



Thru the Bible in 2012

The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of our God endures forever. Isaiah 40:8

Ladies for Jesus Thursday Bible Study Reflects

Readings for May 11, 2012 – May 17, 2012

Emailed: Thursday, May 17, 2012

For our ponderings, consider the questions listed below in regards to what we have read during the days of Friday, May 11th – Thursday, May 17th.

- **(Deuteronomy 1-4)** In our readings this week Moses reviewed the mighty acts of God for the nation of Israel. Remembering God's special involvement in our lives gives us hope and encouragement for the future. There must be a time set aside for us to do this. When was the last time you went down "memory lane" with God and recalled His involvement in your life?
- **(Deuteronomy 4-25)** Obeying God's laws brought blessings to Israelites and disobeying brought misfortune. This was part of the written agreement God made with His people. Although we are a part of the new covenant with Christ and not part of this covenant, the principle holds true: Obedience and disobedience carry inevitable consequence. In what ways have you seen proof of this principle in your own life?
- **(Deuteronomy 1:6-8)** Horeb was the general name of a mountainous district; literally, "the parched" or "burnt region," whereas Sinai was the name appropriated to a particular peak. About a year had been spent among the recesses of that wild solitude, in laying the foundation, under the immediate direction of God, of a new and peculiar community, as to its social, political, and, above all, religious character; and when this purpose had been accomplished, they were ordered to break up their encampment in Horeb. The command given them was to march straight to Canaan, and possess it. Moses starts by sharing with the new generation that their ancestors were given clear instructions but were not willing to trust God. In what ways has God given you clear direction, yet you are not willing to make the step of faith and trust Him?
- **(Deuteronomy 4:32)** It is very easy to give into the temptation of looking everywhere else but to God for our guidance and leadership. We trust medical doctors, financial advisers, and new commentators, but do we trust God? When was the last time that you got God's advice first? It is important that we recognized His authority over every dimension in our lives.
- **(Deuteronomy 5:11)** We are familiar with the sin to be avoided in this commandment that we should not misuse the name of the Lord by saying it in an empty or worthless way. But there is also a good work that is commanded: to use God's name to praise Him and ascribe to Him glory. This is the opposite of misusing His name. While you might be able to keep yourself from swearing, how have you done at finding time to praise God and honor His name in many moments throughout your day?
- **(Deuteronomy 6:10-13)** Moses warned the people not to forget God when they entered the Promised Land and became prosperous. Prosperity, more than poverty, can dull our spiritual vision because it tends to make us self-sufficient and eager to acquire still more of everything – except God. The same thing can happen in our church. Once we become successful in terms of numbers, programs, and buildings, we can easily become self-sufficient and less sensitive to our need for God. This leads us to concentrate on self-preservation rather than thankfulness and service to God. In what ways have you played an active role in your church to make sure prosperity (or the desire for prosperity) hasn't become the focus and Jesus has continued to be the primary focus?

- **(Deuteronomy 7:21-24)** Moses told the Israelites that God would destroy Israel's enemies, but not all at once. God had the power to destroy those nations instantly, but He chose to do it in stages, "little by little." In the same way and with the same power. God could miraculously and instantaneously change your life. Usually, however, He chose to help you gradually, teaching you one lesson at a time. Do you expect instant spiritual maturity and solutions to all your problems? Slow down and work one step at a time trusting God to make up the difference between where you should be and where you are now. You'll soon look back and see that a miraculous transformation has occurred.
- **(Deuteronomy 7:25-26)** Moses warned Israel against becoming ensnared by the idols of the defeated nations by desiring the silver or gold on them. Do you think it's all right to be close to sin as long as you don't participate? Do you tell yourself, "I won't do anything wrong?" Realize that being close to sin can hurt us as we become attracted and finally give in. Avoid the snare of sin by first reigning in your desires. Then stay as far away from sin as you can.
- **(Deuteronomy 9:18)** From the record of this event in Exodus 32, it seems as though Moses acted immediately, grinding the gold calf into powder and forcing the people to drink water mixed with it. But evidently, Moses had first spent 40 days and nights interceding for the people. When you encounter others that have sin against God, do you spend time in prayer interceding on their behalf? By doing so, God will show us how we should respond to their sin and hopefully aid them in seeing their need for repentance.
- **(Deuteronomy 10:12-13)** Often we ask, what does God expect of me? Here Moses gives a summary that is simple in form and easy to remember. Here are the essentials: (1) Fear God (have reverence for Him). (2) Live in a way that pleases Him. (3) Love Him. (4) Serve Him with all your heart and soul. (5) Obey His commands. How often we complicate faith with man-made rules, regulations, and requirements. Are you frustrated and burned out from trying hard to please God? Concentrate on His real requirements and find peace. Respect, follow, love, serve, and obey.
- **(Deuteronomy 13:2-11)** The Israelites were warned not to listen to false prophets or to anyone else who tried to get them to worship other gods – even if this person was a close friend or family member. The temptation to abandon God's commands often sneaks up on us. It may come not with a loud shout but in a whispering doubt. And whispers can be very persuasive, especially if they come from loved ones. But love for relatives should not take precedence over devotion to God. Have you worked towards overcoming whispering temptations by pouring out your heart to God in prayer and by diligently studying His Word?
- **(Deuteronomy 15:7-11)** God told the Israelites to help the poor among them when they arrived in the Promised Land. This was an important part of possessing the land. Many people conclude that people are poor through some fault of their own. This kind of reasoning makes it easy to close their hearts and hands to the needy. But we are not to invent reasons for ignoring the poor. We are to respond to their needs no matter who or what was responsible for their condition. Who are the poor in your community? How could your church help them? If your church does not have a program to identify the poor and assist in fulfilling their needs, why not help start one? What can you do to help someone in need?
- **(Deuteronomy 20:1)** Just like the Israelites, we sometimes face overwhelming opposition. Whether at school, at work or even at home, we can feel outnumbered and helpless. God bolstered the Israelites confidence by reminding them that He was always with them and that He had already saved them from the potential danger. We, too, can feel secure when we consider that God is able to overcome even the most difficult odds. When was the last time you felt this reassurance from God?
- **(Deuteronomy 25:1-3)** At first glance these verses appear irrelevant today. But a closer look reveals some important principles about discipline. Are you responsible for the discipline of a child, a student, or an employee? Three important points will help you carry out your responsibility: (1) Let the punishment follow quickly after the offense; (2) let the degree of punishment reflect the seriousness of the offense; and (3) don't overdo the punishment. Discipline that is swift, just, and restrained makes its point while preserving the dignity of the offender.



