

## FREE BECAUSE OF THE LORD

DEVOTIONAL READING: [Deuteronomy 8:1–11](#)

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: [Deuteronomy 8](#)

### DEUTERONOMY 8:1–11

<sup>1</sup> Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land the LORD promised on oath to your ancestors. <sup>2</sup> Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. <sup>3</sup> He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. <sup>4</sup> Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. <sup>5</sup> Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.

<sup>6</sup> Observe the commands of the LORD your God, walking in obedience to him and revering him. <sup>7</sup> For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills; <sup>8</sup> a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; <sup>9</sup> a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills.

<sup>10</sup> When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. <sup>11</sup> Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day.



Photo © Getty Images

## KEY TEXT

*Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day.—Deuteronomy 8:11*

## GOD FREES AND REDEEMS

Unit 1: Liberating Passover

LESSONS 1–4

## LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. List the imperatives in **Deuteronomy 8:1–11**.
2. Explain the nature of those commandments.
3. Make a plan to practice greater humility in serving the Lord in one particular area.

# LESSON OUTLINE

## Introduction

- A. Negligent Plant Slaughter
- B. Lesson Context
- I. Remember (Deuteronomy 8:1–5)
  - A. Who Holds the Future (v. 1)
  - B. Who Provided in the Past (vv. 2–5)
    - All Who Wander*
- II. Anticipate (Deuteronomy 8:6–11)
  - A. The Walk to Take (v. 6)
  - B. The Land to Take (vv. 7–10)
    - Gratitude and Green Thumbs*
  - C. The Failure to Avoid (v. 11)

## Conclusion

- A. Credit Where Credit Is Due
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

## HOW TO SAY IT

Sinai	<i>Sigh-nye</i> or <i>Sigh-nay-eye</i> .
suzerainty	<i>soo-zuh-ruhn-tee</i> .

## Introduction

### A. Negligent Plant Slaughter

How hard is it to water a plant? As it turns out, very difficult—at least for me. I was home from college for summer break. When my mother had to leave on a business trip, she instructed me to water *one* outside plant. If I didn't and the plant died, I would have to buy a new one. I was confident I could not forget. After all, it was clearly visible through the large window behind the TV!

Not once did I water the plant. Worse yet, it rained very little while my mother was gone. By the time she returned, the plant was a dried husk, and the leaves crumbled to dust at a mere touch.

It wasn't out of rebellion that I didn't water the plant, or even that I didn't care for my

mom. The problem was that I never wrote it down, nor did I make a point to include watering the plant in my daily habits. Her instructions just slipped my mind. I still wish I had guarded myself against forgetting—that was an expensive plant!

Through my failure I learned that even *forgetting* to obey has consequences! But would Israel learn this lesson the easy way?

## B. Lesson Context

The setting for today's lesson is "near Beth Peor east of the Jordan, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites" ([Deuteronomy 4:46](#)) in about 1406 BC. The recipients were the Israelites of a new generation who were about to enter the promised land. Moses would soon die on Mount Nebo, located in Moab (chapter [34](#)), having been barred from entering the promised land because of his disobedience at Meribah ([Numbers 20:7–12](#)).

Deuteronomy is a covenant renewal treaty, delivered by Moses in a series of speeches ([Deuteronomy 1:1–4:43](#); [4:44–28:68](#); etc.). In these speeches, he recounted the covenant God had made with Israel at Mount Sinai some four decades previously. This covenant is very similar to a specific kind of ancient Near Eastern treaty called a suzerainty covenant. In such covenants, a sovereign king (the suzerain) would write out terms of an agreement with a weaker king (the vassal). This generally required obedience from the lesser king in exchange for certain protections and benefits from the greater king. Typical suzerainty covenants contained at least six parts: (1) an introduction, (2) a historical basis for the treaty, (3) general stipulations followed by (4) specific stipulations, (5) divine witness, and finally (6) curses for disobedience and blessings for faithfulness.

[Deuteronomy 5–11](#) is the high point of the book. Here the Ten Commandments are recounted (chapter [5](#); compare [Exodus 20:1–17](#) and [Deuteronomy 4:13](#); [10:4](#)). This is followed by an exposition of how to love and obey the Lord (chapters [6–11](#)). Our text today, from [Deuteronomy 8:1–11](#), falls under general stipulations in the second speech.

