

LEADER GUIDE

DEUTERONOMY

A CHALLENGE TO A NEW GENERATION

GOD'S PEOPLE SEPARATED

BIG IDEA: We have been sent into the world, but we must not allow the world to get in us.

DATE: Sunday, June 21, 2026

SCRIPTURE: Deuteronomy 6:6-7, 11-26

OPENING QUESTION

Have you ever been on a boat and something goes awry? Maybe someone fell overboard, a big storm came up, or the boat sprung a leak? What was that experience like?

A boat does great when it's in the water. But if the water gets *in* the boat, a fishing trip can be ruined. The same is true when it comes to our relationship with the world. We have been sent into the world, but we must not allow the world to get in us.

What are some ways that the "world" slowly gets "in our boat"?

What does it mean to be in the world, but not of it? ("I am not praying that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of it." John 17:15-16).

In the world and of the world = secular, nothing sets them apart

Not in the world or of the world = Amish for example (distinctly separate way of life; no cultural engagement)

In the world but not of the world = Christians, set apart but still in the world to be a witness

Why are we called to still be in the world? (cultural engagement, influence and witness)

SETTING THE STAGE

As Generation 2.0 approached Canaan, God required that they remain holy. They would be entering a country where the customs and cultures were not only different but unholy. To remain holy, they must refuse to embrace those pagan customs and cultures. But Israel was vulnerable to the influences around them. In this section we read of God's plan to keep Israel separate from the influences that would corrupt them.

SCRIPTURE READING

Deuteronomy 6:6-7, 11-26 (CSB)

⁶ For you are a holy people belonging to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be his own possession out of all the peoples on the face of the earth. ⁷ "The LORD had his heart set on you

and chose you, not because you were more numerous than all peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples... ¹¹So keep the command – statutes and ordinances – that I am giving you to follow today.

¹² “If you listen to and are careful to keep these ordinances, the LORD your God will keep his covenant loyalty with you, as he swore to your ancestors. ¹³ He will love you, bless you, and multiply you. He will bless your offspring, and the produce of your land—your grain, new wine, and fresh oil—the young of your herds, and the newborn of your flocks, in the land he swore to your ancestors that he would give you. ¹⁴ You will be blessed above all peoples; there will be no infertile male or female among you or your livestock. ¹⁵ The LORD will remove all sickness from you; he will not put on you all the terrible diseases of Egypt that you know about, but he will inflict them on all who hate you. ¹⁶ You must destroy all the peoples the LORD your God is delivering over to you and not look on them with pity. Do not worship their gods, for that will be a snare to you.

¹⁷ “If you say to yourself, ‘These nations are greater than I; how can I drive them out?’ ¹⁸ do not be afraid of them. Be sure to remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and all Egypt: ¹⁹ the great trials that you saw, the signs and wonders, the strong hand and outstretched arm, by which the LORD your God brought you out. The LORD your God will do the same to all the peoples you fear. ²⁰ The LORD your God will also send hornets against them until all the survivors and those hiding from you perish. ²¹ Don’t be terrified of them, for the LORD your God, a great and awesome God, is among you. ²² The LORD your God will drive out these nations before you little by little. You will not be able to destroy them all at once; otherwise, the wild animals will become too numerous for you. ²³ The LORD your God will give them over to you and throw them into great confusion until they are destroyed. ²⁴ He will hand their kings over to you, and you will wipe out their names under heaven. No one will be able to stand against you; you will annihilate them. ²⁵ Burn up the carved images of their gods. Don’t covet the silver and gold on the images and take it for yourself, or else you will be ensnared by it, for it is detestable to the LORD your God. ²⁶ Do not bring any detestable thing into your house, or you will be set apart for destruction like it. You are to abhor and detest it utterly because it is set apart for destruction.

DISCUSSION

ASK: *What does it mean to be holy?* (Holy can be defined as dedicated or consecrated to God; sacred; set apart.)

GOD HAS CHOSEN US TO BE DIFFERENT

READ: Deuteronomy 7:1-11

Briefly overview Deuteronomy 7:1-5 found in the Commentary section below. Call for a volunteer to read aloud Deuteronomy 7:6-7, 11.

Write the phrase **“The Lord your God has chosen you”** on the board and discuss what that statement means. **Ask:** What does this have to do with living a holy life?

Lead a brief discussion of what God desired of His people as they moved into the promised land. **Ask:** Why was holiness, living differently than everyone else, such a big deal?

Summarize the **“God Has Chosen Us to Be Different”** found here:

Moses told the Canaan-bound congregation, **“For you are a holy people belonging to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be His own possession out of all the peoples on the face of the earth”** (7:6).

