

Session 4

Influence With Action

Deuteronomy 1:1-8, Matthew 4:1-11

Memory Verse

“See, I have set the land before you. Enter and take possession of the land the Lord swore to give to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their future descendants.”

– DEUTERONOMY 1:8, CSB



Influence With Action

THEOLOGICAL THEME: God equips us to conquer our spiritual enemies if we will obey and focus on developing our spiritual strength. It is then our responsibility to train and equip the following generations to know His Word, defend His Word, and share His Word.

There is a famous American prison on an island off the coast of San Francisco called Alcatraz. Movies have been made about the prison and the notorious criminals that were kept on that seemingly inescapable island. To this day people travel by boat to the island and tour the grounds, walking through the prison cells and hearing stories about the inmates housed there. One such cell has a window that looks over the water toward the sights of San Francisco. If you stand at the cell window you can see the lights of the city, and if it is quiet, you can hear the sounds. One reason the prison was closed is that it was declared too expensive, but another reason is that it was considered inhumane. For convicted criminals to be kept in a place where they could see evidence of people living life and enjoying the freedom they were not allowed was considered too harsh. Yet many people today settle for living in defeat and not stepping into the life that God has for them. The children of Israel were at just such a place as they looked at the promised land. Moses challenged them with words that are also helpful to us as we face spiritual challenges.



Why is it hard to see others living in victory and freedom when you aren't?



What are some characteristics you notice about people who win spiritual battles?

Session Summary

Moses knew the time had come for the people of God to obey the Word of God and step out in faith into the promised land. They would be tested and face enemies, and they needed to be equipped by God to see victory.

Jesus gave us the best example to follow when facing the enemies of the world. When we know God's Word and obey it, we will find strength that equips us to be victorious in the things God gives us. As part of this equipping, we are also tasked with teaching the younger generation to know God's Word and live in obedience to what He says.

1. God Equips (Deuteronomy 1:1-5)

After 40 years wandering in the wilderness, the time had come for the children of Israel to move on. Many of us can relate to the feeling of knowing that it is time to go but still having questions about our destination. The life of a Christ follower is not about keeping the status quo but about growing, changing, and moving where God calls us. Much like kids on a car trip, we often feel like asking God, "Are we there yet?" The more prepared you are for the trip, the better the experience. Moses knew the people needed to be prepared for the next step of faith before them, so he taught them lessons found in the book of Deuteronomy.



When is a time you felt like asking God, "Are we there yet?"

The Israelites were entering a new territory and a new lifestyle. They had been wandering in the wilderness for 40 years due to their own sin of not believing and trusting God. The whole generation of adults had died off, and now the people were facing a complete change in their way of life. They would no longer be wanderers on the move but were to take the promised land, defeat their enemies, and settle in Canaan. Though Moses had been their leader, his time was ending, and he was preparing to hand the responsibility off to Joshua. Much of the book of Deuteronomy is a repetition of the laws and statutes that God had given the people. Time and again in Scripture, repetition is used for emphasis so that it can be remembered or emphasized.

Since the written word was not yet readily available, the people relied on teaching and speaking God's instructions verbally. Moses knew they were going to need wisdom and discernment to know how to live in this new land and life that the Lord was bringing them into. The Lord always has good plans for His people, and He also equips His people for what is next. That is exactly what God used Moses to do—equip the people. The people needed to be reminded and challenged to trust God and keep moving forward.



What is something you repeat often so that your kids or family members will remember it and know it is important? Why do you find that thing worth repeating?

Notice that Scripture describes where the Israelites were at the time. They had arrived at the Jordan River just across from the promised land. This area was typically referred to as Transjordan and is where two and a half tribes end up settling permanently. These first few verses of Deuteronomy point out an interesting fact. The journey from where the Israelites had been to this place was typically an eleven-day journey, but because of the disobedience of the Israelites, their journey had taken 40 years. Moses wanted everyone to be reminded that their attitudes and actions had consequences. This new generation was given their own opportunity to trust God and live for Him in the land, but they were to never forget what happened when the previous generation took their eyes off God and listened to the wrong people.

These verses also mention who had been defeated to get them to that place. Moses referred to defeating the two kings of the region. When we go with God and follow His instructions, we will face opposition along the way. Sometimes that opposition can come in unexpected places. They knew there would be enemies in the promised land that they would need to defeat, but enemies are not always contained to the place we expect. These first battles reinforced to the Israelites that God was with them and was fighting on their behalf before they crossed the river and faced even bigger enemies.

 **Application: Where have you experienced unexpected enemies in the Christian life? What encouragement can you take from these verses?**

2. The Key to Victory (Matthew 4:1-11)

The lessons from Moses and the Israelites in Deuteronomy have a parallel passage in the New Testament. God's Word never contradicts itself and seeing passages that reiterate the same truths in both the Old and New Testaments can be powerful. Think back to the questions you might face when you feel like God has you on the move and is calling you to step out in faith. One of the primary questions we'll face will be along the lines of, "How am I supposed to handle _____?" We don't automatically know what we should do or how we should think or act in different circumstances. Just as the Israelites had to learn new things about settling or fighting instead of wandering, we need to learn what God expects and wants from us in whatever He is calling us to. When faced with these questions, Jesus is our best example.