One helpful way to categorize laws in the Bible is to distinguish between conditional and unconditional laws. Unconditional laws are what we have with the Ten Commandments. They are foundation principles for Israel's covenant relationship. Covenant recognizes a relationship, and adherence to the rules maintains the relationship. Conditional laws rightly begin with a conditional clause (beginning with "if" or "when," either expressed or implied), followed by a declarative judgment (beginning with "then," either expressed or implied; examples: [Exodus 21:28–29](#); [22:26–27](#)).

## I. Remember ([DEUTERONOMY 8:1–5](#))



## A. Who Holds the Future (v. 1)

**1. Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land the LORD promised on oath to your ancestors.**

This week's passage continues the call to observe *every command* God gave Israel (compare: [Deuteronomy 4:1–2](#); [5:1](#); [6:1–2](#); [7:11–12](#)). What follows are positive reminders of God's work and the blessings that will follow from continuing to obey *the Lord*. [Deuteronomy 8:12–20](#) (not in our printed text) presents the negative flipside. Curses can and will result from failure to follow the Lord's ways.

Obedying God's commands results in experiencing fulfillment of God's promises (compare [John 10:10b](#)). To *increase* is both a command from the Garden of Eden ([Genesis 1:28](#)) and a blessing given by God ([Deuteronomy 7:13](#)). Israel had multiplied in Egypt, but their growth resulted in a perceived threat to the Egyptians. They resolved this danger by enslaving the Israelites ([Exodus 1:6–13](#)). Possessing the promised *land* would allow the people to multiply in peace. Fulfillment of all these promises was predicated on obedience; the people's failure to obey accounted for their exile in Babylon ([2 Chronicles 36:11–21](#)).

*Your ancestors* refers to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ([Exodus 3:15](#)). God had made a promise of the land of Canaan to Abraham ([Genesis 12:6–7](#)). God then formalized his promise with a covenant in [Genesis 15](#) and [17](#). He renewed the covenant with both Isaac ([26:3–5](#)) and Jacob ([35:9–12](#)).

## B. Who Provided in the Past (vv. 2–5)

**2. Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.**

Though we may not think of *remember* as an enforceable command, it is often given this power in Deuteronomy (examples: [7:18](#); [15:15](#); [16:12](#); [24:22](#)). Festivals, sacrifices, Sabbath rest, and other rhythms of life were meant to help the people keep this command (examples: [Exodus 13:2–3](#); [20:8](#)). In a similar way, the Lord's Supper and baptism remind us of what *the Lord* has done for us, especially through Christ.

Future generations would be well served to learn lessons from the hardships faced *in the wilderness these forty years* without repeating the same sins. Proud people believe they have earned everything they have through their own power; humble people recognize that without the Lord, they would have nothing. Experiencing uncertainty about resources in the wilderness was meant to humble the Israelites, reminding them not only of their need but of

God’s ability and trustworthiness to care for them. Though the next generation was going into a land rich with resources, forgetting humility before God would be a dire misstep.

God was able to see the hearts of his people and *test* their faithfulness. Though God’s seeking evidence of faith may seem to contradict the fact that he knows everything, the story of Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah provides precedent for God’s proving the people’s faith ([Genesis 22:1–18](#)). There as here, God wants to be sure that his people remain faithful to him by keeping *his commands*. And perhaps as importantly, the people were reassured that God saw their efforts and valued their devotion to him.

*What Do You Think?*

What have humbling experiences revealed about your character?

*Digging Deeper*

How does remembering these experiences reveal growth areas and God’s faithfulness?

**3a. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known,**

Immediately after leaving Egypt, the Israelites moaned that Moses was leading them to their deaths ([Exodus 14:10–12](#)). They also spoke against him twice more when they were thirsty ([15:22–24](#); [17:1–3](#)), as well as when they didn’t have food ([16:2–3](#)). This is an example of how God used their circumstances in an effort to humble them (see [Deuteronomy 8:2–4](#)).

Although Israel feared a lack of provision, God provided *manna*, “bread from heaven” ([Exodus 16:4](#), [14–15](#)). This bread “was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey” ([16:31](#); compare [Numbers 11:7–9](#)). In naming it, the people threw up their hands and said in essence, “Manna—we don’t know what this is!” But they didn’t need to recognize the food—only that God’s provision was a concrete example of his care and capability. The intended effect of humbling the people and teaching them to trust God with a grateful heart, however, does not seem to have taken (see [Exodus 16:19–20](#)).

**3b. to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.**

This explanation falls in the middle of the list of things that the Lord provided for the Israelites while they were in the wilderness. Any time a list is interrupted with explanation, the reader should pay close attention. The interruption is important to understanding what surrounds it.

