

Feelings vs. Facts
3-Year Bible Reading Plan
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Bible Text: Deuteronomy 26:16-19
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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the book of Deuteronomy 26. Now if you're a first-time guest and visitor with us, I want to welcome you, in fact, I want to encourage you and implore you to join us on a journey. As a family of faith, we are walking through the Scriptures, usually a chapter maybe two chapters a day, on a journey that will last approximately three years, and not simply to check the box off that we read through the Scriptures together, but to allow the Scriptures to kind of soak in on a very steady basis.

Today we find ourselves toward the very end of book of the Bible known as Deuteronomy. It's one of those books of the Bible that on first glance or on the surface can appear at times to have no real relevance in our life in the 21st century but when you look back at the beginning of the Scriptures, you see the Israelites coming out of Egypt as displayed in the book of Exodus, you see the Israelites wandering in the wilderness in what we know as the book of Numbers, but it is the book of Deuteronomy that demonstrates and shows us the Israelites going into the Promised Land, the fulfillment of what the Lord had already spoken years before. When we look through this section of Scripture, it allows us to overlay the principles and the truth for our life.

As we look to the book of Deuteronomy as a believer in Jesus Christ, as someone who has understood that they are saved by grace alone from their sins through the blood of Jesus Christ, that we are as 2 Corinthians 5 says, we are a new creation with a new Holy Spirit living within us, a new direction, a new purpose, and a new guide, the book of Deuteronomy helps us to see what does that life supposed to look like. In fact, last week if you weren't able to join us, we titled it "The New Normal," and what the Lord was sharing with them in the Promised Land, the way that they made decisions, the way they interacted with each other was to be completely different, or shall we say, different than what it had been in days past. Today we could have easily titled this "The New Normal Part 2." When you get to chapters 22 through 26 of the book of Deuteronomy, this is the section on how would they interact with their neighbors, how would employers and employees, how would they handle their bodies, how would they behave themselves not only in public but in private, and rather than titling today "The New Normal Part 2," I chose this very difficult statement, "Feelings versus Facts." You and I as humanity are oftentimes subject to our feelings, our emotions, my perspective or this is how I see

things, and oftentimes that clouds the facts that the Lord has spoken unto us for it is in this section of the Scripture that we discover sometimes what the Lord has commanded us, we don't feel like it but our feelings at the end of the day don't really matter when it compares to the facts that God has presented. Let me remind you and kind of tell you the story in advance, it was the feelings of the Israelites that messed up the whole Promised Land experience. When they believed that, "Well, I don't feel like we should continue to do it this way. I don't feel like that benefits my life." So today you and I join the Israelites of days gone past in the daily struggle what do I feel, what do I want, versus how has the Lord laid it out.

I would encourage you to turn to the book of Deuteronomy 26, beginning in verse 16. It's the very end of what the Lord is giving them as they are about to approach the Promised Land. I'm going to read two words and pause and then we'll read the rest. Verse 16, "This day." We are in the fortieth year since they've come out of the land of Egypt. The generation that did not believe has passed on. We are days away from the physical death of Moses and the eventual crossing of the Jordan River into the Promised Land. We could say that this is the final speech, so to speak, this is the get in the game speech, this is the end of it, this is the last word before they go into the Promised Land.

16 This day the LORD thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. 17 Thou hast avowed the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice: 18 And the LORD hath avowed you this day to be his peculiar people, as he has promised thee, and that thou should keep all his commandments; 19 And to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the LORD thy God, as he has spoken.

Now what we see here at the end of the book of Deuteronomy is a layout of four very strategic principles. Now I want to remind you what we're about to share this morning is not exclusive to the book of Deuteronomy, it is not exclusive to the Israelites going into the Promised Land, in fact, I would dare say in every book of the Bible, every section of the Bible, and almost every single story of the Bible, you can find these four principles and so they are a very fitting overlay for the Israelites of then and you and I today.

