



Lesson 8: Watch Out!

Deuteronomy 7-8, 13

Lesson Summary and Objectives

Summary

Moses is concerned that the people – the *current* generation and the generations to *come* – will forget the Lord, so Moses issues warnings and instructions about that not happening.

Learning Outcomes

- Participants can describe the proper role of the past in determining our choices for the future.
- Participants can identify with the ancient Israelites and the issues they faced.
- Participants can discuss with clarity what it means to be the people of God.

Teaching Outline

Invite

- What's the most important life lesson someone passed on to you?

Inform

Read Deuteronomy 7:17-26

- This passage picks up in the middle of a passage detailing the command to wipe out the foreign nations in the land the Israelites are about to take.
- God tells the people not to fear, even though the other nations are larger and stronger, because God was the one who got the Israelites out of Egypt (17-19).
- God makes clear that just like the exodus from Egypt, the upcoming victories will be *God's* work, not the *people's* (22-24).
- The people must resist the temptation to adopt the practices of these foreign cultures – especially the practices of worshipping the foreign gods (25-26).

Read Deuteronomy 8:10-20

- God is concerned that once the people get comfortable in the new land, they will forget him (10-18).
 - God brought them out of slavery in Egypt and through the wilderness (15-16).
 - The people might be tempted to say "I built this!" But they didn't build that; God did (17-18).
- God issues a stern threat: if you forget God and worship other gods, you will be destroyed (19-20).

Read Deuteronomy 13:1-18

Moses issues warnings against three types of people in this chapter:

1. Prophets (1-5)

- Moses warns against *prophets* who say they have visions to follow other gods (1-2).
- The people must ignore this prophet, because God is testing them (3).
- God commands a harsh punishment for this prophet who tried to lead people astray (5).

2. Family and friends (6-11)

- Moses warns against close *family* (even a spouse) or *friends* who try to lead loved ones astray to worship other gods (6-7).
- Again, these offenders must receive a harsh punishment (8-10).
- This is to serve as an example to others (11)

3. Troublemakers (12-18)

- Moses warns against unknown *troublemakers* in neighboring towns (12-13).
- These, too, must be punished harshly (14-15). In fact, the whole town that harbors these people must die.
- The plunder from the harboring town must be destroyed (16-17a).
- This kind of swift action will turn away God's anger (17-18).

Investigate

- Summarize Moses' concerns in these readings.
- The punishments listed in Deut 13 seem pretty severe. Why? What's your assessment of them?
- What reasons does Moses give for these harsh punishments?
- God has rescued the people from slavery and fed them in the wilderness. Why is that not going to be enough to keep them loyal to God? What does that tell us about the nature of humans?
- Brueggemann writes that chapter 8 especially is about the "threat of forgetting" and the "urgency of remembering."⁵ What might he mean by that? Is that a good summary in your opinion?

Illustrate

- Moses warns against three kinds of people who might turn God's people away from God: prophets, family, and troublemakers. What might be some modern equivalents of these?

Preachers/teachers/religious professionals, family (same as the original), strangers whom we don't know.
- How do these modern groups sometimes work *against* our faith and try to hurt our relationship with God?
- How and why do subsequent generations compromise or even abandon the faith passed on to them?

⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 103.

Remember that Moses is concerned about turning to idolatry. These aren't your average doctrinal differences. The concerns Moses lists are covenant-breaking offenses that wholesale reject God for the allure of more seductive objects of worship.

- How do we counter the "threat of forgetting?" What is *your* generation's responsibility in this process?
- What are some modern things that seduce us away from faithfulness to God?
- How have you seen faith passed on *well*? What lessons can we learn from that?

Inspire

Ideas for closing:

- Read Deuteronomy 7:7-10.
- Say a prayer of thanksgiving that God chose us when we did not deserve it.

For next class session, read Deuteronomy 28 and consider the blessings and curses listed there.