God’s response to Israel’s hardships was meant to inspire the people to trust him. It’s not that the people didn’t need bread; rather, it’s that heeding *every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord* is the only path to life (see [Psalm 119:9–16](#)). What good is a healthy body if

the soul languishes? Or as Jesus said, “What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?” (Mark 8:36). If Israel wanted to live, they needed not only food and water, but to obey God and find life in him (see Isaiah 45:22–25).

Jesus quoted this Scripture when Satan tempted him to create bread (Matthew 4:1–4). Though Israel struggled with the truth that the Father sought to teach them, Jesus knew it well. Hunger lasts for a time, and God’s provision comes when he wills it. But seeking after God’s words—his laws, his promises, and his other proclamations of love—ensures life, whether one’s stomach rumbles or not. Jesus would wait for God’s time. And if we are to heed the wisdom of Jesus’ words, we will wait too (compare 6:25–33).

#### *What Do You Think?*

What evidence of faithfulness to God’s commands do outsiders see in your life? What contradictory evidence might they see?

#### *Digging Deeper*

What practices can you begin or strengthen to live by every word that comes from God?

#### **4. Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years.**

The list of God’s provision continues. These two preventative measures kept Israel in good health and ensured they could continue the journey, even for *forty years*. Having *clothes* not wear out was important, given the scarce resources to make new clothing along the way. Swelling in the *feet* often results from injury or disease, though exercise (like lots of walking) can also cause it. Prolonged exposure to heat—a reality in the Sinai peninsula where summer highs hover in the high 90s Fahrenheit—can have the same effect.

### ***ALL WHO WANDER***

One summer I hiked in the Rocky Mountains for several months with a single pair of hiking boots. This range boasts peaks that rise more than 14,000 feet above sea level. Oxygen is precious, and trees do not grow above about 11,000 feet. The rocky crags above the tree line are exposed to the sun, high winds, and violent thunderstorms.

This unforgiving landscape chewed up my hiking boots. The laces broke, the soles thinned and then tore away from the toe box, the threaded stitching disintegrated, the leather wore through until my toes stuck out. When I retired them, those boots were a stark image of what happens to hard-used footwear.

The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, traversing many miles of unforgiving land. But their clothes never wore out. God protected them. And he still protects us, no matter how challenging our environment. How does God provide for you in your current



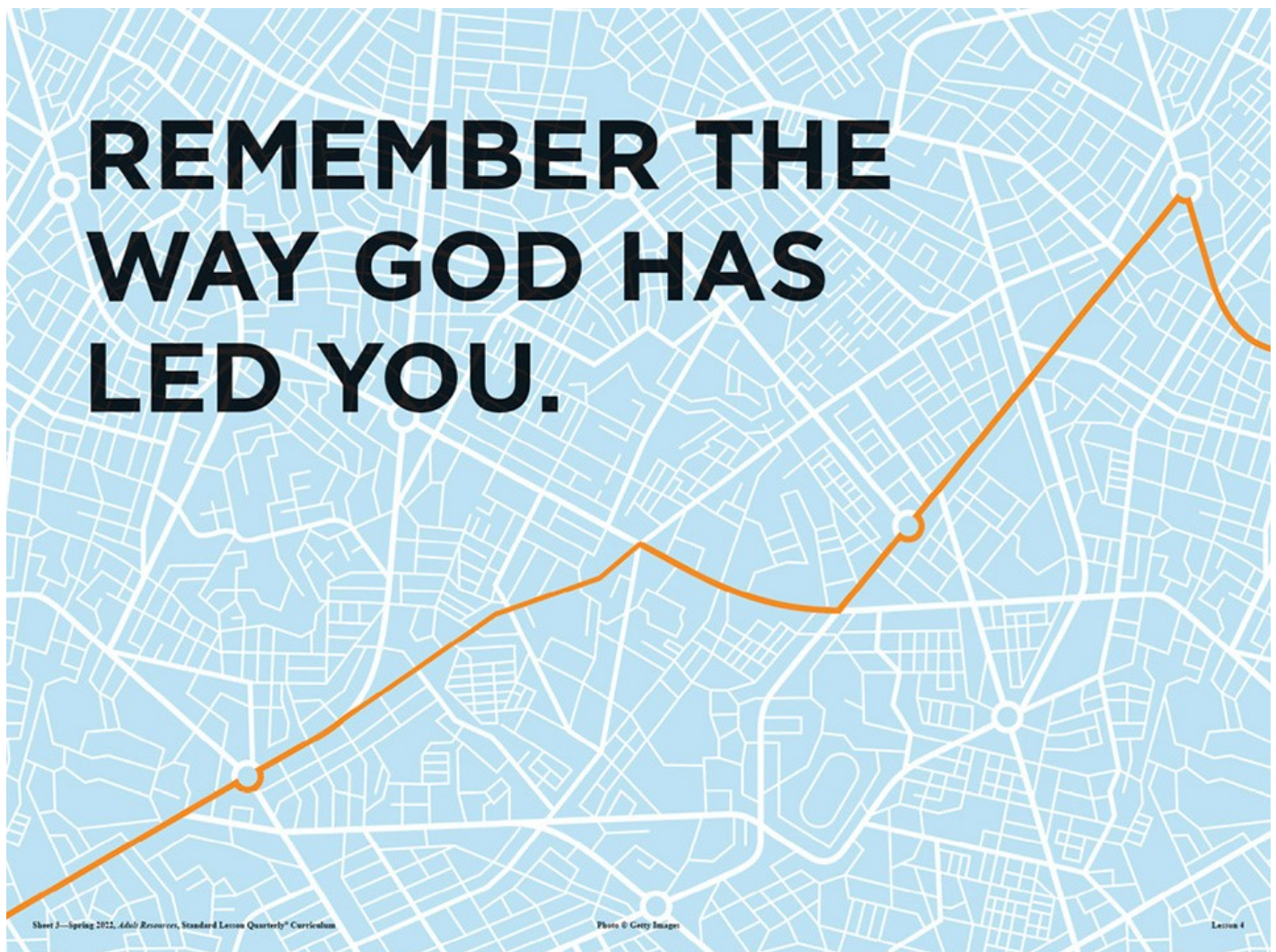
hostile environment?