Principle 1 is simply this: your identity determines your behavior. Who you are, what you believe and, shall we say today, whose you are, should impact and effect your daily life. 2. You have the privilege of choosing your sin, you do not have the right to choose your consequences. 3. That because that you seek the Lord for forgiveness, it does not necessitate restoration. It's getting tough, isn't it? You see, we love to choose our rebellion and are quick to say, "But I don't feel that that should be the consequence," we're real quick to say, "Oh God, I messed up. Forgive me. Let's act like it never happened at all." You see, we see in the Israelites and we even see in our lives today that these are the principles that the Lord has laid out. And finally, restoration and forgiveness

if desired in our lives always begins at the point of repentance where we confess that we're the ones that messed up and the Lord himself is the only one who can fix the problem. So I want to walk through these four little principles through this section of Scripture that hopefully you had the privilege of walking through this week and see how did the Lord lay it out, what was this new normal, and we're going to see in our lives that oftentimes it is our feelings that cloud the facts.

Your identity determines your behavior. Now if you read through the book of Deuteronomy this week, you understand that the Lord covered a lot of ground when it came to behavior, everything from children to spouses to neighbors, to employee/employer relations, and so today I have gone to some great length to categorize and systematize that which you've read this week into five main sections of which the Lord spoke to us and I want to look at these sections and ask the simple question: can you and I as believers in Jesus Christ, can we say that these areas of our life are yielded to the Lord or do we let our feelings get in the way? Now there's going to be a lot of information up on the screen, there's going to be a lot because the book of Deuteronomy is chock full of a lot of things, so I want to begin with what we might call personal issues. Personal issues always begins with how we identify.

Isn't it interesting that today we live in a world where everybody says, "Well, I identify as this, not as that," and yet everybody seems to be given the right, it doesn't matter what you want to be, identify as what you want to, isn't it interesting and maybe it's just me, that in a world that says you get to choose what you are, who you are, and when you make that decision, that when there is discovered, and unfortunately it happens, when there is discovered a lifeless deceased body, the media never comes on and says, "We have found a deceased person. We don't know who or what it is. We don't know how they identified." What do they say? John Doe. Jane Doe. Interesting. In a world that says be what you want to be, it doesn't matter, even the media says that was a Jane Doe, that was a John Doe. Deuteronomy 22:5, it states very clearly you are who the Lord made you to be whether you like it or not. Our identity is not in who or what we wish it was, but in who he has made us to be.

Now for those of you that may not struggle with that issue, how about number 2, or how about fashion sense? You say, "Fashion?" Oh yeah, there's this incredible section in Deuteronomy about how you should wear these clothes versus those clothes, and you read that and you say, "This just doesn't relate to me." Let me ask it this way: when you get up in the morning and you get dressed, do you ask yourself, "Does this honor my relationship with Jesus Christ or is this just what I want to wear to impress other people?"

Number 3: food selection. Oh, we've gone to meddling in a Baptist Church now because gluttony is the only sin we don't preach on, and you read all the rules and the regulations, this and that, and every now and again you say, "Oh, thank God I'm a Gentile. I can eat all that stuff." But let me ask you a question: when we eat and what we eat, do we ask ourselves, "Does this honor the temple of the Holy Spirit or do I just want to take a personal challenge and see can I really do all I can eat?"

Number 4: personal hygiene. Now I know some of you think, "Phew, thank the Lord. I got this one. This isn't a struggle for me." Hopefully it is not, but the Bible discusses personal hygiene and making sure that we take care of the temple that resides the Holy Spirit within us as believers in Jesus Christ.

Finally, how about medical care? There is an entire section in this on leprosy. I know what you think, "I've never struggled with leprosy. I've never known anybody who's ever had leprosy." But let me ask you a question: when illness and sickness comes into your life and family, do you take it to the Lord first or do you take it to the world and if the world can't fix it, then we take it to the Lord? You see, Deuteronomy is a whole lot more relevant than we may have ever perceived.

