

VEAD OF THE DIDLE

Leviticus-Deuteronomy Challenge | FEBRUARY

Leviticus thru Deuteronomy

VERSE OF THE BOBLE

Leviticus-Deuteronomy Challenge | FEBRUARY

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YEAR OF THE BIBLE

Provide the section of the

the devo, read through the chapters of Scripture that go along with the devo. This issue contains 25 devos—that means reading a devo a day, with a few days off every month. It leaves room for about one day off per week—one Sabbath rest. And if you stick with us from January to December, we're going to read the Bible cover-to-cover together and learn a whole lot about who God is and His great love for us.

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Day_**31** Leviticus_**01-03**

Gifts for God

[GOD'S STORY] God calls to Moses from the tabernacle, and dust-made man and Deity meet. God tells Moses about the different kinds of offerings His people can voluntarily give Him at the worship tent when they want to draw near to Him.

The burnt offering is completely consumed on the altar, rising up to God in heat and aroma and praise. An Israelite is to bring what they can afford—a bull, a ram, or a bird—to the tabernacle and slaughter it. The life of the animal is seen as a symbolic substitute: It covers the Israelite as they draw near to the Holy One's presence.

The grain offering is to be yeastless grain—raw, baked, or fried. Part is to be consumed by fire on the bronze altar for God. The rest is to be given to the priests for food.

The fellowship offering is a shared meal. The choicest of fats of the sacrifice are to be burned on the altar, consumed by God. A portion of the meat is to be given to the priests, with the rest of the meat going to the offerer to be eaten by family and friends (see Leviticus 7:15-18).

[GOD'S HEART] Of the five kinds of offerings prescribed in Leviticus 1–7, only two are to be given as atonement for sin. The majority of sacrifices are God-gifts from worshiping hearts wanting to draw near and thank Him. As the smoke rose from the altar, it was a picture—a worshiper's heart was rising in awe and praise to God.

"I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6). It was not the offering that God longed for, but rather the tender heart turned toward Him.

Very little is more precious to our good King than a heart that loves Him. Our best efforts and deeds—our offerings—are empty and tepid when devoid of passion. When the love song of our hearts rises to God's throne, we bring Him great joy.

[INSIGHT] Sacrificing a bull as an offering would be the financial equivalent today of offering a new car. Most often common people would bring a dove, and poorer Hebrews would bring a grain offering to serve as their proxy. Even though no lifeblood was poured on the altar with a grain offering, God received the poor person's grain offering as if they had offered their own souls. God simply wanted His people to draw near to Him.

More Gifts for God

[GOD'S STORY] God continues to tell Moses about the offerings His people are to bring Him at the tabernacle, explaining the two that are required as a result of sin.

The sin offering is to be made when an Israelite sins unintentionally. The Hebrew word for "unintentionally" means "wandering away"—as a sheep might wander from the flock. It refers to general sin that was born from the weakness of human character—not outright rebellion.

The guilt offering is required when a person becomes ritually unclean or when a person commits a sin that injures someone else. Guilt offerings would require not only a sacrifice, but also restitution to the person who had been injured, and a fine of twenty percent.

God then reviews the offerings from the perspective of Aaron and his sons, the priests. He reminds them that a burnt offering should always be on the altar. To ensure a continual burnt offering, an animal is to be offered in the morning as the first sacrifice of the day, and another should be offered as the last sacrifice of the day and kept burning all night.

[GOD'S HEART] As the priests performed their daily duties, the offering blood was sprinkled and poured on the altars—sometimes on the bronze altar outside of the tabernacle proper, sometimes on the altar of incense inside the Holy Place, directly in front of the curtain behind which God's Presence dwelled.

And in that moment, the earthly touched the holy. God did something mystical: He made the offering sacred. He made it so it affected something in the spiritual realm—it became sufficient to cover over the people's sin. Animals are just animals, blood is just blood, unless the sovereign God deems them otherwise.

Yes, every animal, every grain, every offering was a gift from an Israelite to God. But their effectiveness was a gift from Him to them. Every animal offered was already His anyway; the Owner of everything has no need for sacrifices.

We approach the Holy God not through our efforts. Our efforts are unnecessary to the God of all power and ability. We approach the Holy God because He, the loving Controller of all, allows us to. He wants us to.

[INSIGHT] According to ancient Jewish tradition, the priests rose early in the morning to wait for the burnt offering of the night before to be completely consumed. As the last ash fell on the bronze altar, tradition says that the watching priests would blow special trumpets and shout: "It is finished!" It is no coincidence that those were the last words of Jesus, our sacrificial Lamb.

The Sacrifice God Accepts

[GOD'S STORY] God tells Moses that it's time to ordain the priests to serve in His tabernacle.

Gathering all of the people at the tabernacle, Moses brings Aaron and his sons forward. The entire nation is to witness this weighty God-call. Moses clothes Aaron and his sons with their priestly garments, anoints Aaron and the altars with oil, and slaughters the sacrifices to cover over the priesthood and the altars. By God's command, Aaron and his sons, soaked and sealed with blood and oil, stay at the tabernacle entrance for seven days, lingering in the holiness, being atoned for.

On the eighth day, Moses commands the priests to offer the sacrifices for themselves and the people. They do. After Aaron pronounces God's blessing on them, God's glory appears, consuming the offerings with fire. God is pleased with what they have done. And the people celebrate.

That same day, two of Aaron's sons make an offering of incense that isn't prescribed by God. It is an egregious violation of holiness, and the two men die.

[GOD'S HEART] It was "unauthorized fire"—God hadn't commanded it to be offered. There was a sacrifice that was acceptable to Him, and He had already consumed it. This was unacceptable. And it cost two men their lives.

We often have the hearts of Nadab and Abihu. While the sacrifice that God accepts—Jesus—has already been consumed by God, we act as if there are other sacrifices that we should offer. We try to offer our own insufficient works—maybe if we work hard enough God will be pleased with us. When we do that, we insult the sacrifice that has already been made for us. We treat Jesus as if He is not enough. As Paul put it, *"I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!" (Galatians 2:21).*

When we turn our backs on Jesus, the acceptable sacrifice, we—like Nadab and Abihu—become the "sacrifice," so to speak, because the cost of sin must be paid (see Romans 6:23). But we don't need to. God provided Jesus, the acceptable sacrifice. May our works-weary hearts rest and trust in Him and Him alone. Our good God wants us to.

[INSIGHT] Oil is used to anoint kings and priests, but it also represents joy (see Psalm 45:7). When Aaron was anointed as high priest, he was dripping with joy. This is also one of the possible reasons why Aaron didn't want to eat the sin offering; with the loss of his sons, he wasn't able to eat it in a state of joy as offerings are supposed to be eaten.

God's Perfect Purity

[GOD'S STORY] God's tabernacle is a heaven snapshot—a glimpse into His sacred dwelling. It's the purest place on earth. But because this glimpse of heaven intersects fallen earth, God instructs Moses about certain conditions of fallenness that can't be allowed to come close to the tabernacle's purity. These conditions aren't sinful; they're simply impure. Yet they disqualify people for a time from being able to draw near to God's holy presence.