—W. L.

**5. Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.**

The *heart* in the Hebrew language represented the origin of will, or volition. (The same Hebrew word is translated “conscience” in [Genesis 20:5–6](#) and “minds” in [Exodus 14:5](#).) The command here is not about an emotional reaction but, instead, one of considering the facts of what God has done.

Though the people may have felt sorely used, it benefited them to consider their hardships as instruction to make them wise and capable of living well ([Hebrews 12:5–11](#); compare [James 1:2–5](#)). The familial imagery—God as Father, Israel as *his son*—speaks to the love behind God’s actions. Even the curses contained in the covenant were meant to lead the people back to him ([Deuteronomy 30:1–10](#)). And when Israel called out, God delighted in delivering his children (examples: [Judges 3:7–9, 12–15; 4:1–7](#); compare [Jonah 3:5–10](#); [Revelation 3:19](#)).



Visual for [Lesson 4](#). While discussing the questions with verse [7a](#), ask the class for examples from the congregation as well as personal experience.

## II. Anticipate

### (DEUTERONOMY 8:6–11)

#### A. The Walk to Take (v. 6)

##### 6a. Observe the commands of the LORD your God, walking in obedience to him

“Therefore” (KJV; not translated in the NIV) transitions from what God did in the past to what he would do in the near future (see [Deuteronomy 8:7a](#) and following, below; contrast [8:2](#)). When we think of *the commands*, we may think specifically of the Ten Commandments. But the instruction to *observe* God’s commands by *walking in obedience* refers to the instruction contained within the entire covenant (contrast [Psalm 1:1](#); see [Deuteronomy 8:11](#), below). The Ten Commandments serve as a summary in many ways, but the rest of the legal code gives Israel further direction in *how* to carry out those fundamental commands. Israel was required to keep God’s commandments by living lives that reflected his ways.

##### 6b. and revering him.

Elsewhere the Hebrew word rendered *revering* is translated “fear” ([Genesis 22:12](#); [Exodus 9:30](#); [Leviticus 19:14](#); etc.). This phrase called the people to a proper, humble respect of God. Even so, the word *revere* in this context does not lose the connotation of terror. When people have a fuller understanding of God’s power and authority, fear is an entirely appropriate response. The righteous do not need to fear God’s wrath; their respectful fear of the Lord motivates them to keep his laws and continue to live rightly ([Psalms 34:9](#); [52:5–7](#); etc.).

