

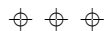
WATER•FIRE•STONE

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MOSES

Session 22 – Choose Life, Part Four | Deuteronomy 31 & 34

Moses was in the final stretch, but that didn't slow him down one bit. From the moment he learned he wasn't going into the Promised Land, Moses started praying for the next man up. He asked God for a man "who will guide them wherever they go and lead them into battle, so the community of the Lord will not be like a sheep without a shepherd" (Numbers 27:17 NLT).

That man was Joshua, and Moses worked to make the transition smooth. The last four chapters of Deuteronomy trace the activities that occupied Moses in the closing days of his life. He gathered Israel to say goodbye. He designated Joshua as God's clear choice to be his successor. He established public reading of the Law. And he assembled the elders from every tribe to hold them accountable for leading faithfully.



The book of Deuteronomy is a series of sermons Moses gave to prepare the people for life in the Promised Land. In this last session of our four-part series, *Choose Life*, we focus on faith, choices, and finishing well.

Icebreaker

In your opinion, what made Moses a great leader? Name the first three things that come to mind.

Goals for this Session

- Discover our responsibility to know God's Word and pass it faithfully to the next generation.
- Consider the vital connection between faith, obedience, and finishing well.
- Pray for courageous faith that refuses to give in, go back, or give up.

1 Deuteronomy 31:1-8 | When Moses called the tribes together this time, what do you suppose they expected? Another history lesson, perhaps? Maybe an orientation to cover the last minute details for entering the Promised Land. What they *didn't* anticipate was Moses' announcement that he would not be going with them. Imagine the impact this news would have had on them. Share your thoughts.

- a. **Be strong and courageous.** Moses repeated this command three times in this chapter; it's also used four times in Joshua 1, where the story picks up after Moses' death.

What obstacles did they anticipate and what reasons did Moses give them to be strong and courageous?

Strong and Courageous

In English, these words are adjectives; but in Hebrew, they also function as verbs.

Together they describe a heart that is set immovably on God; alert and actively exhibiting courage.

- b. Why do you think Moses directed this command (twice) to Joshua? Consider and discuss what he would be experiencing at this point.
- c. Courage doesn't exempt you from fear—it simply refuses to give in, go back, or give up. In what ways are you currently being called to be strong and exhibit courage?

What can you be certain of?

Isaiah 41:10

Psalms 46:1-3

John 16:33

Philippians 4:6-7

2 Deuteronomy 31:9-13 | Moses established a public reading of the Law* every seven years. This would be vital for Israel's identity as God's people, long after Moses and Joshua were gone. Each Sabbath year, during the Feast of Tabernacles, the entire Book of Deuteronomy would be read aloud and taught to everyone.

- a. During his long ministry, Moses compiled volumes of history and kept meticulous records for God's people. But this book wasn't just another history lesson. According to verses 12-13, who did Moses have in mind when he wrote Deuteronomy and what did he hope to accomplish?

The Sabbath Year

God taught Israel to live in cycles that reflect Creation.

Six days of work; rest on the seventh.

Six years to work a field; left fallow on the seventh.

Six years of paying debt; no payment required in the seventh year.

For more information on the Sabbath year, read in Exodus 21, Leviticus 25, and Deuteronomy 15.

- b. Can you identify with Moses' desire to ensure that future generations will *hear* and *learn* to fear the Lord and walk in His ways? Discuss ways and opportunities we have to participate in the public reading and study of God's Word. In what ways do we play a part in that?

3 Deuteronomy 31:14-22 | The Lord tells Moses to bring Joshua and come to the Tent of Meeting. Describe what takes place during this meeting.

- a. What new assignment is Joshua given? Highlight what stands out to you and why.

- b. What last assignment is Moses given? Highlight what stands out to you and why.

* The Law generally refers to the Pentateuch (Genesis through Deuteronomy) but in context here, it meant that the entire book of Deuteronomy would be read aloud (Deuteronomy 31:24-26).