God specifies the foods that are clean and unclean—unclean foods are to be avoided. Because a woman bleeds during childbirth, a certain amount of time is required for her purification. And any time a person's uncleanness lasts over seven days, an offering is required to make atonement. The Lord gives Moses and Aaron guidelines for determining when skin conditions are unclean and when mildew is infectious, and He explains the proper cleansing rituals that must be performed to bring people back to a state of ritual purity. Bodily discharges also cause a person to be ritually impure.

God is holy, His sacred dwelling is holy, and He has provided a way for His people to draw near to Him.

[GOD'S HEART] Heaven, God's home, is a place of purity and wholeness. Thriving life. Perfect goodness and beauty.

Earth, our home, has been ravaged by the fall. Disease infects, mold decays, rust deteriorates. These are rancid violations, misfits.

In the ritual impurity commands, God is calling His people's attention to the discrepancy. He is saying, "Here are the things that do not fit in My presence." He's lifting His people's eyes to His wholeness and holiness. It's a calling up, a peek into home. Like orphans living in a trash heap, God's people needed to know they were infected with an uncleanness just by living in the fallenness.

Heaven is different because its King is different. God's people needed to see and sense the difference. When we get to heaven, we'll recognize the discrepancy too. And we'll praise the holy King.

[INSIGHT] Matthew 8:1-4 tells of the time Jesus encountered a man with leprosy—a man who, because of his disease, was required by the Law of Moses to be ostracized (see Leviticus 13:45-46). Because Jesus has all authority, He could have chosen to heal the man with a mere word. But He didn't. Jesus chose to touch him. It was a monumental gesture, the gospel in a moment. Motivated by a deep love, purity incarnate touched and healed disease, taking on the uncleanness Himself.

Day_**35** Leviticus_**16–17**

The God Who Inspires Angel Awe

[GOD'S STORY] There's a prescribed way to approach God's holy presence—the Pure One must not be approached irreverently.

God tells Moses that one day a year Aaron is permitted to go behind the thick veil in the Holy Place and enter the Most Holy Place—the sacred back room that contains the ark of the covenant. Aaron must enter with smoking incense and blood. Smoking incense to cloud his view—it's not safe for a dust-made man to see the atonement cover, above which God's glory dwells. And blood to make atonement because of the people's impurity and sin.

Among several other sacrifices, two goats are also to be brought to the tabernacle. One of the goats will serve as a sacrifice to cover over the people's sin and purify the tabernacle. The other will have the sins of the nation confessed over it and then be led into the wilderness to carry them away.

On the solemn Day of Atonement, the Most Holy Place, the Holy Place, the altar, the priests, and the people are to be atoned for by the covering of blood.

[GOD'S HEART] "Don't look, Aaron. You can't handle it."

The atonement cover—the place where year after year the blood was sprinkled, covering over the sins of impure people, allowing them to draw near to the perfect purity of God. Something mysteriously sacred was happening with the blood and the atonement cover. It was the place of reconciliation between God and people. From the ends of the cover, two golden cherubim stare, frozen in a position of awe (see Exodus 25:17–22).

The Greek word for "atonement cover" is *bilasterion*. It's used in Leviticus 16 in the Greek translation of the Old Testament that the apostles and early church knew so well. The same word for "atonement cover" is used in Hebrews 9:5 and in Romans 3:25, where Paul says, "*God presented Christ as a [bilasterion], through the shedding of his blood*."

Jesus is the atonement cover—the place of reconciliation between the Most Holy God and impure human beings. God Himself, the pure One, paid for sin with His very own lifeblood to be the covering for sinful man.

No wonder the cherubim stare in awe.

[INSIGHT] The cherubim on both ends of the atonement cover are representatives of the thousands of living angels who worship around God's throne in awefilled praise. They loudly proclaim: *"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" (Revelation 5:12).* Deity blood has been spilled. And the angels are in awe.

The Atmosphere of God's Home

[GOD'S STORY] God wants His people to be His representatives. He is holy and good and He wants them to reflect that goodness in the way they live. God speaks to Moses to tell the Israelites that they are to live differently than the evil people of the world. He explains that even the land stands as witness to the dark wickedness of the people in the promised land—it vomited them out. And it will do the same to His people if they live wickedly.

God gives Moses commands to show the people what it looks like to live in a way that reflects His goodness and glory. They are not to have sex with relatives or animals. They aren't to murder their children in false-god worship or participate in the dark, dangerous practice of sorcery. They're to rest on the Sabbath, provide for the poor, pay fair wages, honor the elderly, and treat foreigners as equals.

God reminds the Israelites that they are set apart. They are to be people of integrity who distinguish between the clean and the unclean. They are to be holy because He is holy.

[GOD'S HEART] God wanted His people to follow His ways. And as they did, they'd experience the goodness that comes from living out His heart. Honest relationships would be safe. Words would have the assurance of meaning behind them—yes would be yes, no would be no. As people honored their marriage covenants, families would be strong. As God's people loved their neighbors and cared for the poor, they'd create a nation of security. When holiness is lived out, beauty and goodness spill out into the world like a beautiful fragrance.

But as God's people lived out His ways, they'd be experiencing more than the fragrant fruit of living rightly. "I am the God of heaven, and in My kingdom, things are done in goodness, in purity. While earth isn't quite like My kingdom in its fullness, integrity is still integrity. Purity is still purity. I want you to get used to the ways of My kingdom. Because My kingdom is going to be your home."

Goodness, love, and purity make up heaven's atmosphere. And God wanted His people to get used to the environment of their forever home.

[INSIGHT] In Leviticus 19:5–8, God commanded His people to eat the meat of fellowship offerings before the third day. On the third day, decomposition would set in, defiling the holiness of the sacrifice. On the morning of the third day, Jesus, the Great Offering, rose from the grave—defeating death. No decomposition could touch the Holy One.



A KINGDOM OF PROMISE

The Lord now said to Moses, "Send out men to explore the land of Canaan, the land I am giving to the Israelites." Numbers 13:12

IN WORD God made a promise long ago to Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph that He would bring His people out of Egypt and back into the land of their inheritance. He kept His promise by sending Moses back into Egypt on a mission of deliverance. Now, after bringing them through the waters and teaching them His will, the time had come for fulfillment. The people were now ready to enter the Promised Land.

Or were they? God instructs Moses to send twelve men into the land on a reconnaissance mission. Their assignment was not to determine whether the promise was valid; it was to strategize the conquest and settlement. After all, quite a few Canaanites already lived there. It might be good to have a plan when taking the land back from them. Somehow the spies misinterpreted their mission. They let their fears and their very human logic get the best of them. They forgot that the Promised Land was actually promised land. Even so, God would get His people there eventually. He does not neglect His own words, even when His people forget them or rebel against them. Yes, the generation of rebels missed the fulfillment, but the fulfillment still came. That's because God's Kingdom is based on the reliability of His own plans.

IN DEED That's good to know. We can miss many of the blessings of the Kingdom ourselves, but we can't mess up the Kingdom agenda. God is building it, fulfilling it, and blessing it, regardless of how we respond. When we pray for His Kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, the outcome is certain. We don't have to wonder if it's going to happen. God's promises never fail.