(Deuteronomy 1:1-5) The 40 years of wilderness wandering come to an end in this book. The events of Deuteronomy cover only a week or two of the 11th month of the 40th year (1:3). The 12th and the last month was spent in mourning for Moses (34:8). Then the Israelites entered the Promised Land the first month of the 41st year after the Exodus (Joshua 4:19).

(Deuteronomy 7:5) Asherah was a Canaanite mother goddess of the sea, associated with Baal. Baal was the most worshiped god of the Canaanites. Most often cast in the form of a bull, he symbolized strength and fertility and was considered the god of agriculture, means of wooden pillars (here called “poles”).

(Deuteronomy 10:5) The tablets that had the Ten Commandments written on them were still in the Ark about 500 years after this when Solomon put it in his newly built temple (1 Kings 8:9). The Ark last appears in the Israelites’ history during the reign of Josiah, about 300 years after Solomon (2 Chronicles 35:3)

(Deuteronomy 12:12, 18) The Hebrews placed great emphasis on family worship. Whether offering a sacrifice or attending a great festival, the family was often together. This gave the children a healthy attitude toward worship, and it put extra meaning into it for the adults. Watching a family member confess his or her sin was just as important as celebrating a great holiday together. Although there are appropriate times to separate people by ages, some of the most meaningful worship can be experienced only when shared by old and young.

(Deuteronomy 14:3-21) Why was Israel forbidden to eat certain food? There are several reasons: (1) Predatory animals ate the blood of other animals, and scavengers ate dead animals. Because the people could not eat blood of animals they found dead, they could not eat animals that did these things either. (2) Some forbidden animals had bad associations in the Israelite cultures just as bats, snakes, and spiders do for some people today. Some may have been used in pagan religious practices (Isaiah 66:17). To the Israelites, the unclean animals represented sin or unhealthy habits. (3) Perhaps some restrictions were given to Israel just to remind them continually that they were a different and separate people committed to God. Although we no longer must follow these laws about food (Acts 10:9-16), we can still learn from them the lesson that holiness is to be carried into all parts of life. We can’t restrict holiness only to the spiritual side; we must be holy in the everyday practical part of life as well. Health practices, finances, use of leisure – all provide opportunities to put holy living into daily living.

(Deuteronomy 15:12-15) The Israelites were to release their servants after six years, sending them away with enough food so that they would be amply supplied until their needs could be met by some other means. This humanitarian act recognized that God created each person with dignity and worth. It also reminded the Israelites that they, too, had once been slaves in Egypt, and that their present freedom was a gift from God. We do not have servants such as these today, but God’s instructions still apply to us: We must still be sure to treat our employees with respect and economic fairness.

(Deuteronomy 18:21-22) As in the days of ancient Israel, some people today claim to have messages from God. God still speaks to His people, but we must be cautious before saying that someone is God’s spokesman. How can we tell when people are speaking for the Lord? (1) We can see whether or not their prophecies come true – the ancient test for judging prophets. (2) We can check their words against the Bible. God never contradicts Himself, so if someone says something contrary to the Bible, we can know that this is not God’s word.

