


A Prophetic Vision's Power

This week's scripture passages speak to the power of love, giving us vision, bringing joy in times of struggle, shaping us as a community, and grounding our faith in a practice that confronts injustice with a bold but straightforward proposition: love.



Focus scripture
Deuteronomy
34:1–12

Additional scriptures
Psalm 90:1–6, 13–17
1 Thessalonians 2:1–8
Matthew 22:34–46

 *Seasons of the Spirit* is based on semi-continuous readings of the Revised Common Lectionary.

For materials for Reformation Day and All Saints Day, go to www.seasonsonline.ca, click on the Library tab.

Creator of life, you set before us the promise of freedom and the opportunity to live in a just and compassionate relationship with one another and all of life. Thank you for the prophetic voices who remain empowered by the vision of a land of promise for all, and who call upon us to join our voice with theirs. Amen.

Focus scripture: Deuteronomy 34:1–12

If ever there was a time for Moses to experience heartbreaking disappointment, the events in this week's reading is such a time. Moses has invested his entire adult life leading the people on a long 40-year journey through the wilderness. Again and again the people lost faith, breaking covenant with each other and with God, believing the certainty of imperial oppression was better than the uncertainty of this wilderness journey. In spite of their betrayals, Moses remained an unfailing advocate for the people, never relinquishing the vision of freedom that God had given him and the people. The journey, however, was enough to exhaust and deplete the most dedicated and faithful of leaders.

Now, Moses finds himself on a mountaintop, looking out at the promised land, having been told by God that this is where his journey will end. There will be for Moses no celebratory crossing of the Jordan River. There will be no tasting the ripe, juicy grapes and the sweet honey about which they had dreamed as they wandered in the wilderness, munching on the same old mana, day after day. Moses is only offered a vision of the promised land. Yet, according to the text, the vision seems to be more than enough. You can almost hear Moses say, as Martin Luther King Jr. would say years later, just before his assassination, "I have seen the promised land, I may not get there with you, but I want you to know that we, as a people, will get to the promised land."

Moses has every reason to feel exhausted, tired, discouraged and heartbroken, but we are told that "his sight was unimpaired, and his vigour had not abated." For Moses, the vision of the promised land was never limited to the physical territory the people were about to enter. The promised land resided in the promise of freedom and justice for all people.

This is something the Israelites, including the author of Deuteronomy, would forget, as the Deuteronomist goes on to recount a story of genocide and the same imperial, brutal practices toward the Canaanites as had been experienced by the Israelites in Egypt. Yet in spite of the never-ending allure that systems of dominations can provide, neither the Israelites nor the Deuteronomist could forget the prophetic power of the vision by which Moses guided the people.

Psalm 90:1–6, 13–17 is a selection of verses from the only psalm attributed to Moses, or at the very least in remembrance of Moses. With unflinching honesty, the psalm speaks of disappointment and failure, but also the steady joy that comes from trusting the liberating vision given by God.

In **1 Thessalonians 2:1–8**, Paul rejects imperial, hierarchical authority, which he says he could claim if he were inclined. Instead, Paul's gospel model is a gentle authority, like that of a mother nursing a child.

Matthew 22:34–46 reflects the tension, conflict, and contradiction between an imperial theology of hierarchy and the realm of God. The Good News theology proclaimed by Jesus centred in love of God and love of neighbour"

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It is the vision of freedom and promise rather than life turning out precisely as Moses expects and desires that gives Moses hope. He could live with discouragement, frustration and betrayal because the vision God had given them as a community was intended as a blessing for all people, and this vision never loses its force or power. It is this same vision that is the source of life and strength for the psalmist, for Paul, and for Jesus as he confounds those whose lives are governed by imperial rules rather than the power of love.

The Focus for Ages 5–12

For materials for Reformation Day, go to www.seasonsonline.ca, click on the Library tab.

As children mature through this age range they begin assuming a number of new responsibilities. As their physical capabilities increase, they are able to manage more things for themselves and enjoy demonstrating their increasing maturity and capabilities. Some children will enjoy the increasing sense of responsibility; others may find the prospect somewhat daunting.