Mine God's Word for His promises. Don't let fear rob you of their fulfillment; let faith fill you with expectancy. The Kingdom is given to those bold enough to believe it, those who take God at His word and don't let go. Cling to the vision He has placed with you; it was put there for a reason.

On these [promises[we are to build all our expectations from God; and in all temptations and trials, we have them to rest our souls upon. — Matthew Henry

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God's Holy Days

[GOD'S STORY] Priests stand as earthly representatives of a holy God, so they must be holy themselves. God informs Moses of the ways Aaron and his sons are to conduct themselves. They are to live lives worthy of their high calling.

Since contact with death made a person unclean, priests must avoid all dead bodies, except when close relatives die. The high priest can never go near a dead body. Priests must be pure and they must marry pure women. And since deformity and defects don't exist in God's heavenly home, only men without bodily defect or injury can offer the sacred sacrifices on holy altars—and only blemish-free animals should be offered.

God shares the holy days He wants His people to honor—weekly Sabbath days, festivals, and sacred days throughout the year.

[GOD'S HEART] As God's people walked through the calendar, celebrating His holy days, they were walking through their destiny. God had written the story of their future—and ours as well—in their festivals.

Because years later, as the Israelites gathered to celebrate the Passover, Jesus —our Passover Lamb—was crucified. He, a sinless, leaven-free sacrifice, lay in the tomb on the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, while His people were eating their hard-times bread. He was raised from the dead, the first of God's harvest, as God's people were offering the first of their spring harvests during the Festival of Firstfruits. And seven weeks after Jesus' resurrection, the Holy Spirit descended powerfully on His followers as they celebrated the Festival of Weeks what became known as Pentecost.

There was a long gap in Israel's calendar between these first four special occasions and the three remaining ones—just as there is a gap in God's story, a gap in which we now live. But like the trumpet blasts at the Festival of Trumpets, one day there will be another trumpet, this time calling those who trusted Jesus—both the living and the dead—to meet Him in the air (see 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17). Soon after, judgment will come, represented by the Day of Atonement, when the sin-guilt of Jesus' followers will be completely and permanently absolved by His blood.

And we will celebrate for all eternity with God in heaven—the fulfillment of the seven-day Festival of Tabernacles—forever cleansed and free.

[INSIGHT] God wasn't discriminating against people with disabilities when He decreed that only the physically flawless could offer sacrifices. Though no priest could perfectly represent Him, priests were to be an image of God Himself. Brokenness would not do. In the meantime, priests with disabilities were able to remain at the tabernacle, eating the food of the sacrifices and performing some priestly duties.

God's Year of Jubilee

[GOD'S STORY] After the Israelites had received all of the laws designed to honor God's holiness, sadly one man, during a fight, blasphemes God's sacred name with a curse. Those who heard the vile words are to lay their hands on the evildoer's head, perhaps as a testimony against him, and then he is to be stoned. The somber punishment is carried out.

Before Moses descends from Mount Sinai, God explains a few more special observances for the nation. Every seven years, God's people are not to plant or harvest—they are only to eat what grows on its own. And God declares every fiftieth year a Year of Jubilee. During this land-resting year God's people are to release any fellow Israelites who have become indentured servants, forgive all debts, and return all property to its original owner. It is to be a full year of rest and celebration.

As a conclusion to His commands, God explains how He will bless His people beyond imagination as they accept Him as their God. And although the consequences of turning away from Him are dire, the instant people repent of their evil, He will forgive them.

[GOD'S HEART] Every fiftieth year, God wanted His people to shake off life's shackles.

He wanted debtors to have a clean start. He wanted people who had been forced to forfeit their land to get their home back. He wanted indentured servants to experience freedom. He wanted the exhausted to rest.

Sadly, we don't know the extent to which the nation of Israel actually celebrated the Year of Jubilee—or if they ever did. But God's heart hasn't changed.

The Year of Jubilee was a microcosm of what God is going to do in human history for His people. God isn't just going to usher in a Year of Jubilee, we will forever live in the wake of Jubilee.

One day God is going to break off the shackles this life has put on us. He will annihilate evil—including the sin that has kept us in bondage. We will never struggle with sin again. He will set us free from the shame in our hearts and replace it with deep love. The enemy who won't let us forget our sin and shame? God will permanently silence him (see Revelation 20:7-10). Work will be fulfilling; diseases will be healed. And we will never have to leave.

We will spend eternity in Jubilee with the Inventor of Jubilee.

[INSIGHT] At age five, Jewish children start their formal religious education—with the book of Leviticus. Learning about the heart of the holy God is seen as the utmost importance. Day_40 Numbers_01-04

God's Warriors

[GOD'S STORY] For the past year Israel had camped near Mount Sinai, where Moses had met with God and received the Law. Now the Lord speaks to him from the newly assembled tabernacle. God wants Moses to take a tribal tally of the men who are old enough to fight in the nation's army—except for the Levites, who are to be in charge of the tabernacle.

Since God has chosen to go with His people, they are to camp around the worship tent where His presence dwells—but with a specific arrangement: three tribes on each side of the tabernacle, with the priests and Levites directly surrounding it. When the nation marches out, the priests and Levites are to carry the tabernacle and its furnishings in the middle of the national march. God will be in the center of their encampment, their procession, and their hearts.

Moses presents the Levites to Aaron to help him and his sons serve at the tabernacle. The tabernacle responsibilities are divided up between the descendants of Levi's three sons.

[GOD'S HEART] More than two million men, women, and children encamp under banners and standards. They know their assignments. At God's signal, they march out in order.

God hasn't just created a nation: He has formed an army. By His lead and under His banner, His army will march through the wilderness to the promised land and do battle against the evil, dark enemies living there, claiming the territory for the rightful King.

God knew that an army would be necessary. The people living in the promised land weren't just enemies: they were enslaved, sick, puppets of evil. They worshiped idols—false "gods" masking powerful demonic forces—requiring child sacrifice and fornication as worship.

These evil forces were at war with God, out to defame Him and destroy the seed that would crush the serpent (see Genesis 3:15). And as part of that war, they'd seek to enslave God's people, just as they had enslaved the people living in the promised land. God knew this. Battles would need to be fought.

When we joined God's family, we joined His mission. We are—by the goodness of His guidance—to take the light of God's love and use it as a weapon against the strongholds of the kingdom of darkness. The dark kingdom is trespassing here, and with every step we take we're to claim territory for our good King. Because this is the King's country.

[INSIGHT] When the Israelites broke camp, the tribe of Judah in the east would lead, carrying their standards and banners. Judah means "praise." In God's economy, praise leads.

Day_**41** Numbers_**05–08**

The Divine Hug

[GOD'S STORY] From above the atonement cover and the frozen awe of the cherubim, God continues to speak to Moses from the Most Holy Place. If a man suspects his wife of adultery, he can bring her to the tabernacle and, under the guidance of the priest, have her drink water that will reveal her guilt or innocence. And if men or women want to dedicate themselves totally to the Lord for a time, there is a special vow they can take. God gives Aaron and his sons the words of the priestly blessing—He wants His love habitually lavished upon His people.