 **What parallels or similarities do you see in the Matthew 4 passage to the Children of Israel's situation?**

The children of Israel were coming out of the wilderness and facing new challenges and enemies. The parallel passage in Matthew 4 describes what happened when Jesus faced a strong enemy in the wilderness. He was fasting for 40 days. During this time, Jesus faced three specific temptations or tests that were similar to the temptations the children of Israel faced. Though the Israelites failed in their temptations or tests, Jesus never failed and gives us a perfect example to follow when we encounter tough times.

? What did Jesus do in response to each temptation or test that Satan put before Him?

Scripture is the key to winning spiritual battles. Jesus quoted God's Word back to Satan even when Satan misquoted it. God's Word stands firm against the wiles and schemes of the enemy, and it will always hold true. The Scriptures Jesus used in His battle were from Deuteronomy 6–8. The very teachings Moses used to equip the people to follow God and do the right things were the same Scriptures Jesus used against the enemy. Jesus could have called down angels to fight for Him, brought fire from heaven, or anything else He wanted. But He chose to use God's Word. One benefit of reflecting on Jesus's temptation is it shows us how to respond when battles come our way. It also reminds us that Jesus has been perfect, even when we fail.

? When was a time you used Scripture in a battle you've faced? How does it change your perspective to rely on God's Word and not your own knowledge or strength?

When you face temptations, tests, or battles, you have a choice of what weapons to rely on. The world offers many suggestions of how and where to find strength for our battles, but nothing the world has to offer will give you the strength of God's Word. Jesus's example shows us that truth from Scripture is our best weapon. When you strengthen yourself in the Lord and His Word, you find what you need to resist and stand firm against the enemy. Knowing and using Scripture develops spiritual strength and is the key to victory for believers who want to conquer spiritual enemies and live forever with God.

? Application: How will you be intentional about using God's Word to develop spiritual strength this week?

3. Responsible to Equip (Deuteronomy 1:6-8)

Moses challenged the people to remember when God spoke to them at Mt. Horeb. Horeb—also referred to as Sinai—was the place of the covenant and it seems the Israelites became comfortable there. God spoke to them and said they had been there long enough. There is a great temptation for us to stay where we are comfortable. We like to linger where we feel God's Presence or where we have experienced Him in a real way.

The problem is that God had bigger plans for them that would not be fulfilled unless they were willing to leave the place where they had grown comfortable. The Lord recognized what was happening and told the people it was time to keep moving. He called the people to trust Him in a new place as they stepped out in faith to take the land He had promised. The same thing happens for us. It is easy to grow comfortable in one spot, place of service, or location to the point that we resist following God when He calls us to something or somewhere new.

? Why do you think people resist stepping out of a comfort zone once they find it? How does this specifically tempt you?

Consider what was at stake for the Israelites. They had learned about wandering and found a place that felt good. They knew what it was like to be transient and being challenged to leave that behind likely stirred up fear of the unknown. They knew enough of their own history to realize that if they made bad decisions, it would have a negative effect on their children and grandchildren. They had lived out that scenario. God knew their hearts and called them to resume their journey to the promised land despite their fear or hesitation. He reminded them that He had set the land before them and had sworn to give it into their possession.

? What effect do you think being reminded of God's promise about the land had on the Israelites? How do God's promises impact you?

Though it is true that the people needed to step out in faith for themselves, they also carried the responsibility of teaching and training the next generation to trust and obey God. The Scriptures were to be taught from one generation to the following, and no one was exempt from the responsibility they had to the younger ones. By obeying God's commands, the men and women set an example that their children could see and follow. Actions speak louder than words, and modeling obedience to God's Word is one of the best and most powerful examples you can set today. God knew what was coming for His people and wanted them to experience the abundant life that comes with following Him. He also knew that taking the land was going to be a process, and it would take all of them believing, trusting, and obeying to accomplish the victory.

We also need the reminder that our Christian walk is not just about us but about setting an example for those who follow us. It is our responsibility to make sure the younger generation is equipped just as Moses spent time intentionally equipping the children of Israel. Each of us has a choice about who we will trust, follow, and obey daily. Will we strive for spiritual strength and equipping, or will we settle for what the world has to offer? One is the way of destruction and the other is the way to life, freedom, victory and belonging. God has great plans for us if we will surrender to Him and follow.

? Application: How has today's text challenged you? What do you need to change to be intentional about equipping the next generation?

Conclusion

The words of God are exactly what you need to be strengthened for the battle. It is time for God's people to choose His weapons and His armor instead of wasting time on what the world has to offer. The false gods of the world will never give you the victory you desire and will leave you empty and defenseless, which is precisely where the enemy wants you. Jesus endured and defeated the temptations and tests from Satan by using Scripture. If we want to be wise and step into the things that God has for us, then we will follow the example of Jesus and let Scripture be our strength.

Moses referred to the promise of God as being for Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all their future descendants. The choices you make today will affect how you live and are crucial for the impact they will have on future generations. If you want the best for those who follow you then it is imperative that you know where you're going and be intentional about equipping the next generation. What can you do to help them know God's Word, defend God's Word, and share God's Word with the world?



What battle are you fighting today? Have you been relying on God's strength or your own strength in this battle? What needs to change?



What step of faith do you need to take? How will you do that this week?



How do you need to change to be intentional about equipping the next generation?



FOR NEXT WEEK

Reading as Conversation

New Series: How to Read and Study Your Bible

Main Passages

- Hebrews 4:12

Memorize

“See, I have set the land before you. Enter and take possession of the land the Lord swore to give to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their future descendants.”

- Deuteronomy 1:8, CSB