In the Bible story for this week, Joshua assumes the leadership from Moses. Older children in this age group are starting to look beyond their families to others as leaders and role models for their lives. At this age their heroes are likely to be popular

superstars or sports personalities. When one of these popular stars dies, there is often an outpouring of community grief as the life story is told over and over in the media.

The session offers an opportunity for children to see why Moses was revered and why the people needed to mark Moses' death with special ceremonies and times of remembrance. They will also consider the ways in which they, like Moses and Joshua, are part of God's unfolding story. Pray for the children, that they will know a real sense of belonging and deepen their identity as beloved children of God.

Prepare

Before the session

- ☐ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Deuteronomy 34:1–12, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 59).
- ☐ Set a worship space with green cloth, white pillar candle, offering basket, Bible with bookmark in focus passage, and basket of green, flat-bottomed glass stones.
- ☐ Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2) and, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* and *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 9), CD or MP3 player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at www.seasonsonline.ca.

Gather

- ☐ Bring, if possible, the song "Come, Holy Spirit" (p. 12 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9; #13 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9).

Engage

- ☐ Bring resource sheet "[A Leader Dies](#)."
- ☐ **Drawing group:** drawing paper and coloured pencils or markers
- ☐ **Research group:** copies of resource sheet "[A New Leader](#)" (p. 103)

Respond

Choose one or more of the following activities and bring materials to set up the chosen zones.

- ☐ **Story zone:** book binder with pages from previous weeks, copies of resource sheet "[Part of the Story](#)"
- ☐ **Art zone:** copies of resource sheet "[Word Art](#)"
- ☐ **Music zone:** lyrics and recording of the song "A World of Difference" (pp. 6–7 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9; #2 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9)
- ☐ **Craft zone:** pieces of card stock/ heavy paper
- ☐ **Outreach zone:** invite church leaders to attend the session; print the following questions on a sheet of newsprint: When did you first hear about God? How did you become a leader? What do you do as a leader of our church? How does our church tell and show God's love? What might our group do to help?

Bless

- ☐ Bring, if possible, song "As Long As We Follow/*Na Nzela Na Lola*" (p. 25 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9; #17 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9).



October 25, 2020

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Scripture

Deuteronomy
34:1-12

FOCUS To consider Joshua's place, and our own, in the unfolding story of God's promise

Gather

Welcome the children. Introduce any newcomers to the group and share experiences from the past week.

Opening ritual

Gather in the worship space. Point out the green cloth, reminding the group that green is the colour of the Season after Pentecost. This is a time to learn about what it means to love and follow God's ways.

Lead the group in the following litany:

Leader: We are on a journey and
God's light goes with us.
(Invite a child to light the candle.)
God's Spirit is deep inside and all around,
helping us as we learn and grow.

(Invite children to place glass stones in a spiral leading out from the candle.)
God breathes love into everything.

All: Thank you, God!

Sing or listen to, if possible, the song "Come, Holy Spirit" (p. 12 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9; #13 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9); if singing the song, choose several verses to focus on this week.

Pray *(Invite children to repeat each line after you.)*

Loving God, thank you
for each person here.
May we feel you with us, as we learn
more about the unfolding story of your
people. Amen.

Receive the offering. Extinguish the candle to signal that the opening ritual has ended.

Connecting with the focus

Invite children to name some leaders in the world, the nation, or in your community. Ask:

- What do you think good leaders do?
- What leaders do you admire? Why?
- Who are some of the leaders in our church?

Explain that this week's Bible story is about two important leaders of God's people.

Engage

Preparing for the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship area and use the bookmark to open it to the book of Deuteronomy. Remind the group that we are reading stories from the book of Exodus about Moses, who was a leader of the people of Israel. Help children recall the stories of the past few weeks: Moses is given the Ten Commandments; his brother Aaron makes a golden calf as a god that the people can see; Moses stands up for the people; and Moses has an experience of God's

presence. This week we read from the book that comes after Exodus. The book of Deuteronomy begins with the last part of the story of Moses, when Moses and the people have come to the end of their very long journey and are about to settle in a new land. Moses is very old by now and it is time for a new leader.