After Moses finishes setting up the tabernacle, the leaders of Israel's 12 tribes donate carts and oxen so that the tabernacle can be transported as the nation travels. And for 12 days—one day for each tribe—the leaders of Israel present monumentally generous offerings before the altar. It's time for its dedication. In the presence of all the people, Moses and Aaron purify and commission the Levites, and they go to work in God's holy dwelling place.

[GOD'S HEART] God could have chosen any words for Aaron to speak over His people. But He wanted them to regularly hear this: *"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace"* (Numbers 6:24-26).

In Jewish culture, a spoken blessing is considered a tangible gift, an impartation. As Aaron stood before the people, raising his hands and speaking the blessing over them, their heads would be bowed in an act of humble receiving. God was speaking these realities into His people, pushing His love into their hearts. This blessing is a divine hug.

God's face turned toward and shining on His people is His smile. The "peace" the blessing speaks of is *shalom*. It's not solely an inner peace, it is physical wholeness and complete well-being.

God wanted His people to continually stand in the warmth of His love and delight, and for His poured-out love and graciousness to bring them peace and wholeness. He wanted His love to be their security and their identity. Each time the blessing was spoken, it was a proclamation from God's heart: "I love you. You are Mine. And I am taking care of you."

[INSIGHT] The lampstand Aaron tended to daily might be a picture of one that burns before God's throne (see Revelation 4:5).

God's Constant Presence

[GOD'S STORY] Soon after celebrating the first anniversary of the Passover, God's glory cloud lifts from above the tabernacle. The people know what this means—it's time to march. The nation leaves Mount Sinai, following God's guiding cloud.

Some of the people begin to grumble about their hard life. Angered, God sends fire on the outskirts of the camp. The complainers-turned-cowards cry out to Moses, who asks God to relent. He does.

But the Lord is angered once again when some people start whining about how they're sick of eating manna. Unnerved, Moses cries out to God about the overwhelming burden of leading a whiner-nation. To help Moses lead the infantile people, God pours out His Spirit on 70 of the people's leaders. He also sends a torrential rain of quail. The meat-cravers get their fill, but for many it's their last meal because they also get a plague.

Miriam and Aaron grow jealous that their brother Moses is the one God speaks through. So they use Moses' marriage to a foreign woman as grounds to criticize him. God hears their nonsense and calls them before His presence and vouches for Moses' spiritual pedigree. The Lord is protective of His friend.

[GOD'S HEART] If God's people ever started to wonder if He was with them, all they had to do was look to the tabernacle to see His glory cloud dwelling there. God wanted His people to have a visible, physical reminder of His presence to anchor their questioning souls.

We're a little removed from the days of God's glory-cloud presence, but we have definitive assurance of His presence too. *"I am with you always"* Jesus promised (Matthew 28:20). And God has moved as close as He can to us—He lives within us through His Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:22).

God's presence in and with us is as sure as a glory cloud. If we could see how that looks in the spiritual realm, our minds would be boggled by the sight. Perhaps that's why God keeps His presence invisible. He's protecting us from short-circuiting.

Jesus, teach us to live with a powerful awareness of Your constant presence. May we be people who live in tandem with You.

[INSIGHT] One fine day, the clouds and trumpets will announce something incredible to us just like they did for the Israelites. Jesus "will come down from beaven . . . with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever" (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17).

The Day God Was Insulted

[GOD'S STORY] God instructs Moses to send a 12-man scouting party to the promised land. During their 40-day expedition they scope out the land, taking samples of the giant-sized food eaten by the giant-sized people living there. The men present the scouting report to the nation, and ten of the spies spread the message that the promised land's inhabitants are just too powerful to defeat.

Sliding into a faithless fear, the Israelites wail that night—even proposing that they go back to Egypt. But Joshua and Caleb, the two other spies, appeal to the people, pleading with them to trust God. The mutinous nation is about to stone their leaders when God's majestic and powerful glory appears at the tabernacle. Enough! God wants to destroy His faithless people.

Moses begs God to spare them, and God relents. But He vows that not one Israelite who saw His miraculous acts in Egypt and the wilderness, yet chose to disbelieve Him, would ever set foot in the promised land. The scouts who had spread the bad report quickly die of a plague.

In a desperate move, the next morning the people set out to try to take the promised land. But God's presence doesn't go with them. They're routed.

[GOD'S HEART] God's people didn't know Him. They had seen Him stop the hearts of the firstborn sons of Egypt, while "passing over" them, and had watched Him drown the world's strongest army. They had trembled at His voice at Mount Sinai and woke up every morning to His daily bread delivery. He had vowed to be their God—to protect them and provide for their every need.

Yet when they heard of the strength of the people in the promised land, they got scared. Their fear revealed their belief. Their hearts were convinced that the Creator would get thumped by His own creations. The Israelites failed to believe and trust in the Great Rescuer's power.

It was insulting. God's passion had been to show His people who He was. And they didn't know Him at all.

Worry is an insult to God—we're living as if something is mightier than He is. But our trust in Him reveals that we know who He is. And for the God who longs for us to know His good heart, trust is the most precious gift of all.

[INSIGHT] In obedience to God's command in Numbers 15:38, Jesus would have worn tassels on the corners of His garment. In Jesus' day, some people believed that the tassels of the garments of holy men had healing powers. Perhaps that's why the woman with the issue of blood grabbed the corner of Jesus' cloak (see Mark 5:24-34).



A Kingdom of Faith

Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. "Let's go at once to take the land," he said. "We can certainly conquer it!" Numbers 13:30

In Word God puts His promises out there, but they usually apply only to those who accept them. That's because faith is the currency of His Kingdom—like dollars in the United States or euros across the Atlantic. You can't get much of anything in God's Kingdom without believing what He has said. Salvation, a transformed heart, an answer to prayer—all are given to those who believe. Those who don't may receive many common blessings in spite of themselves, but they don't receive the Kingdom. Faith is the key to fulfillment. Joshua and Caleb were the only two spies who lives were extended long enough to receive what God had pledged to give. Why? Because they believed when everyone else thought they were being foolish. Being perceived as arrogant, naive, presumptuous, and out of touch with reality didn't faze them. They anchored themselves in what God had promised, knowing that the God of promise doesn't lie.

We see this dynamic in the ministry of Jesus often. "Your faith has healed you" and "if you have faith" are commonly repeated phrases in His encounters with those who needed His touch. The clear implication is that without faith, the outcome would have been different. That doesn't mean that every time a prayer goes unanswered, the asker didn't have enough faith. Kingdom life is more complex than that. But it does mean faith is very often the difference between receiving and not receiving.

IN DEED Kingdom citizens are, above all, people of faith. We understand that the King responds to those who trust Him, who hang on His every word, who reject the opinions of others for the sake of His faithfulness. We apply our faith not only to what He has promised but also to what He has instructed and what He has done. We accept it all because it comes from Him. That kind of faith is transforming, fulfilling, and entirely pleasing to Him. And it's always eventually rewarded.

I do not want merely to possess faith; I want a faith that possesses me.

— Charles Kingsley

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Day_**45** Numbers_**17–20**

The Failure of God's Faithful Friend

[GOD'S STORY] To silence the people questioning Aaron's leadership, God instructs Moses to gather 12 staffs, one from each of Israel's tribal leaders. Moses places the staffs in front of the ark of the covenant, before God's presence. The next morning, God has brought life to Aaron's dead staff. It has sprouted like an almond tree—buds, blossoms, almonds, and all. God has spoken. His favor rests on Aaron.