#### B. The Land to Take (vv. 7–10)

##### 7a. For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land—

The original *good land* was the earth itself (see [Genesis 1:10](#), [12](#), [25](#)). Canaan was the specific land God promised to Abraham and his descendants hundreds of years before ([Genesis 15](#); [17](#); [26:1–5](#); [28:12–15](#)). “Good” is repeated in verse [10](#) (below) and to describe the houses the people would build for themselves (“fine” in [Deuteronomy 8:12](#), not in our printed text). In declaring the work of their own hands “good,” they would risk not appreciating that *everything* comes from the Lord (compare [Daniel 4:28–37](#)). God is not in the habit of giving mediocre gifts (compare [John 2:6–10](#); [3:16](#); [James 1:17](#)), and the place he set apart for the people’s promised home was no exception ([Deuteronomy 6:3](#); [11:9](#); [26:9](#); etc.). To forget this was to invite dire consequences.



*What Do You Think?*

In what ways do you see that God has brought you into a “good land”?

*Digging Deeper*

How can you be better satisfied with God’s provision?

**7b. a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills;**

After wandering in a wilderness where water was not easily found ([Exodus 17:1](#); [Numbers 20:2–4](#)), abundance of water would seem like an appropriate litmus test for answering the question “Is the *land* good?” Flowing water from *brooks*, *streams*, and *deep springs* ensured that disease wouldn’t flourish in stagnant water.

**8–9a. a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing;**

The northern portions of Canaan were ideal for fields of *wheat* and *barley*. These grains were used to make bread and other food. The southern mountains yielded a more temperate environment that could sustain *fig trees* and *pomegranates* along with *olive* groves. Some students propose that *honey* refers to the syrup from fruits rather than to what bees produce.

While this list should not be taken as comprehensive, the elements named illustrate that the people would eat *bread* without scarceness and find nothing lacking in the land (see commentary on [Deuteronomy 8:3b](#), above). This once again reversed the scarcity the Israelites had experienced in the wilderness (see [8:3a](#), above). The 12 Israelite spies had brought back a report of abundance in the land, coupled with information concerning the people who lived there. When the Israelites disobeyed the Lord and gave in to fear, the first generation out of Egypt was barred from entering the land ([Numbers 13:17–14:25](#)).

**9b. a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills.**

Here the focus shifts to materials for crafting tools and weapons. *Iron* was known during the Bronze Age (about 3300–1200 BC) but not widely used (compare [Deuteronomy 3:11](#)). As the Israelites were soon to enter the promised land, the year was about 1406 BC, around 200 years before the beginning of the Iron Age (about 1200–550 BC), when iron’s value would be better appreciated. *Copper* when alloyed with tin resulted in bronze, the metal that defined the Bronze Age. This metal was still widely used as societies were learning how to work with iron.

**10. When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.**

God’s provision was meant to teach the people to depend on him, to live by faith and not by sight ([2 Corinthians 5:7](#); see [Deuteronomy 8:3b](#), above). Such abundance might lure the

people into believing they were self-sufficient or that the “gods” who were already worshipped in the land had helped them. The people would labor in the fields and vineyards, but God gave them *the good land* and then the conditions to benefit from his bounty. The only appropriate response to his provision is always to *praise the Lord*.

*What Do You Think?*

What ordinary blessings do you tend to take for granted?

*Digging Deeper*

How will your life change when you take time to thank God for *all* your daily provision?

### GRATITUDE AND GREEN THUMBS

I once knew a delighted, delightful gardener. Her yard was a riot of teal lamb’s ear, hollyhock, yellow and white daisies, soft purple columbines, pale catmint, bone white aspen roots, and snow-in-summer. She kept a golden peach tree and an orchard of bright green apple trees. An enormous grapevine scaled the east-facing side of her house. In late fall the vine grew plump clusters of vivid wine-colored grapes that hung down and touched the ground. The garden vibrated with iridescent hummingbirds that shimmered green and pink and silver, fat bumblebees, ladybugs, robins, and great orange monarch butterflies.

I imagine the good land as an alpine garden overflowing with fruit, bursting with color, teeming with life. Just as we are to rely on God in times of trouble, we are also called to praise him when blessed to sit and eat in a bountiful garden. Give praise today for your own “good land”!

—W. L.

### C. The Failure to Avoid (v. 11)

**11. Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day.**

Memory is the beginning of obedience (see [Deuteronomy 8:2](#), above). If the people failed to remember, it would be seen in their disobedience to all that *God* commanded them. The repetition of this command makes clear its importance and even models how to remember.