(Deuteronomy 19:12) The “avenger” was the nearest male relative to the person killed. He acted as the family protector (ref. Numbers 35:19)

(Deuteronomy 20:20) Archaeologists have uncovered the remnants of many well-fortified cities in Canaan. Some had tall walls (up to 30 feet high), ramparts, moats, and towers. Accustomed to fighting on the open plains, the Israelites were going to have to learn new battle strategies to conquer these massive fortresses.

(Deuteronomy 24:1-4) Before we think that this passage supports divorce we must consider what all four of these verses recognize. It simply recognizes a practice that already existed in Israel. All four verses must be read to understand the point of the passage; it certainly is not suggesting that a man divorce his wife on a whim. Divorce was a permanent and final act for the couple. Once divorced and remarried to others, they could never be remarried to each other (24:4). This restriction was to prevent casual remarriage after a frivolous separation. The intention was to make people think twice before divorcing.



(Deuteronomy 4:39-40) Was Israel guaranteed prosperity for obeying God's laws? Yes – but we have to look carefully at what that means. God's laws were designed to make His chosen nation devout, healthy, just, and merciful. When the people followed those laws, they prospered. This does not mean, however, that no sickness, no sadness, and no misunderstandings existed among them. Rather, it means that as a nation they prospered and that individuals' problems were handled as fairly as possible. Today God's promise of prosperity – His constant presence, comfort, and the resources to live as we should – extends to all believers. We will face trials, Jesus us told us that. But we will avoid the misery that directly results from intentional sin, and we will know that a great treasure awaits us in heaven.

(Deuteronomy 7:2) God told the Israelites to completely destroy their enemies. How can a God of love and mercy wipe out everyone, even children? Although God is loving and merciful, He is also just. These enemy nations were as much a part of God's creation as Israel was, and God does not allow evil to continue unchecked. God had punished Israel by keeping out of the Promised Land all those who had disobeyed. The command to destroy these nations was both a judgment (9:4-6) and a safety measure. On one hand, the people living in the land were being judged for their sin, and Israel was God's instrument of judgment – just as God would one day use other nations to judge Israel for its sin (2 Chronicles 36:17; Isaiah 10:12). On the other hand, God's command was designed to protect the nation of Israel from getting ruined by the idolatry and immorality of its enemies. To think that God is too "nice" to judge sin would be to underestimate Him.

(Deuteronomy 9:2-3) The Anakites were enormous people, some seven to nine feet tall. Goliath, probably a descendant of this race, was over nine feet tall (1 Samuel 17:4-7). Unfortunately, these great men used their stature as a means to intimidation rather than for noble causes. Their appearance alone frightened the Israelite scouts (Number 13:28), and their bad reputation may have been the deciding factor that kept the Israelites out of the land 40 years earlier (Number 13-14). Moses used all his persuasive power to convince his people that God could handle these bullies. He used the illustration of God as a devouring fire, for not even a giant could stand up to that.

(Deuteronomy 13:12-16) A town that completely rejected God was to be destroyed so as not to lead the rest of the nation astray. But Israel was not to take action against a town until the rumor about its rejecting God was proven true. This guideline saved many lives when the leaders of Israel wrongly accused three tribes of falling away from their faith in Joshua 22. If we hear of friends who have wandered from the Lord or of entire congregations that have fallen away, we should check the facts and find the truth before doing or saying anything that could prove harmful. There are times, of course, when God wants us to take action – to rebuke a wayward friend, to discipline a child, to reject false teaching – but first we must be sure we have all the facts straight.

(Deuteronomy 17:14-20) God was not encouraging Israel to appoint a king to rule their nation. He was actually against the idea because He was their King, and the people were to obey and follow Him. But God knew that the people would one day demand a king for selfish reasons – they would want to be like the nations around them (1 Samuel 8). If they insisted on having a king, He wanted to make sure they chose the right person. That is why He included these instructions both for the people's benefit as they chose their king and for the king himself as he sought to lead the nation according to God's laws.

(Deuteronomy 18:15) In this verse Moses stated that the Lord would raise up a prophet like him from among the fellow Israelites. He continued to say that they should listen to him. Who is this prophet? Stephen used this verse to support his claim that Jesus Christ is God's Son, the Messiah (Acts 7:37). The coming of Jesus Christ to earth was not an afterthought but part of God's original plan.

(Deuteronomy 25:4) What is the point of this Old Testament regulation? Oxen were often used to tread out the grain on a threshing floor. The animal was attached by poles to a large millstone. As it walked around the millstone, its hooves trampled the grain, separating the kernels from the chaff. At the same time, the millstone ground the grain into flour. To muzzle the ox would prevent it from eating while it was working. Paul used this illustration in the New Testament to argue that people productive in Christian work should not be denied its benefits (1 Timothy 5:17, 18). The fact that a person is in Christian ministry doesn't mean he or she should be unfairly paid. There is also a broader application. Don't be stingy with those who work for you.