We use the word holy in many contexts. In our culture it almost has become a term of derision. People describe certain Christians as “holy rollers,” or they speak of someone feeling as if they are “holier than thou.”

In its most basic meaning, the word holy means “different.” It could also be understood as “one-of-a-kind” or “out-of-the-ordinary.” For instance, the word Bible literally means “book.” But what makes the Bible different is that it is the “Holy Bible.” It is different than any other book written in the history of the world.

When Isaiah fell on his face before God in Isaiah 6, the seraphim were chanting, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts” (v. 3) There were many false gods, but the One True Living God was “different” than any other—that made Him holy.

The children of Israel were “holy.” That means they were “different” than any other nation or tribe. In His grace, God had chosen them out of all the nations of the earth. The word special is so overused that it has lost its meaning, but the Jews really were special among all the people of the earth.

They were about to enter a land that had different cultures, customs, and languages. God warned them against being assimilated into the godless culture. Instead, they had to maintain their unique relationship with Yahweh.

But God didn’t choose them because they were superior to all the people of the earth. Instead, God chose them to be a blessing to all the other nations. When God first called Abram He said, “I will bless those who bless you, I will curse those who treat you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen. 12:3).

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to be holy. We should be “out-of-the-ordinary” individuals. Our culture doesn’t embrace a biblical worldview, so we are called to be different. Peter wrote, “Be holy, because I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:16).

We should be “out-of-the-ordinary” individuals.

When people examine your conduct and vocabulary, what are the noticeable differences between your lifestyle and those who don’t claim to be followers of Jesus Christ? What about in the area of social media or media choices in general?

How does it make you feel to consider yourself “holy”?

GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES **READ Deuteronomy 7:12-16**

Write the word **covenant** on the board. Explain that a covenant is a formal agreement, a contract, between two parties in which, typically, each party has responsibilities for action.

Ask: What are some forms of contracts (covenants) that we enter into today? (*such as buying a home or car, renting an apartment, signing up for credit cards or cell phones*) Discuss any personal experiences learners have had with contracts, especially regarding the ramifications of breaking a covenant and the penalties that ensued.

Under the word COVENANT draw two columns and label them as follows:

COVENANT

God's Responsibilities & Actions

Responsibilities & Actions of the People

According to these verses what are "God's Responsibilities and Actions?" What are "The Responsibilities and Actions of the People?" Write answers in the appropriate column.

SHARE: God has also made a covenant with us—it's His **new covenant** that Jesus established by His death. On the night before He went to the cross, Jesus announced this covenant: "As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take and eat it; this is My body.' Then He took a cup, and after giving thanks, He gave it to them and said, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood that establishes the covenant; it is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins'" (Matt. 26:26-28).

Ask: What is our responsibility in regard to this new covenant? What is God's responsibility?

GOD IS MIGHTIER THAN YOUR ENEMIES

READ: Deuteronomy 7:17-26

In the conquest of Canaan, the Israelites were the military underdogs. And the only way they could conquer the Canaanite nations would be through a miracle from God. The people of God were facing some of the strongest armies on the earth. Jericho was the most heavily fortified city in the ancient world. There were still giants in the land. It would have been easy to give in to fear. Moses, their head coach, encouraged them. But he didn't tell them to trust in their own abilities; he charged them to trust in the power of their God. He said, "Don't be terrified of them, for the Lord your God, a great and awesome God, is among you" (7:21).

Ask: How is God's desire that His people live separated lives seen in these verses? If God were writing these verses specifically to us today, how might these verses be worded?

Tell your group to envision a snap mousetrap. Remind them that it works by providing some sort of bait to entice the mouse but then traps the mouse when it attempts to eat the bait. **Ask:** How is this a picture of what Moses described in verse 25? What are some other examples of things used to ensnare prey?

Explain that **fear** sometimes leads us into snares. And there are times when each of us faces frightful enemies who try to make us afraid. Your enemy might be called cancer, grief, heartache, or rejection. The Lord Jesus told His disciples, "Don't fear those who kill the body, and after that can do nothing more ... Aren't five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight. Indeed, the hairs of your head are all counted. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows!" (Luke 12:4,6-7).

God cares so much for each of us that He has numbered the hairs on our head. God cares about the tiniest details of our lives. When it comes to His compassion for us, nothing is trivial to our Creator.

A good acrostic for irrational FEAR is "False Evidence Appearing Real." When we look at things from our earthly perspective, those gigantic enemies appear to be unbeatable. But when we look

at them from the perspective of God, they seem tiny compared to His power. The next time you're facing enemies that seem to be stronger than you, just claim this promise: **God is mightier than your enemies.**

Read **Deuteronomy 7:26** again. Ask: What are some ways that we bring "abhorrent" things into our homes today? What can a believer in Christ do about that?