God tells Aaron that he and his sons are in charge of the holy offerings and that, as a gift from Him, they are to live off the offerings the nation gives. While Aaron and the Levites won't have land in their family name, they'll have something better—the Lord. He will be their portion.

At Kadesh, the people grumble because of thirst. God commands Moses to speak to a rock to draw water out of it, but in anger and frustration Moses strikes the rock twice with his staff. It's an irreverent act against God's holiness, and God tells Moses that it disqualifies him from leading the Israelites into the promised land. Aaron, a partner with his brother in this breach against the Lord's holiness, is punished too. After passing the mantle of the high priest to his son Eleazar, Aaron dies.

[GOD'S HEART] It seems like harsh punishment. "*The Lord said to Moses* and Aaron, 'Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them'" (Numbers 20:12).

Even though Moses didn't get to lead the people into the promised land, he did get to enter it. God did not forget His faithful friend. Years later, the Egypt-deliverer stood on the Mount of Transfiguration with the ultimate Deliverer (see Matthew 17:1-3). Moses was standing on a piece of the promised land with Jesus, God Himself. And just like Moses spoke with God face to face (see Exodus 33:11), he spoke with Jesus face to face. In fact, the transfigured Jesus radiated light—the same deity-light that reflected on Moses' face when he came down from spending time with God on Mount Sinai (see Exodus 34:29-30).

God had always met with His friend, and it seems that He continued to do so.

[INSIGHT] The slaughter of the red heifer was the only sacrifice that was offered outside the camp (see Numbers 19). The red heifer's ashes were used to cleanse people from death contamination. Jesus was killed outside the gates of Jerusalem (see Hebrews 13:11-13). He is the ultimate sacrifice for death contamination.

The Healer God

[GOD'S STORY] The whiner-nation complains again of hunger and thirst, their selective memories somehow convincing them that they miss Egypt. Angered, God sends deadly poisonous snakes into the camp. Now the grumblers really have something to complain about. Many people die. Moses intercedes and God instructs him to put a bronze snake on top of a pole. Whoever raises their sight to look upon the bronze snake is healed from the snakebites.

Soon after, enemies attack. One enemy, Balak, the king of Moab, tries to hire Balaam, a well-known seer, to curse God's people. Though Balaam isn't a God-follower, the Lord speaks clearly to him—even through a donkey. God's people are not to be cursed.

At Moab, God's people fall sickeningly low by participating in the sex-worship of Moabite fertility gods. Revolted, God commands that the idolaters be killed and sends a plague against the people. Twenty-four thousand Israelites die before Aaron's grandson, Phinehas, stops the plague by killing an Israelite man and a Midianite woman engaged in a sex act near God's holy tabernacle.

[GOD'S HEART] The snakebites made the Israelites' deadly sin condition obvious. They had cell-killing poison coursing through their bloodstreams—just as their black, sinful condition contaminated their souls. Sinfully, God's people had just wanted to go back to Egypt, turning away from God—a desire that would only lead to death. The snake poison physically demonstrated the deadly sin that lived within them. It infected them in ways they couldn't control, and they were helpless to cure themselves.

God provided the remedy in the serpent on the pole. The serpent pole was most likely stationary. Only the people who recognized their need, believed in God's cure, and took the steps to look at it would be healed. A person who wanted healing had to take initiative, mill through the multitude to the pole, and look up. The instant they looked up at the pole and believed, God neutralized the cell-killing poison.

The bronze serpent didn't cure the people. God did. God's power alone can heal. There is no other cure for sin than the one He offers in Jesus, the lifted-up One (see John 3:14-15). He just wants us to come to Him and believe.

[INSIGHT] Incredibly, God spoke to Balaam about the Savior He would send, the One who would crush His enemies: *"I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel" (Numbers 24:17)*. Jesus is called the "morning star" (see 2 Peter 1:19 and Revelation 22:16), and will one day rule with a scepter of justice (see Revelation 19:15).

God's Mandated Fun

[GOD'S STORY] It has been a long 40 years while the faithless generation died out. But the previously counted generation has passed. God instructs Moses to count the nation again tribe by tribe.

God tells Moses to use the census numbers to assign plots in the promised land by family and size. The males, as heads of the families, actually own the land. Zelophehad's daughters appeal to Moses about the promised land allotment—they are their father's only heirs. After hearing their request, Moses makes an addendum to the land policy in special circumstances for families with no male heirs. Every family is to forever have a piece of the promise.

God tells Moses to go to the top of a mountain and view the promised land as his final act as leader, because Moses is going to die. Knowing the nation will need a new leader, Moses asks God for one. God selects Joshua. Having Joshua stand before the priest and the nation, Moses commissions him. The entire nation witnesses the passing of the mantle.

God reviews the instructions He had given for offerings, festivals, and other sacred days. After going over them with Moses, Moses then passes God's commands on to the people.

[GOD'S HEART] Only one of God's holy days, the Day of Atonement, was to be a somber occasion. God tells His people on that day to *"deny yourselves" (Numbers 29:7)*—or more literally, to *"humble (or afflict) yourselves."* The expression came to be used of fasting. The Day of Atonement was to be a heavy-hearted day of confessing sin and seeking God's mercy.

But every other special occasion—including the weekly restful Sabbaths and the monthly and yearly festivals—were to be days of celebration. "Do no regular work," God keeps saying. "Shake off your burdens. Unload your worries. Eat and drink and enjoy each other. I am taking care of you. Celebrate!" It was joyful, jubilant, mandated fun. God had commanded celebration to be permanently and repeatedly on the calendar.

[INSIGHT] God required two daily offerings of lamb to serve as bookends for all other offerings (Numbers 28:1-6). The morning offering was the first offering of the day and all other offerings were placed on top of it. The second lamb was offered in the late afternoon and was left burning all night on the altar. There would continually be an offering before God. Many scholars agree that Jesus was crucified at the time of the first daily sacrifice and gave up His life during the late afternoon offering. Jesus is the offering who is continually before God.

God's Hatred of Evil

[GOD'S STORY] The Midianites had lured the Israelites into the sexually immoral worship of Baal of Peor. As Moses' last act of leadership, God calls him to lead the people to destroy the temptation-nation.

God's warriors fight to victory—but an incomplete one. Infuriated, Moses realizes that the warriors have spared the Midianite women—the source of the sinful seduction. He orders God's warriors to finish the job. They do.

As Israel approaches the promised land, the tribes of Reuben and Gad find that the land east of God's promised border is good for livestock and appeal to Moses to let their tribes settle there. Initially, Moses refuses. It appears that the two tribes are repeating the sin of the ten spies—faithlessly abandoning Israel's mission outside of the promised land. After the tribal leaders assure Moses that they'll fight with Israel until the promised land is fully taken, Moses reverses his decision.

Moses shares his list of the campsites that the nation has visited in their 40-year wandering. And God issues His conquering command: "Completely drive out the people in the promised land so they do not lead you astray."

[GOD'S HEART] The Midianites worshiped their idols with sex. And somehow, while the Israelites were passing through on their way to the promised land, they had seduced the Israelite men into participating in their idol worship.