The Bible story

Use the resource sheet "[A Leader Dies](#)," based on **Deuteronomy 34:1-12**, to tell the story.

Wondering Invite discussion on the following questions:

- **How do you think Joshua felt about being the new leader?**
- **What might he have liked about being a leader? What might he have worried about?**

Exploring the story further

(To enable the children to explore the scripture reading further, according to their interests and abilities, explain the two options and have each child select one.)

Drawing group *(for younger children)* This group will have the opportunity to imagine what a good leader might do through a drawing exercise. Distribute pieces of paper and have them draw a picture of a person. Form pairs and take turns pointing to different parts of the body and naming how they could use that part to be a good leader (such as, a mouth to say encouraging things).

Research group *(for older children)* This group will have the opportunity to learn more about the people in this week's story. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "[A New Leader](#)" (p. 103) and invite four volunteers to read a section each. After each reading, let the silence gather for moment. Then discuss together the questions for that reading.

Reporting Invite the drawing group to share their drawings and ideas of a good leader and invite the research group to share some of their responses to the questions.


The Bible story and us

God's story of love continued after Moses, after Joshua, after Jesus, and right up to today. We and our church are part of that story of God's love. Ask:

- **How have people shown God's love to you?**
- **How can we continue the story of God's love in our relationships with others at school or in the neighbourhood?**

Respond

Invite the children to select a zone and work with the materials there.

- ❑ **Story zone: Group book** *(final week)* Look at the book that has been created, reviewing each "chapter" together: the collages of sources of water, loving actions, hand shapes as reminders that what we do matters to God, and drawings of places where we can meet with God. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "[Part of the Story](#)" and read the first sentence together. Invite the children to write their names in the space provided and help them to add a drawing of one way that they show love in their daily lives. Place the pages in the binder as the last chapter. Consider adding a cover page and placing it in the church library.
- ❑ **Art zone: Word art** *(for older children)* God's unfolding story has continued from Moses to Joshua to us today. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "[Word Art](#)" and review the instructions together. Invite the children to brainstorm ideas for designs and words. If they need help choosing words, encourage them to review the stories in their Bibles: Exodus 20:1–4, 7–9, 12–20; Exodus 32:1–14; Exodus 33:12–23; and Deuteronomy 34:1–12. Display the artwork with a title chosen by the children.
- ❑ **Music zone: Part of God's story**  God's story of love continues to unfold today through our lives and actions. Read the words for the song "A World of Difference" (pp. 6–7 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9) or listen to the recording (#2 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9). Discuss the following questions together:
 - **What are some of the ways that this song describes the story of God's love?**
 - **When have you been able to share God's love and "make the world a better place"?**
- ❑ **Craft zone: Blessing cards** *(for younger children)* God blessed Moses and Joshua and helped them to be leaders. Distribute pieces of card stock (two for each child) and help the children print "God blesses you!" on their cards and decorate them with markers. They might draw stars or spirals or happy faces around the words, using many colours. Talk together about who some of the leaders are in and outside of the church. Have children give one of their cards to another in the group (recognizing that we can all be leaders) and the other card to someone else that they consider a leader.

- ❑ **Outreach zone: Interviews** Moses and Joshua were leaders who helped the people of Israel to know God's story of love, and many have shared that story since then. Invite children to interview your guests to learn how the church is contin-



uing God's story today, using the questions printed on newsprint. Encourage children to ask their own questions too. Take notes to help the group remember what was said. The children might write up the interview for the church newsletter or website.

Bless

Gather around the worship area and light the candle again.

Sing or listen to, if possible, the song "As Long As We Follow/*Na Nzela Na Lola*" (p. 25 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9; #17 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9).

Blessing Lead the group in the following litany of blessing, inviting children to repeat the last line after you:

Let's go out into the world
giving thanks for all the leaders who are part of
God's story.

God is with us. Amen.

Reflect

From their conversations, how do the children understand that they are part of God's unfolding story? How have the children responded to the story of Moses? What new insights did you gain from this session?



A Leader Dies

based on Deuteronomy 34:1-12

Notice how the suspense builds to the identity of the new leader at the end of the story. Try to play that up as you tell the story.