RESPONSE

Are you an "out-of-the-ordinary" Christian? Remember to be holy means to be dedicated or consecrated to God; sacred; set apart. Take time this week to ask God to search your heart and reveal any unholiness that has crept in. Ask God to keep you from evil and to guard your witness. Remember, just a tiny leak can eventually sink a boat.

JBS 2015 Personal Study Guide Deuteronomy. LifeWay Press. Retrieved from <https://read.lifeway.com>

COMMENTARY

God called the newly formed nation of Israel to be a holy people (Lev. 19:1; 20:26). But Israel was vulnerable to the influences of the pagan cultures around them. In this section we read of God's plan to keep Israel separate from the influences that would corrupt them.

DEUTERONOMY 7:1-5

Hundreds of years before Moses, God promised that He would give the land of Canaan to the descendants of Abraham's son Isaac. The LORD Himself would bring the Israelites **into the land**, and it would be theirs **to possess**. God would drive out many nations that were collectively **more numerous and powerful** than Israel—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites (7:1). Though other cultural groups also inhabited Canaan, the mention of the seven nations was probably meant to symbolize the entirety of the non-Israelite populations in the promised land.

God would give these nations **over to** the Israelites, but it was up to Israel's armed forces to **defeat them** and to **destroy them** (7:2). The Hebrew phrase translated as "completely destroy them" is an emphatic one; it twice employs the verb suggesting total annihilation of a group of human beings who were accursed by God due to their disobedience to Him.

God was ordering Israelite soldiers to wipe out entire villages, and He knew this command would be especially difficult for the Israelites to fulfill. Nevertheless, the Lord directed His fighters to **show ... no mercy** to the inhabitants of Canaan. The Israelites might be tempted to work out a peaceful arrangement with the people groups in the land, much as Abraham and Isaac had done centuries earlier and to coexist peacefully with them. But the Lord told His people to **make no treaty with them** (7:2), and they were certainly forbidden to **intermarry with them** (7:3).

Idolatry, the worship of an image believed to be the embodiment of a deity, was also part and parcel of local Canaanite religions (Num. 33:52). This kind of activity was also expressly forbidden by God (see Deut. 5:8-9), and **any culture** that became involved in this practice became **subject to God's wrath**. In fact, when the Israelites—God's covenant people—had engaged in this forbidden practice in Moses' day not long after they had departed from Egypt, God punished them severely (Ex. 32:15-35). Members of the priestly tribe of Levi were ordered to kill the Israelites who sinned,

with the result that about 3,000 people died.

Canaanite religion was attractive to those who were in it and around it. After all, that brand of paganism made the expression of sexual desire a central part of the religious experience. It had beautiful, skillfully created gold, silver, wooden, and pottery artwork in the form of idols; and it included mystical, macabre, and cruel rituals, including ones in which priests killed and burned human beings, boiled infant animals in their mother's milk, and attempted to contact the dead.

In fact, Canaanite religion was so attractive that the only way to eliminate it was to **completely destroy** everything associated with it. Thus, God's people were ordered to **tear down** the pagans' altars, **smash their sacred pillars** (objects associated with male gods), **cut down their Asherah poles** (objects associated with female gods), and **burn up their carved images** (7:5). The Lord knew that if the Israelites did not carry out these tasks and eliminate all who worshiped in this way, the pagans would **turn Israel's sons away from the Lord to worship other gods** (7:4). And when Israel began acting like the pagans, they would be judged like the pagans; **the LORD's anger would burn against them**, and He would **swiftly destroy** His own covenant people (7:4).

DEUTERONOMY 7:6-16

God's plan all along for His covenant people Israel was that they would be a **holy people belonging to the LORD Himself** (7:6). More than half a millennium earlier God had chosen Abraham, and now in Moses' day the LORD had **chosen Abraham's descendants to be His own possession out of all the peoples on the face of the earth** (7:6). The apostles Paul and Peter applied these verses to Christians as well; we, too, are a people chosen by God (Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:9), called to live lives characterized by holiness (Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:15-16).

God **chose** Israel as His own possession and **was devoted to** that nation (7:7), but it wasn't because of any obvious qualities that were present within them. It wasn't, for example, because they **were more numerous than all peoples** (7:7). In fact, when God first revealed His plans for Israel, He did so to the childless old man Abraham. At that time the Israelites were literally **the fewest of all peoples** (7:7). But God's gracious blessings on that nation weren't based on anything Israel was or had done. Israel's freedom, protection, and provision were sovereign gifts of God. And it was two qualities in God especially that were responsible for Israel's favored treatment: His love and His faithfulness. God **redeemed Israel from the place of slavery** in Egypt because He **loved** Israel and He **kept the oath**—that is, the promise—He **swore to** Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (7:8).