It was evil. And God couldn't let His people become heart-captive to sex-idol gods. The Midianites had to go.

Moses was angry when he learned that the 12,000-man army he had set up had left the women alive. It was the women who had seduced Israelite men into the idol-worship. He gave new orders: kill all of the women who had been sexually active (and most likely had participated in the idolatry) and all of the boys. But Moses instructed the army to let the virgins live.

Moses was extending God's grace. The young girls would be freed from the entrapment of sex worship. They would become a part of God's people. Their family lines would be grafted into God's family line. And they would have the opportunity to know and love the one, true God who had given them a fresh start.

[INSIGHT] It was impossible for Balaam to curse Israel, but we discover in Numbers 31:16 that he was the one responsible for counseling the women of Moab and Midian to lure the Israelite men into sex-idol worship. In a way, he did curse Israel by getting them to fall into dark idolatry. So Balaam was killed with the rest of the Midianites (see Numbers 31:8).

God, Our City of Refuge

[GOD'S STORY] Some two million descendants of Abraham arrive at the edge of the land God had declared would be theirs. God maps out the land's borders for Moses and gives him the names of the tribal leaders He has chosen to oversee its allocation. God has kept His hundreds-of-years-old promise.

Each of the 12 tribes will receive their portion, their God-chosen home. That portion is to stand as a permanent inheritance for a family—passed down from father to son in generation after generation. Every family will literally live on, and off of, their God-provided land. Within those 12 territories are to be 48 cities for the Levites, who will have God as their inheritance. Six of those 48 cities are to be asylum cities—places where a person who accidentally kills someone can flee for safety until trial.

When a father only has daughters, God makes a special stipulation: Women in these situations are free to marry any man within their own tribe, but not from another tribe, because land portions must forever stay with their assigned tribes.

[GOD'S HEART] In ancient societies, where there weren't local police to protect and serve, a victim's family members meted out justice. A "guardian-re-deemer" protected the family's interests—he was a close relative who stood for a family's justice. If a family member was sold into slavery or a piece of family land fell out of the family's possession, the redeemer could buy it back (see Leviticus 25:25-34; Ruth 2:20; 4:1-10).

A redeemer also served as a blood avenger for a murdered family member. Revenge was quick and often blind of justice. Even if a homicide was accidental, the redeemer could kill the offender—on the spot and without a trial.

God, in His justice, introduces the idea of a city of refuge. A person who killed someone unintentionally could flee to a city of refuge and be safe until they stood trial. The city walls shielded the offender from the blood avenger.

Because of our sin we owe our lives. Our enemy pursues us as if he's the blood avenger—assaulting our minds with guilt and accusation. He's right—we're guilty. But Jesus stands as our City of Refuge. In Him we find asylum, and in Him the accusations of the avenger are silenced.

[INSIGHT] Jesus stands on both sides of justice—as our City of Refuge and as our Blood Avenger. Psalm 9:12 speaks of the Lord as the Blood Avenger for those who have been wronged. *"He who avenges blood remembers; he does not ignore the cries of the afflicted."* Jesus sees, He hears, and one day He will avenge those who have been oppressed. A just Judge reigns on the throne of the universe.

The God Who Carries Us

[GOD'S STORY] As God's people gather just east of the promised land, Moses begins delivering his farewell addresses. The protective leader's fierce love pours out as he preaches words heavy with finality.

Reviewing the faithless fiasco of the spies, Moses reminds the people that the previous generation's lack of trust in God and His abilities cost them the opportunity to see the promised land. For the sake of the current generation, Moses reviews the landmarks and battles the nation has walked through in the last 40 years including the recent annihilation of the kingdoms of Sihon and Og. The message is crystal clear: Walking with God has resulted in blessing; stepping outside of His guidance has been disastrous.

From a heart of love and great concern, Moses beseeches the people—with shake-you-by-the-shoulders intensity—to follow God and His commands. They are His, the nation chosen by God. An honor so high should be carried with awe and intentional obedience. They have been given the honor of knowing the supreme King.

[GOD'S HEART] "You saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place" (Deuteronomy 1:31).

"As a father carries his son . . ." This image implies a sense of protection and love. A young boy is tenderly picked up by his daddy, feet high above danger, pulled close, ear pressed to heart, and held and carried through the journey.

Like Israel, we are the held-close ones. We are enveloped in the protective arms of the Almighty One, raised high above all danger, pressed close as a cherished treasure. God longs for us to rest in His love and power, exhaling our worry in the safety of His goodness and strength.

If you're worried or stressed, ask God to help you remember the strength of His arms and His love. Then rest in them. Your good Father is carrying you through.

[INSIGHT] The nation gathered on the plains of Moab across from Jericho (see Numbers 36:13 and Deuteronomy 34:8) while Moses spoke his final words to the nation—calling them to repent and walk with God. Interestingly, John the Baptist, who also called people to repent and walk with God, baptized people "*at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan*" (John 1:28). It's possible that John may have baptized and preached at the same place where Moses spoke.



A Kingdom of Perseverance

If the Lord is pleased with us, he will bring us safely into that land and give it to us. It is a rich land flowing with milk and honey. Do not rebel against the Lord, and don't be afraid of the people of the land. Numbers 14:8-9

IN WORD "If the Lord is pleased with us . . ." That sounds awfully performance oriented for a God of grace, but Caleb's words turn out to be accurate. God was not pleased with the fear and complaining of the multitudes, so He wanted to give the Promised Land to their children. The majority view neglected an essential fact about God's processes: They aren't instant.

We forget that too. When we become convinced of God's plans for us, we expect to see them coming to pass immediately. They rarely do. The path from Egypt to Canaan was traumatic to begin with—it took ten plagues and a miraculous exodus to get free—and there were hardships immediately after freedom came. We forget that there might be dry seasons, obstacles, enemies, and severe temptations to complain about along the way. We easily lose heart, see the need for perseverance as a sign that something has gone wrong, and weaken in faith. All the while, God's promise lies before us, waiting for those who have both faith and patience. Only this tandem of attitudes makes the inheritance possible (Hebrews 6:12). One or the other is not enough.

IN DEED Perseverance is a necessary Kingdom attribute. The writer of Hebrews urged his readers not to shrink back in fear or unbelief, citing the spies' report in the wilderness and the people's response to it as the prime example of what not to do. The Kingdom is not a place of fear, complaining, or weak wills. It's a place of encountering obstacles and opposition and overcoming them, of enduring to the end, of setting our sights on the inheritance and never swerving from it. Remember that in whatever you face today. Nothing can undo God's plans for you if you anchor yourself in what you know to be true and refuse to be moved.

He who perseveres makes every difficulty an advancement and every contest a victory.

— Charles Caleb Colton

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What God Longs For

[GOD'S STORY] "Walk with God! You've entered into a covenant with Him! Be faithful to it! He will bless you!" Moses paces and preaches as the nation looks on.

Moses reminds the people of what the generation before had seen—the mountain-trembling, knees-knocking, fire-and-glory presence of God at Mount Sinai. They even heard the voice of the living God as He chose to give them—out of all other nations—His Ten Commandments.

