

DEUTERONOMY

HPUMC BIBLE READING PLAN

GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 1

CONVERSATION STARTER

If you could enact any one law or ordinance that other people would be forced to abide by, what would you choose and why?

WHAT IS DEUTERONOMY?

Deuteronomy is the final book of what's known as the Torah (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). In Hebrew, Torah means *instruction*; These are the foundational books of Israel, telling the story of how God raised them up, rescued them from slavery, and formed them into a nation at Mt. Sinai with a mission to bring blessing to the entire world.

In Greek, Deuteronomy means "Second Law," and that's precisely what it is. Through a series of speeches, Moses will reshare the Law with the second generation of Israelites after the Exodus story. But far from being a collection of dusty old laws, Deuteronomy is a profound book that calls all of God's people throughout the generations to faithfulness.

Throughout the book, Moses implores God's people to obey the Law and to love God with all of their heart, soul, and strength. If they do that, Moses says they will experience blessing in the land. If they rebel, they will be cursed. But even when they fail, and Moses assures them there will be times when they fail, **God will never give up on them. God will always be with them because God loves them deeply.**

For thousands of years, those who love God have read this incredible book and seen themselves reflected in its pages. It's as if each generation is standing on the edge of the Promised Land, being given the same choices: Faithfulness or rebellion. Blessing or curses. Life or death.

These ancient words of Moses can speak to us, too, if we allow them. Far from being out-of-touch, boring, or irrelevant, Deuteronomy can be a source of wisdom for us, reminding us who God is and who we are called to be.

What will you choose?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What previous experiences, assumptions, or impressions of Deuteronomy are you bringing into this journey as we begin?
2. At the end of the first chapter, Moses speaks about the importance of having good leaders around him to shepherd Israel. What do you think are the most important qualities of a good leader?
3. Can you think of a person in your life who reminds you of God's faithfulness, like Moses did for Israel? How can you model this same faithfulness to those around you?
4. When was the last time you found yourself "in the wilderness?" What was that journey like for you? How did you sense God's presence with you, either in those moments or now as you look back?
5. Read Exodus 34:6-7 out loud together. What words jump out at you when it comes to how God describes His own character? Which of these characteristics are easy for you to identify God with?

WEEKLY PRACTICE

In September, we are focusing on cultivating a life with God where **love** can grow within us. Throughout this month, we invite you to join us in praying this prayer from St. Francis of Assisi, each day:

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.
O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,*

*to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.*

Before you echo St. Francis' prayer, spend a few moments in silence to quiet your mind, and as you pray, think about what these words mean to you. What might the implications of this powerful prayer be in your life?