Now those are just personal issues. You see, what we discover is our relationship with the Lord isn't just about Sunday morning for an hour, it affects how we dress, it affects how we eat, it affects where we go and what we do.

Second section, how about property issues? Chapter 22, it talks about how to treat animals. Now there's a delicate balance there. We're not to be subject unto them but yet we are not to mistreat because according to Proverbs 10:12, a righteous man takes care of his beasts and/or animals. The Bible then says that he has entrusted you with the animal kingdom, you should make sure that they have good welfare.

Secondly, how about the construction of the home? Now here's an interesting thought, when you lay out the blueprints or you're seeking for a new residence or maybe you're updating, modifying, restoring, whatever it may be, do you ask this question: is adding this room, is this honoring the Lord with our resources in this home or is it just the latest thing on the latest HGTV TV show that everybody's got and I've got to have it? Because sometimes the Lord has you update and sometimes he doesn't. Sometimes he has you move and sometimes he does not. He says honor him even with the construction of your home.

Finally, how about caring for the land? You know, in the Deuteronomy code, there was a sabbatical to allow the land to rest, and there is much discussion when it comes to the animal kingdom, the construction of our homes, and even the land, do we truly ask the question what would the Lord want versus what is in style, what is en vogue, what do I desire?

Here's where it's going to get fun if it hasn't been already, how about financial issues? Chapter 23 of the book of Deuteronomy says that you should not charge a brother interest but charge the pagans and the heathens. In other words, like the book of Galatians 6, it says be good unto all men but especially the brethren. In other words, don't take advantage of somebody just because you have the ability to do so. Be careful how you "charge interest."

Second, what about loan provision? Chapter 24 of the book of Deuteronomy says remember you were redeemed out of Egypt and just as you despised the fact that you

were enslaved, how dare you want to enslave somebody else. So when there's a transaction that regards or involves interest in our loans, making sure that we don't put others into bondage so that we can experience more financial freedom.

Third, business transactions in general. The Bible makes it very clear in Deuteronomy, do not extort somebody. In other words, don't take advantage of somebody just because they are ignorant to it and you are well versed. I've heard this excuse even among believers and it just grates at me. It's funny when you hear it but it's not funny if you're on the other side of the table: we don't understand, that's just good business. Oh, it's good business to extort and take advantage of somebody rather than to make sure that everybody has the facts.

We gone to meddling, haven't we, this morning, because now what's in your pocketbook, don't worry, it's about to get in your home, it's about to get real fun. How about tithing and giving? I don't even have to preach about this because you already know what it is, you've just got to start doing it. I'm going to have a dramatic pause there. I don't have to tell you to tithe, you know. You say, "Well, how do you know that we know?" Because every survey we do says you know that you do it or should do it, you just don't, and so the question becomes if we declare the Lord as our Savior, why doesn't this play out in every aspect of our life?

Just when you thought it couldn't get any more fun, let's talk about our families. Now I know what people say, "Well, you just run your home the way you want to, I'll run mine the way I want to." Too bad, you don't have that privilege. You run your home the way the Lord has commanded you, not according to the latest television show.

How about disobedient children? I've got news for you, do you know what the Lord says? Discipline them. You can be friends with them when you have grandkids with them. Now I know what some of you are thinking, "Well, your boys aren't completely raised yet." You go ask them if I'm their friend and you'll get an answer I'm their dad. One day I hope to be their friend if they live long enough to see it. And yet what does the world say? "Ah, just let them do what they want to do." No. No, as a believer in Jesus Christ, you are to discipline your children because the Lord disciplines us as his children.