Too fine a distinction can be made between *commands*, *laws*, and *decrees*. When used in quick succession this way, the three are meant to give a sense of the weightiness of all the covenant ordinances Israel had been given to obey. God’s people were responsible not for the pieces they liked or whatever was easy but for the entire law ([Deuteronomy 6](#); [Luke 11:42](#); [James 2:10–11](#)).

*What Do You Think?*

Which of God's expectations do you most struggle to adhere to on a daily basis?

*Digging Deeper*

What memory aids can you use to remember God's commands and seek to keep them?

## **Conclusion**

### **A. Credit Where Credit Is Due**

God has given us words to remember, laws to live by. Our peace depends on remembering what God has commanded and then acting faithfully on that memory (see [John 14:21](#)).

Though much has changed between when Israel stood at the boundary of the promised land and the time of the global church, we too are called to remember all that the Lord has done for us. We are not self-sufficient—God has given us all that we have. We must look to him in times of both need and plenty. Only when we honor and fear him like this can we call others to the same respect.

And, of course, we bring not only knowledge of God's law but also the peace of God's forgiveness through Jesus' sacrifice. His love has been shown to us; let us show it also to the watching world. Only then will we experience life in our own good land—the world God created—and beyond, in his Heaven.

### **B. Prayer**

Thank you, Lord, for all the ways that you bless us daily. Help us to remember you in hard times and in times of bounty. Show us opportunities to tell the stories of your faithfulness to everyone we meet. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### **C. Thought to Remember**

The Lord's faithfulness to us calls for our faithfulness to him.

## **INVOLVEMENT LEARNING**

*Enhance your lesson with NIV Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at [www.standardlesson.com](http://www.standardlesson.com) or in the back of the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).*

## Into the Lesson

Invite the class to play a memory game called Going on a Picnic. Explain that participants will take turns saying, “We’re going on a picnic and we’re taking ...” and add a word. The first person’s word begins with the letter A (example: apples). The second person repeats the A word and adds a B word (example: apples and bananas). The third person will need to remember the A and B words and add a C word (example: apples, bananas, and cheese). The goal is to have a list of items from A to Z, without forgetting any of them! Make this activity competitive (if a participant forgets an item, that person is out) *or* cooperative (everyone can help each person remember all the items).

After this activity say, “Sometimes it’s a challenge to remember things, even things that are important to us. We’ll see in today’s lesson some things God commands his people to remember and why.”

## Into the Word

Ask a volunteer to read [Deuteronomy 8:1–5](#). Divide the whole group into three smaller groups and give each group a poster board. Assign different focuses to each group: **Command Group**, **Reason Group**, and **Lesson Group**. Instruct the **Command Group** to write down the command words and phrases in this passage (example: *remember*), the **Reason Group** to write down the reasons the people should obey the commands (example: *that you may live*), and the **Lesson Group** to write down the lessons the people learn about the character of God through the reasons (example: *to know what was in your heart*).

*Alternative.* Distribute the “Looking Backward/Looking Forward” exercise from the activity page, which you can download, to pairs of participants. Instruct them to only complete Part A.

Ask a volunteer to read [Deuteronomy 8:6–10](#). Continue the previous activity of listing the commands, reasons, and lessons in the three groups. Then post the three posters on a wall, in a triangle pattern: the Command Group and Reason Group posters side by side, and the Lesson Group poster centered below. Give a handful of 24-inch lengths of yarn and a roll of tape to each group. Instruct them to tape the yarn on the wall, connecting the words they listed on their poster to the related words on the next poster. When they are finished, have the whole group study the visual effect and give feedback on what they notice.

*Alternative.* Instruct pairs to complete Part B of the “Looking Backward/Looking Forward” exercise from the activity page. When they are finished, ask them to discuss the results as a whole class and summarize what they notice about God’s character—in both the past and the future. (Possible conclusions may be: God always provides what is needed; God’s provision is

abundant and gracious; God cares about the physical well-being and prosperity of his people.)

Ask a volunteer to read [Deuteronomy 8:11](#). Ask the whole group to discuss: If the people did not heed this warning, how would it change their understanding of who God is? Invite participants to cite examples from the Old Testament, as well as the consequences the people faced.

### Into Life

Give participants one minute to write down some of the blessings they have. Allow time to share these things in their previous groups and discuss how counting their blessings can help them practice humility when they serve the Lord. Allow one more minute for participants to write a reminder to serve God humbly.

*Alternative.* Distribute the “Remember” activity page to each participant as a take-home to be completed as indicated.

Close class with a prayer of thanks for all that God has done and will do for his people.