Moses reviews the commandments with this new generation and then urges them to walk in God's ways. God's commands are to be ever-present on their minds. They're to talk about them when they're waking up and when they're going to bed. They're to teach them to their children, savoring them like the richest fare. Why? Because they are the ways to life—long, prosperous life. If God's people will honor Him by walking in His ways, He will heap blessings upon blessings on them. Long lives. Many children. Fruitful crops. Enemy annihilation. God will honor those who honor Him.

[GOD'S HEART] "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deuteronomy 6:5). This is an interesting command, since it's impossible to command love. You can't order up affection or demand emotions. This command is more of an appeal, a heart-cry, evidence of what God longs for. God calls it the greatest commandment—the highest above all others (see Matthew 22:34-38). It's what He wants most.

"Love Me," God appeals.

This appeal is also a beautiful conundrum. In order to love someone, you have to know that person. And when you seek to know who God is, you find this: He is the deepest love and the purest good. And when anyone presses closer into Him, His love can't help but spill out from His overflowing heart. In other words, it's impossible to love God without letting Him love you.

It's just like our good God. What He wants most from us will bring us deep fulfillment, melt our insecurities, and drown us in joy.

[INSIGHT] Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is known as the *Shema*, since the first word in the passage is "hear," which is *shema* in Hebrew. Faithful Jews recite it every morning and night as a part of their daily prayers. Most likely, Jesus recited it too.

Day_**53** Deuteronomy_**08–11**

What God Wants Us to Remember

[GOD'S STORY] East of the Jordan River, Moses continues his last words to the people he has led, attempting to permanently inscribe God's goodness on their hearts. "When the Lord brings you to the land of plenty, drives out your enemies and prospers you, don't forget Him," Moses warns.

He reminds the people of the time when their parents worshipped the golden calf. When they griped to the faithful Provider for water. When they complained and grumbled for meat because the daily-bread delivery wasn't sufficient for their tastes. They were ungracious, unbearable, and unfaithful. But God was faithful.

Moses beseeches them to knit their hearts to God and to follow Him. He spells it out clearly: Following God will lead to blessing but disobeying Him will lead to a curse. To physically demonstrate this reality, Moses orders that once the nation is in the promised land, they're to stand on two opposing mountains—Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal—proclaiming the blessings of obedience from one and the curses of disobedience from the other.

[GOD'S HEART] "Don't forget God," Moses urges. "He has given you everything you have." This is wisdom.

We live—every millisecond—because of God's provision. Our hearts move blood, our lungs process air, and we didn't do a single thing to cause it. Our brains think, neurons fire, thoughts travel, and we didn't do a thing to make it happen. We fret and worry about life in a moment we didn't provide for ourselves, in a brain we don't cause to think, in a body we're not causing to function. The irony.

Every second is a gift from God, and one that He sustains. The thudding heartbeats, the breathing lungs, the thinking brains, the sustaining food—we have done nothing.

Every moment we live, we can rest knowing that God has given it, and He will provide for it.

[INSIGHT] In Deuteronomy 11:10-12, Moses explains that the promised land is going to be different than Egypt—it will be watered by God Himself. The country of Israel has two rainy seasons: one in the spring near the spring festivals and one that begins in the fall near the fall festivals. The two rainy seasons are separated by a dry, waterless summer.

The Marching Orders God Gave

[GOD'S STORY] The time for wandering is almost up: God's people are about to move into their God-promised home. So Moses continues his farewell speeches with a few more of God's instructions for life there.

As the Israelites settle in the land, they are to go on idol demolition. Every dark-god altar and worshiper is to be destroyed.

The tabernacle, the spot where heaven meets earth, is to be the center of promised land life. While the nation has wandered, the tabernacle has moved, so they've offered sacrifices in different places. No longer—God is going to choose a permanent site for the tabernacle. And the men of the nation are to assemble there three times a year for festivals.

As people who have been chosen by a holy God, the Israelites are to live holy lives. They are to eat "clean," acceptable food, tithe their harvests, and provide for the poor. Every seven years they are to cancel all debts and release their Hebrew servants. And each year they are to celebrate God's festivals—remembering Passover, thanking the Lord for their harvests, repenting of sin, and celebrating His forgiveness. Life in the promised land is to follow the rhythm of God's provision.

[GOD'S HEART] "Drive out the people living in the promised land." It seems like such cruel marching orders. But the enemies living in the promised land were nauseatingly evil, enslaved to forces of darkness. Children were burned alive on the altars of demon gods. Men and women sex-worshipped dark-idols with orgies and other unspeakable perversions. The promised land reeked with an infestation of evil (see Deuteronomy 9:4-5; 12:31; 18:9-12).

And God had been oh-so-patient. Hundreds of years earlier, He had told Abraham that his descendants would leave the promised land and become slaves, but "*in the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure*" (*Genesis 15:16*). God had given the people living in the promised land hundreds of years to turn their hearts toward Him. But they hadn't. And now their sin had "reached its full measure."

"I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked," God says (Ezekiel 33:11). His somber marching orders were given with a heavy heart.

[INSIGHT] One of the demon-gods that the people living in the promised land worshiped was Molek (Leviticus 20:2-4). Molek required the sacrifice of children as worship. Only a demon, a force against God, would demand child death. The idols of the people living in the promised land weren't just bad, most or all of them were demonic.

God's Battle Cry

[GOD'S STORY] Israel's nomadic days are nearly over. And a nation with land lives differently than a wandering one. So the people listen as Moses relays God's intentions for the leadership and foreign policy of the new nation-state.

If the people decide they want a king like the other nations, he must be an Israelite, and he must not take many wives or accumulate great wealth. He is to make his very own copy of God's laws, keeping it by his side and studying it all his days, yoking his heart to God.

Since the people are too scared to hear from Him directly, God promises to raise up a prophet for the nation once Moses dies. A false prophet is easily identi-fied—what he says won't come true. Liars who dare to speak for the Truth are to be put to death.

Battles are to be fought in faith by men who have enjoyed a good life. God commands that the fearful and fainthearted be sent home from the front lines—God's warriors are to have lionhearted trust in Him.

[GOD'S HEART] When the Israelite army was outnumbered and overpowered, God commanded the priest to proclaim to the army: "Do not be fainthearted or afraid. . . . For the LORD your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory" (Deuteronomy 20:3-4).

God knows that sometimes our enemy's size blocks our view of Him. He knows we forget His presence, His power. So He ordered a faith-filled, sight-correcting reminder to be called out in the face of fears.

"Shout it over your life," He commands. "Don't let your vision trick you—I am with you! The Sovereign One, the King-Raiser and King-Deposer, the Army-Toppler, the Future-Decider—I am fighting for you!"

Sometimes we need to shout faith to our souls. We need a reminder that while the obstacles we face may be bigger than we are, they are never bigger than God. There is no need to be afraid, because we are His. And no foe stands a chance against Him.

[INSIGHT] According to Deuteronomy 19:15, no one is to be executed on the testimony of only one witness. In John 8:1–11, religious leaders bring a woman caught in adultery before Jesus. The men stand ready to stone her as the law requires (see Leviticus 20:10). But Jesus pricks their consciences, and one by one they leave. Jesus is alone with the woman—the lone witness. She is guilty of adultery, yes. But there are not enough witnesses to condemn her. Jesus meets the requirements of the law and simultaneously shows her grace.

