history, from the day God created humanity on the earth and from one end of heaven to the other. Has anything like this ever happened? Has any people heard the voice of God speaking out of the fire and lived? Has any god ever taken a nation for himself from the midst of another nation (4:32–34)? The answer is no. Israel was shown these things so that they would know that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him (4:35).

Moses grounds it all in love: because the LORD loved their fathers, he chose their offspring and brought them out of Egypt by his own presence and great power (4:37). So the chapter closes where it began, with a call to know it, lay it to heart, and keep God's statutes, so that it may go well with them and their children and they may live long in the land (4:39–40).

6. Mercy Built into the Land (Deuteronomy 4:41–43)

Finally comes a brief narrative note. Moses sets apart three cities east of the Jordan, Bezer, Ramoth in Gilead, and Golan, where a person who killed a neighbor unintentionally, without prior hatred, could flee and live (4:41–43). Even before Israel crosses the river, mercy is built into the map of the land. These cities of refuge return in Week 4.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.4)

1.4 Q1: Moses says obeying God's statutes will be Israel's wisdom in the sight of the nations (4:6). What would it look like for a community's faithfulness to be visible wisdom to its neighbors today?

1.4 Q2: "Take care... lest you forget" (4:9). What causes people to forget what God has done, and what practices help them remember?

1.4 Q3: At Horeb Israel heard a voice and saw no form, so they were to make no image. Why might an image of God be a danger even when someone means well?

1.4 Q4: The same chapter calls God "a consuming fire, a jealous God" (4:24) and "a merciful God" (4:31). How do these descriptions fit together?

1.4 Q5: Moses commands parents to make God's works known to their children and grandchildren. Who in your life passed faith on to you, and what role can everyone in a church play in that?

Section 1.5

Canonical Horizon: Memory, Horeb, and the God Who Speaks

Passage **Deuteronomy 4:39**

Tracing the Thread Across Scripture

Moses' first sermon does not stand alone. Its memories, its mountain, and its voice echo across the whole Bible and come to their fullness in Jesus Christ. Turn to each passage as we trace the thread together.

1. The God Who Speaks Rather Than Shows (John 1:14–18; Hebrews 1:1–3)

At Horeb Israel heard a voice and saw no form. That voice did not fall silent. God kept speaking through the prophets, and Hebrews 1:1–3 says that in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son. John tells us that no one has ever seen God, but the only God, who is at the Father's side, has made him known (John 1:18). The Word who spoke from the fire became flesh, and his glory was seen (John 1:14).

2. The True Image (Colossians 1:15; 2 Corinthians 4:4–6)

Deuteronomy 4 forbids Israel to make any image of God. That ban protects a place that only God's own Image can fill. Paul calls Christ "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15) and speaks of the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4–6). Meanwhile, Romans 1:22–23 describes human idolatry in the very categories of Deuteronomy 4:16–18: images of people, birds, animals, and creeping things. People cannot craft an image that tells the truth about God. God has given his own.

3. The Mountain of Fire and Mount Zion (Hebrews 12:18–29)

Hebrews 12 contrasts two mountains. Believers have not come to a burning, terrifying mountain like the one Israel stood before at Horeb. They have come to Mount Zion and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant. Yet the same passage closes by quoting Deuteronomy 4:24: "our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). Grace brings us near, but it does not make God less holy.

4. The Father Who Carries (Deuteronomy 1:31; Hosea 11:1–3; Isaiah 46:3–4)

Moses reminded Israel that God carried them through the wilderness as a man carries his son (1:31). Hosea remembers God calling his son Israel out of Egypt and teaching him to walk (Hosea 11:1–3), and Isaiah hears God promise to carry his people from birth to old age (Isaiah 46:3–4). Matthew applies Hosea's words to Jesus (Matthew 2:15), who calls Israel's story his own. The God who carried Israel is the Father revealed in the Son.

5. Where Israel Failed, the Son Is Faithful (Matthew 4:1–11)

Israel was tested forty years in the wilderness and failed again and again. Jesus was tested forty days in the wilderness, and he answered the tempter three times with words from Deuteronomy (8:3; 6:16; 6:13). Where the wilderness generation doubted God's goodness, the Son trusted his Father's word and stood firm.

6. Today, If You Hear His Voice (Psalm 95:7–11; Hebrews 3:7–4:11)

Psalm 95 holds up the wilderness generation as a warning to every generation: today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. Hebrews 3–4 carries that warning to the church. The Kadesh generation did not enter God's rest because of unbelief, and even Joshua did not give the final rest. A Sabbath rest still remains for the people of God (Hebrews 4:8–9).

