



# DEUTERONOMY

HPUMC BIBLE READING PLAN

## GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 5

### CONVERSATION STARTER

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What and where is your happy place? Why do you love it?

### GOD'S DWELLING PLACE

*Deut. 12:3-7*

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**“Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and burn their Asherah poles in the fire; cut down the idols of their gods and wipe out their names from those places. You must not worship the Lord your God in their way. But you are to seek the place the Lord your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go...There, in the presence of the Lord your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the Lord your God has blessed you.”**

We've made it to the central section of Deuteronomy, and this chapter kicks off Moses' exposition on the Laws of the Torah. Moses begins with a command to destroy all of the places where the Canaanites worshiped their gods. There were Canaanite shrines all over the place, built on the hilltops to mark out a region, forest, valley, etc. as a territory owned by and given in allegiance to that god.

You can see why God says, “These have got to go.” This Promised Land is supposed to be like a new Eden, a place where heaven and earth meet and God and His people are one. His presence is going to dwell in this land among His people, and no idol shrines are allowed, which might tempt His people toward other false gods!

We shouldn't take this passage as an invitation to commit the same type of destruction today; remember: the Bible was written *for* us but not *to* us. But there is wisdom here

for us, too! The purpose of the laws of the Torah is so much bigger than just offering a list of dos and don'ts. **The law is supposed to shape Israel into a wise and understanding people who will seek justice and live in right relationships with God and others.** We believe that, by meditating on the law, it can do the same for us!

The apostle Paul reinterprets this idea of idolatry in the dwelling place of God for followers of Jesus in 1 Corinthians 10. When discussing whether it was permissible to eat meat sacrificed to idols, Paul emphasizes that the community of Jesus should be free from any association with idolatry. They, as the family of Jesus, are now where the Spirit of God resides! He doesn't advocate for tearing down the pagan shrines in their neighborhood, but he does call them to be a community where God alone reigns.

In many ways, Paul's message mirrors Moses' call to Israel in Deuteronomy 12: **We (the Church) are God's dwelling place, and all traces of idolatry have to go. We have to watch out for anything that pulls our attention and love away from God.**

With your group, reflect on the wisdom that Deuteronomy 12 might offer us today. We, as the family of Jesus, are meant to create pockets of Eden here on earth. We are the place where Heaven meets Earth, and we must be watchful for anything else coming into our community that vies for our allegiance.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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1. What stuck out to you about the reading from last week? Was there a verse or idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?
2. What does it mean to you that we are meant to be creating pockets of Eden on earth? When have you experienced glimpses of Eden through a friend, your community, your church, etc.?
3. An idol is just something you trust to do what only God can. What are some of the things that our culture puts its trust in? These can be organizations, people, ideologies/philosophies, etc.
4. How do we find balance in enjoying the good things in life (like work and relationships) without letting them become idols?

## WEEKLY PRACTICE

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This fall, we are focusing on cultivating a life with God where **love** can grow within us, and it is so important for us to reflect the love of God to the next generation in our church by investing in them and caring for them.

Who are you investing in during this current season? If you have children at home, start there! Our household is our first ministry responsibility, but the call to model love isn't just for parents. We are all responsible for the next generation in our spiritual family (the church).

Remember, we cannot make children become disciples of Jesus, but we can create an environment where it is more likely they will follow Christ as they grow older. Somebody told somebody who told you about the love of God, and now it's your turn!

One of the ways we share God's love with the next generation is through our Family Ministries, which invests in kids from birth through high school. If you feel led to serve in this area, contact Andi Fancher ([fanchera@hpumc.org](mailto:fanchera@hpumc.org)) to learn how you can get involved.