The God of Good Gifts

[GOD'S STORY] Even at age 120, Moses' vigor and passion for God pours out in his messages to the nation he'll soon leave.

God wants His chosen people—who dwell with His presence—to be holy. And the holy can't be desecrated by the unholy. That means that the land must be purified from unsolved murders, the people kept sexually pure, the army kept from anything unclean, weights and measures kept consistent and fair.

When the people's first harvest sprouts up from their God-given land, they're to take their firstfruits to the tabernacle. There they are to recite a poem reminding them of where God has brought them and how He has provided for them. They'll verbally proclaim this truth with their mouths in the hopes that it will permanently settle in their hearts: Every good gift comes from God.

[GOD'S HEART] James states it plainly: *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father" (James 1:17).*

God leaves no room for mystery—every good thing in our lives comes from Him. Warm rays of sunshine, the extra money we didn't plan for, the sweetness of a strong hug—all from Him.

No good thing in our lives is a coincidence. Or mistimed. In fact, every beautiful thing is strategically placed by our sovereign God who knows our hearts, who knows what we're facing, and who even knows what we're experiencing in every moment. The song on the radio with lyrics reminding us of truth we had forgotten? From Him.

Our good God is constantly showering our lives with infinitely thoughtful gifts. As we pay attention to how often and how personally He's lavishing us with goodness, we'll fall even more in love with Him.

[INSIGHT] Deuteronomy 24:5 explains that when a man took a new wife he was not to be sent to war, but was to remain at home for a year enjoying his new bride and bringing her happiness. It was a God-commanded year of bliss. The Pharisees once asked Jesus why His disciples didn't fast. Jesus might have been alluding to the command of the "year of happiness" in His answer. "*Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while he is with them?*" (*Luke 5:34*).

The Life God Wants for Us

[GOD'S STORY] Moses knows that the people's future hinges on whether they follow God. To walk away from Him will bring disaster.

To etch that solemn reality on their hearts, Moses commands the nation's leaders that once they cross into the promised land they are to write the stipulations of God's covenant with them on large stones as a memorial to Him. God's law is to be the first thing present in their new home. Then Moses repeats his earlier instructions: Once they're in the promised land, half of the tribes are to stand on Mount Gerazim and speak the blessings of obedience over the nation. The other half of the tribes are to stand on the opposing Mount Ebal, speaking the warning curses of disobedience.

Moses spells out the blessings of covenant obedience, but goes into horrific detail of what will happen if the people turn from God's ways. Even after His people have heinously rebelled, God promises that if—from the putrid pits they have sunk to—they have a heart-turn, He will hear and restore them. God is ludicrously merciful; no one is too far gone to return to Him.

The hosts of heaven lean in as Moses calls them to be witnesses to God's revelation and the people's response.

[GOD'S HEART] "This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you," Moses proclaims to his fellow citizens. "I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

It's true. Every decision to obey or disobey God is a life-or-death decision. Dishonesty—God-disobedience—introduces death in relationships, killing trust and the freedom to be vulnerable. Honesty—God-obedience—creates relationships that are safe, trustworthy, and intimate. Disobedience—sin—ushers in death, introducing things like suspicion, insecurity, fear, hatred, injustice, heartache, impurity, greed, lust, sickness, pain, terror, and loneliness into our lives. But every obedient act leads to life: security, peace, love, justice, purity, and wholeness.

God does want us to obey Him, yes. But His reason is beautiful: He is jealous for us to experience the fullness of life that comes from living in His good ways.

[INSIGHT] Moses hints at us in Deuteronomy 29:14-15: "*I am making this covenant, with its oath, not only with you who are standing here with us today* . . . *but also with those who are not here today*." We are included in the future generations of God-followers who have been grafted into God's family and called to walk in His good ways.

God's Close Friend

[GOD'S STORY] It's time for Moses' long journey to come to an end. He writes down the law—likely most or all of Deuteronomy—and gives it to the Levites. He instructs them to read it to the entire nation during the Festival of Tabernacles of the debt-canceling year that takes place every seven years.

God tells Moses that he is about to die, and calls him and Joshua to the tent of meeting. God commissions Joshua, telling him that He will be with Joshua just as He had been with Moses. The mantle of leadership has been passed.

The Lord informs Moses that soon after he dies the people will turn from God and give their hearts to the dark idols of the people living in the promised land. God wants His people to have a song on their hearts so they can remember Him and perhaps return to Him when they've sunk to their deepest depths.

Moses recites the song to the people, and then he speaks a blessing over each of the 12 tribes. He travels to the top of Mount Nebo where God personally shows him the promised land. Then the Heartbeat-Sustainer stops Moses' heart. God buries His dear friend in a valley in Moab.

[GOD'S HEART] Many years earlier, a scared shepherd stood trembling at a burning bush. "What makes You think I can lead the people out of Egypt?" he had asked God.

"I'll go with you," God had responded. "I AM WHO I AM."

"Who is this God?" Moses later asked. Through the years and countless experiences—through pharaohs and plagues and legions of whiny people and untold intimate face-glowing meetings in tents and on mountains and in the Most Holy Place—God continued to reveal more of who He is to His friend.

"This is Me—the I AM WHO I AM. I am the Sign-Worker, the Water-Changer, the Frog-Rainer, the Sun-Coverer, the Neck-Stiffener, the Sea-Parter, the Enemy-Drowner, the Idolater-Destroyer, the Manna-Deliverer, the Water-Provider, the Mind-Changer, the Complaint-Tolerator, the Tabernacle-Dweller, the Army-Toppler, the Promise-Keeper."

Moses knew this God, the I AM WHO I AM. He knew Him well—and he had faithfully, lovingly served Him. And Moses held a special place in God's heart too. As a gesture of that closeness, God stooped down and buried His dear friend.

[INSIGHT] During the end times, the song of Moses will be sung again, along with the song of the Lamb (see Revelation 15:1–4). The people who were victorious over the beast will sing it as a song of praise to the great and holy God.



e've seen it in the lives of people all over the world. When people encounter the living God in His Word, everything changes. Eyes are opened. Hungry hearts are filled with truth. Lives are transformed. Families are reconciled. Entire communities are challenged to see the world through a different lens—the lens of Scripture.

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Every day, God is using Walk Thru the Bible to share His Word around the world. We serve the **biblically unengaged**, the **persecuted church**, and **under-resourced pastors** and **Bible teachers**—from Philippines to Honduras, from Kenya to Moldova, from the UK to Venezuela, and the U.S. and Canada, we ignite passion for God's Word.

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*Available only at otLIVE events





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Read through the Bible in one year with the *Daily Walk Bible*—it offers a simple 365day reading plan and tools to enrich your experience and your understanding, to help you on the journey of walking with God.





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Closer Walk is a bimonthly devotional magazine that is designed to help you read through the entire New Testament in a year. At an easy, manageable pace, you'll go deep with the help of timeless devotional messages from such esteemed theologians as Charles Spurgeon, C.S. Lewis, John Wesley, Matthew Henry, Oswald Chambers, and so many more.



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RESOURCES

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[the Bible study series]



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