7. A Greater Leader Than Moses (Hebrews 3:1–6; Matthew 17:1–8)

Hebrews says Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, but Christ is faithful over God's house as a Son (Hebrews 3:5–6). And Moses' unanswered plea has a remarkable sequel. On the mountain of transfiguration, Moses, once barred from the land, stands on a mountain in the land with Jesus (Matthew 17:1–8), speaking of his "departure" (Luke 9:30–31).

8. Exile, Return, and the Oath That Holds (Deuteronomy 4:29–31; Hebrews 6:13–18)

Moses promised that even after exile, those who seek God with all their heart will find him, because he will not forget the covenant he swore to their fathers (4:29–31). Hebrews 6:13–18 points to God's oath to Abraham as an unchangeable anchor of hope. God's oath to the fathers anchors hope after failure, and the gospel announces the true return through Christ.

Anchor Verse (ESV)

> **Deuteronomy 4:39:** know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.5)

1.5 Q1: Israel heard God's voice but saw no form; in Jesus, the Word became flesh and was seen (John 1:14–18). How does Jesus fulfill what Horeb began without undoing the ban on images?

1.5 Q2: Hebrews 12 says Christians come to Mount Zion rather than a mountain of fire, yet "our God is a consuming fire." How should both truths shape the way we approach God?

1.5 Q3: Jesus answered temptation in the wilderness with words from Deuteronomy. What does that suggest about how Scripture he had learned shaped him, and how it can shape us?

Personal & Group Application (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD	Moses retold the journey so the new generation would know who God is: the One who goes before, fights, carries, speaks, and keeps his oath.
HEART	God's people are called to trust the God who carried them, even when the road was long and the answer was sometimes no.
HANDS	Remembering is an action: telling God's works aloud, guarding our hearts against forgetting, and passing faith on to the next generation.

Section 1.6

Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer

Application

Take a few minutes to move this week's study into everyday life. Discuss these three questions together and write down what you want to remember:

1.6 Q1: Looking back over your own journey, where can you see God going before you or carrying you, even if you did not notice it at the time?

1.6 Q2: What is one thing in your life that most easily crowds out remembering God's word, and what is one way to guard against it this week?

1.6 Q3: Who in the next generation (in your family, church, or neighborhood) could you tell one story of God's faithfulness to, and when?

Looking Ahead to Next Week

Recap: In Week 1, Moses retold the road from Horeb to Moab, centered on the unbelief at Kadesh and the God who carried his people, then called Israel to listen, take care, reject every image, and remember that the LORD is God and there is no other.

Transition: Moses has reminded Israel that at Horeb God declared "the ten words" (4:13) and that they must seek him "with all your heart and with all your soul" (4:29). Next week he begins his second speech and restates those words in full.

Week 2 Overview — Love the LORD Your God (Deuteronomy 4:44–11:32): This is the longest week of the study, eight chapters of covenant sermon. Movement 1, The Ten Words and the Shema (4:44–6:25), covers the Ten Commandments restated, the people's request for Moses to mediate, and the Shema, "Hear, O Israel." Movement 2, Circumcise Your Heart (7:1–11:32), covers Israel chosen by love and not by size, "man does not live by bread alone," not because of your righteousness, the golden calf remembered, and the call to circumcise the heart. The Canonical Horizon traces Jesus and the Shema and the new-covenant heart. Because the stretch is long, the group will read selected focal passages together.

Focal Readings to Preview

- Deuteronomy 5:1–6
- Deuteronomy 6:4–9
- Deuteronomy 7:6–9
- Deuteronomy 8:1–3
- Deuteronomy 10:12–22

My One Concrete Step for the Week Ahead

Write down or name aloud the specific rhythm, boundary, or conversation you want to practice before next week's gathering:

Closing Prayer

Close your time together by inviting each person to share a one-sentence takeaway or prayer request, then pray together along these lines:

Closing Group Prayer

Closing Group Prayer Faithful God, we thank you that you went before your people Israel, fought for them, and carried them through the wilderness as a father carries his son. Thank you for carrying us too, often in ways we did not notice at the time. We confess that we forget. Like Israel at Kadesh, we sometimes look at real evidence of your goodness and still doubt your heart toward us. Forgive us. Give us hearts that listen to your word and take care, so that we do not forget what our eyes have seen. Thank you that you have not left us with silence or with images of our own making, but have spoken fully in your Son, Jesus Christ, the image of the invisible God. Give us grace this week to pass on your works to the next generation, in our homes, in our church, and in our neighborhoods. In Jesus' name, Amen.