What a journey for Moses and the people of Israel! For years, *years* mind you, they walked through the wilderness.

The people complained about the food and Moses talked to God. God sent manna and quail. The people complained about the lack of water. God told Moses how to get water. The people were afraid of God when he spoke in thunder and lightning, and sent Moses to talk with God. Fearful that Moses would not return, they had Aaron make them a god of gold, a golden calf. But they were still God's people. Moses stood up for them, reminding God that the people of Israel were the people God had called.

Finally, they were at the edge of a new land and a new life. What an exciting time! As they made camp for the night, they told stories of the journey. Moses told stories, too. He reminded them of all God had done for them, like taking them away from the life of slavery in Egypt. But Moses was getting very old. Who would lead them when he died? Who would help them live this new life in a new land?

Before the night sky filled with stars, Moses knew that God was waiting to speak with him on the mountain, Mount Nebo. The people watched him walk to the mountain. "Would his brother Aaron be our new leader?" they whispered to each other.

On the mountain, God told Moses to look all around at the new land for the people of Israel. It looked like a wonderful place to begin a new life. But God told Moses that Moses would not be going into the new land. Someone else will take the people to this new land.

Then, at 120 years old, Moses died in the land of Moab. The Israelites cried for their leader and friend. They were sure there would never be another leader like Moses. They remembered how Moses and God met and talked. They remembered all the good things that Moses did for them. For thirty days, they remembered Moses and were sad that he was gone. All the while, they wondered, "Who will be our new leader?"

At the end of 30 days, a month, Joshua stood before the people. Moses had chosen Joshua to lead the people and had prepared him for this job. The people were happy. No, there would never be another leader like Moses, but they were ready to follow Joshua into the new land and a new life.



Part of the Story

The story of love continues with

(write your name on the line above)

when I...





Word Art

Instructions

- ☐ In the box below, draw a design that reminds you of God's unfolding story. Keep the design fairly simple. Perhaps you could draw a swirling story ribbon that moves through the ages or fill the box with geometric shapes that remind you of God's story of love. What ideas do you have?
- ☐ Use fine-tipped markers to fill in each section of the drawing. But instead of colouring the section, fill the space with words. Pick words or phrases that have something to do with God's story. You might use the names of the people in the stories you have been reading.
- ☐ Copy the words or phrases over and over until you have filled in the whole drawing.
- ☐ Change colour and words as often as you like.
- ☐ Print larger letters to fill in bigger areas and smaller letters for small areas.



A New Leader

based on Deuteronomy 34:1–12

Reader 1: After Moses gave God's blessing to all the people, Moses went from Moab to Mount Nebo, to the very top. There Moses could see the whole land. God told Moses, "This is the land about which I spoke to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, 'I will give this land to your families.' Now, Moses, you have seen it with your eyes, but you will not go into it."

Imagine being Moses and looking out over this land.

- **What do you see?**
- **What do you feel?**
- **What are you thinking?**

Reader 2: Then Moses, the servant of God, the leader of God's people, died in the land of Moab. The people buried Moses in Moab, but today no one knows where Moses is buried. When he died, Moses was 120 years old. He could still see and he had lots of energy. For 30 days, the people of Israel mourned and cried because Moses had died.

Imagine being the people of Israel.

- **How do you feel?**
- **What are you thinking?**
- **What will you remember most about Moses?**
- **What do you think it will be like without Moses as your leader?**

Reader 3: After the 30 days of mourning were over, it was time for a new leader. Joshua, son of Nun, had been following Moses. Joshua had worked alongside Moses for many years learning how to lead the people. Seeing that Joshua was very wise and that, at God's command, Moses had laid his hands upon Joshua, the people of Israel accepted him as their new leader.

Imagine being Joshua.

- **How are you feeling?**
- **What is the scariest thing about taking over from Moses?**
- **What are you looking forward to?**

Reader 4: No leader or prophet in Israel ever knew God face to face as Moses did. No leader did the wonders that God had Moses do to save the people of Israel. The people never forgot Moses.

Imagine being a grandmother or grandfather at the time of Moses' death.

- **What stories will you tell your grandchildren about Moses?**