The second thing is this, this is interesting, you say what about the prodigals because, man, I did everything I was supposed to do. Do you know what the Bible says in Deuteronomy? That you as a parent are not personally responsible for the sins of your well-knowing children. Do you know how many people wear the millstone of burden of even their grown and adult kids and the decisions they have made? I've got news for you: if you can't take credit for the "good things," how dare you take blame for the bad. You raise your children as the Lord has commanded you to and they have the right, as we're about to see in a moment, they get to choose their sin, they don't get to choose their consequences.

How about human trafficking? That's an issue of today. The Bible makes it very clear don't allow it, don't endorse it, and if you know about it, report it.

Number 4: divorce provisions. Oh yeah, it's in there. Chapter 24 of Deuteronomy talks about if the contract is bad or somebody lied or somebody manipulated or not all the information was known, this is how you work everything out.

Next, premarital advice. One of the privileges that I have as a pastor is having sometimes young, sometimes not so young couples who are desiring to be married. One of the things I always emphasize is this: that you're not in my office today for a 30 minute ceremony, it's about a lifetime together, and in Deuteronomy it says that when you prepare to enter that marital union, don't be thinking about five weeks and the celebration with family and friends, you need to be thinking about 50 plus years and how the two of you are going to work some things out.

And do you know that Deuteronomy even talks about marital candidates? That's right, who is it that we should involve ourselves in a relationship with. I can't tell you how many times I've had somebody in a torn marriage say, "I should have never taken that step. I should have never gone that direction. I knew better." You see, the Bible is very relevant, even in the book of Deuteronomy, of how to orchestrate our lives.

One last section here and then we'll move on. How about community issues? How about dealing with your neighbors? Interesting concept here, it says be selfless, desire their well-being as much as your own.

How about employee relations? You see this over in the book of Ephesians as well, that as an employer you should care for your employees, and as an employee, you should work hard for your employer.

How about the poor? Jesus said we always will have them among us and with us but it says in Deuteronomy that if there are leftovers, if there is excess, you don't go and spoil yourself, you make sure that those around you without at least have the minimum that they need.

How about judicial verdicts? You know the famous thing many of us are familiar with that when the Jews would punish a criminal, it was 40 strikes minus one so they would not break the law. That's right here in the book of Deuteronomy.

And finally, warfare. The Lord says, "If I have commanded you to enter into a conflict," by the way, we could spiritualize this, Ephesians 6, we fight not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, "don't quit the battle halfway, complete the commandment the Lord has given you."

Now, I rest assured that every one of us right now is uncomfortable at some level. Why? Because it's just not about an hour on Sunday morning, folks. The Lord says when you get up on Monday, when you're struggling through Tuesday and you're dealing with your neighbors and your family and your this and your that, when he says that we are his people, that means it should impact every aspect of our lives. So let's go back to those

principles for just a moment. What if we say, "Well, that's not how I feel. That's not what I think. I don't care what the Lord said, I'd rather do it this way." Fine. You need to choose your sin, you don't get to choose your consequences. Do you know in this section of the Scriptures it says that if you do such and such, the land is defiled. If you do this, sin will take over.

There are three places where it says it's just an abomination to the Lord, in other words, it is so frustrating to the Lord he would rather you would have done anything else but that. It's interesting in chapter 22 he makes it very clear in verse 5, of a man who is desiring to be a woman, a woman desiring to be a man, it's an abomination to the Lord. Chapter 23, it says that if we practice what we might call prolific intimate behavior and/or that of a sodomistic relationship, the word used in the Bible, it says it's an abomination. It doesn't matter what you feel about it or think about it, that's what God said about it. By the way, I know those are sensitive issues in our culture today but when you get to chapter 24 and 25, there's another abomination: if somebody cheats to take advantage of you financially, they withhold information or they manipulate the data, it is an abomination to the Lord. You know, how many of us want to aim on that one but not the first two because often times we engage things on how we feel versus what are the facts.