4 Deuteronomy 31:23-30 | When Moses finished writing all the words of the Law in a book, he instructed the priests to place it near the ark of the covenant for safekeeping. Then he summoned the elders and officers of each tribe to stand before him, with newly commissioned Joshua by his side.

a. What did Moses say to them? Highlight what stands out to you and why.

b. Then Moses spoke the words of the song that Israel would be taught for generations to come. It was a song that only God could give him because it traces Israel's story from their wilderness beginnings to the end of time. Read the entire song in chapter 32 if you like, but we will do a flyover here.

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Learning the character of God should be our major concern in the school of life, and Moses was a star pupil.
Warren Wiersbe

The Song of Moses is divided into four parts, highlighting each characteristic below.*

God's Character | Deuteronomy 32:4-5. What does this say about God's character and Israel's foolishness?

God's Kindness | Deuteronomy 32:6-7, 10-12. What does this say about God's kindness and Israel's forgetfulness?

God's Chastening | Deuteronomy 32:18-21. What does this say about God's chastening and Israel's unfaithfulness?

God's Vengeance | Deuteronomy 32:34-36. What does this say about God's vengeance on His enemies and Israel's ultimate restoration?

c. Which of these would you say is most relevant to your current situation? In what way?

* Outline adapted from Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary, Old Testament*, pg. 448.

Memory Verse

“Be strong and courageous.
Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you;
He will never leave you nor forsake you.”
Deuteronomy 31:6 NIV

Which part of this verse resonates most with you today? How or in what way?

That very same day, the Lord told Moses it was time to go. Moses' final act was to give Israel a blessing, tribe by tribe. The final blessing that Moses spoke over the people was saturated with grace and finished on a high note.

5 Moses had one more mountain to climb. He went alone, knowing he would not return. From the summit of Pisgah, atop Mt Nebo, God gave His servant a panoramic view of the Promised Land.

Pisgah ("cleft") reminds us of Moses' prayer forty years earlier on Mt. Sinai. "Please show me Your glory" (Exodus 33:18). Moses couldn't see God's glory, but He put Moses in the cleft of the rock and covered him while He passed by.

But here, in the cleft on Mt. Nebo, it was different. For all the beauty of Canaan's land, it wasn't the last thing Moses saw. It was seeing God at last, in all His glory, that took Moses' breath away.

Another author (most likely Joshua) wrote the divinely inspired details of this last chapter.

- a. Deuteronomy 34:1-9 | Highlight what stands out to you and why.

- b. Deuteronomy 34:10-12 | Epitaph of a hero. We can't imagine a more suitable eulogy for Moses than this. Highest praise, simply stated.

What made Moses a man *mighty in words and deeds*? We'll leave it to you to scroll back through all the epic scenes and b-roll of his life—but for now, consider the secret of his success. It's right there, hidden in plain sight.

"Mighty" describes a combination of humble, persisting (*stubborn*) determination on Moses' part that was divinely infused with gifted strength on God's part. It started with a burning bush conversation and grew from there.

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Moses put faith into action. Will we? Put your own name in Hebrews 11:23-26 and write your personal response.

Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

Hebrews 11:1 NIV

By faith, he *refused* . . .

By faith, he *chose* . . .

By faith, he *was looking ahead to* . . .

Action Steps ►► As you think through this part of Moses' story, what is the most important takeaway point for you personally? How will you put what you've learned into action?

Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. —Ephesians 6:18 NIV

Adoration – Giving praise and honor to God for who He is and what He does.

Confession – Honestly deal with sin; acknowledge to God the ways (and whys) you fall short.

Thanksgiving – Verbalize your gratitude; express your praise and a thankful heart.

Supplication – Pray specifically for the needs of others, ourselves, our church, our nation.



Close your discussion time by praying together. Use the A·C·T·S pattern as a group focus and keep it simple. No need to be lengthy or profound—just authentic.