Here's the third principle, that if you come to the Lord and say, "Lord, I have messed up. I have sinned. I've gone contrary to you. I need forgiveness." The Lord will forgive. 1 John 1:9 says he is faithful to forgive us of all transgressions but forgiveness does not always necessitate restoration. In fact, there's a passage in chapter 23 where it says the product of one sin behavior, they are not allowed to go into the tabernacle for 10 generations, there's another one that says for three generations, and we look at that and we say why did the Lord discriminate between this one and that one? I've got news: he's God, we're not, and he makes it very clear that forgiveness is readily available through grace but restoration is not always promised on this side of the grave. And yet we live in a world today that says we just want to – listen – start the game over. You know, one of the great travesties of the electronic media of the world today is if the electronic video game is not going the way you want, you just reset it, you restart it, and you act like, "Whoops, that one never occurred." No, it did occur and unfortunately we don't always get the privilege of it being restored the way we would desire.

Last but not least, that if you're this morning desiring forgiveness, then hopefully restoration, where does it begin? The point of repentance. In fact, real quickly I want you to turn to the end of chapter 21 and I want you to see something in verse 21. It's right in the middle of the verse, there's a phrase that's repeated over and over and over again, it says put evil away. Chapter 22, verse 21, right at the very end of the verse, put evil away from among you. Verse 22 at the very end in chapter 22, put evil away. Verse 24, put evil away. I want you to know what the Lord says about our relationship with him, that we are not to rationalize, we are not to justify, we are not to excuse our sinful behavior, we are to put it away from us.

Now I'm going to be honest as we come to our time of invitation, I know, you know, we all know this is not one of those messages that ends up in a book that's sold in a large

department store with smiling faces on the front, but I have got also news for you: the Lord is more interested in your holiness than he is your "happiness." Happiness is a feeling, holiness is a fact, and you and I have the privilege, we have a God who loves us so much that he was willing to pour out the blood of his Son on the cross not so that we could have feelings but so that we could have facts, and he desires not just to save us for tomorrow but to save us for today.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. You know, maybe you're that person today whether here for the very first time or the 10,000th time, maybe you're that person today where you finally realized it's really not about how you view things, it's truly how God does, and maybe you've viewed forgiveness and maybe you've viewed salvation from the wrong perspective, it was about doing this and doing that or maybe being here and not being there, but maybe the Lord spoke very clearly today that forgiveness and salvation isn't based on what you do or don't do or your feelings but it's based on the fact that Jesus Christ loved you so much that he was willing to give his life and take it up again for you. Maybe you're that individual today and the Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord should be saved, maybe you're that person that needs to call on the name of the Lord. Allow me just to encourage you to do so. You don't have to call out openly and out loud, you don't even have to say the same words that I might say, but maybe your crying out to the Lord would sound something like this, "God, today I'm coming clean. I want you to know that I know I'm the problem and I believe that Jesus Christ is the answer. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to be born on my behalf. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was willing to live a sinless life on my behalf. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was willing to pay the price for my sin on his cross. And God, I believe today that when he rose from the dead, he made it possible for my sins to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. God, today I don't have all the answers to the problems of life but I do know in spite of what I or others may feel, that Jesus Christ is the only answer to my sin problem. I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me. In the best way I know how, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe today you're that person who made that decision that we saw displayed through the beautiful expression of baptism earlier in this service and we'd love to celebrate with you, encourage you after I pray just to step out and step forward. Maybe you need to be one who follows in believer's baptism as was displayed, or maybe today you're that person, that couple, that family, that the Lord has said this is the place, this is your home, this is where you are to get rooted spiritually. Maybe you need to pray with someone or maybe there's another decision, we just want to celebrate with you.

Heavenly Father, as we come to this time, thank you, thank you that you have not left us to the devices of our feelings and our emotions and the latest fads and trends, but you've made it very clear that you desire to bless us and provide for us and to give us holiness through an understanding of you in your word. Help us, O God, to care more today what you have said than how we feel. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

I'm going to ask you to stand with me as Jimmy leads us, whatever decision, I'll be right here at the front.