God had been good to Israel. So how should the people respond to Him? Moses provided four solid answers to this question in verses 9-10. First, Israel should acknowledge that **Yahweh their God is the one true God**. Second, they should acknowledge two key facts about the character of their God. Fact number one is that their Savior is **faithful** to His commitments, and He **keeps His gracious covenant loyalty for a thousand generations**—that's Moses' way of saying forever. Fact number two that Israel needed to know about their God was that He demands absolute loyalty and devotion from His people; **He will not hesitate to directly pay back the one who hates Him** (7:10).

The last two ways Israel should respond to God's amazing goodness were by loving and obeying Him. The Lord God loved Israel, and Israel should **love Him** back; God gave Israel rules to live by, and Israel was obligated to obey them (7:9). In a very real sense, obedience is the sincerest expression of love toward God. It's certainly that way in relationships between people. Israel was to **keep the Lord's statutes and ordinances** that Moses was **giving them to follow** (7:11). The Hebrew word translated *keep* can also mean "to act as a military guard" (see 1 Kings 14:27; 20:39); Israel was to be as attentive to God's commands as a military guard is to protecting high-value

objects or people.

As Israel was **careful to keep** Yahweh's **ordinances**, the Lord would be diligent to keep supplying Israel with the blessings associated with **His covenant loyalty** (7:12). As a result, Israel would **be blessed above all peoples** (7:14). And what a rich set of blessings that would be! Nurtured by divine **love** and kindness, God would **multiply** Israel and all that was theirs (7:13).

The Lord mentioned four primary blessings associated with obedience to Him: an increased population, good health, increased harvests, and enlarged herds and flocks. Within the borders of **the land He swore that He would give** them, the Lord would **bleed** and increase the number of their **descendants** (7:13)—literally “the fruit of [their] womb.” There would be **no infertile male or female among** them (7:14). More than that, **the LORD would remove all sickness from** them, especially the **terrible diseases** which they had seen in **Egypt** (7:15). The people's obedience would also result in an increased food supply; Israel's **grain, new wine, and olive oil** (7:13) would be abundant. Israel's **herds and flocks** (7:13), primary measures of wealth in western Asia in Old Testament times, would also increase in number.

In contrast to this amazing array of the blessings Israel would enjoy was the dark destiny that lay before the Canaanite peoples under God's judgment. The Lord would **inflict** dreaded diseases on **all who hate** Israel (7:15). He would deliver the people of those condemned cultures **over to** Israel's fighting men, and **Israel must destroy** them without **pity** (7:16). As difficult as that would be, they must do it; otherwise Israel would begin to **worship** the fascinating but forbidden pagan **gods**. Of course, this would **be a snare to** God's people that would result in deadly judgment against them.

DEUTERONOMY 7:17-26

Israel was to act as God's agent of judgment against the Canaanites. But this task involved armed confrontation with societies that had large populations, cities with high stone walls around them, and metal weapons (most of Israel's would have been made of rock or wood). The Israelites would naturally be tempted to think that these Canaanite **nations** were **greater than** God's covenant people, and that it would be impossible to **drive them out** of the promised land (7:17).

This seed of doubt, in turn, could easily grow into a paralyzing fear that would create two even bigger problems: it would keep Israel from receiving the promised land, and it would prevent them from fulfilling the judgment task God had assigned them to do. Moses understood this, and so he rightly warned the Israelites **not to be afraid** of the Canaanites (7:18). Instead of focusing on the frightening people in front of them, they must focus on the powerful God among them. With inner eyes of faith they were to look back in time and see again **what the LORD ... did to Pharaoh and all Egypt** (7:18). They were to remember **the great trials** they went through, but even more **the signs and wonders, the strong hand and outstretched arm, by which the LORD had brought** them out of the land of slavery (7:19).

In Moses' day, Egypt was the world's number one world superpower, yet it had been overpowered by Israel's infinitely powerful God. And because God never changes, Israel could rest in the assurance that **the LORD would do the same to all the peoples** of Canaan (7:19). Just as God had once used insects—flies and gnats (see Ex. 8:16-32)—to defeat Egypt, so now He would **send the hornet against** the Canaanites **until all the survivors and those hiding from Israel perish** (7:20). But the Lord would do other things as well to assist Israel in its conquest of the land: He would disrupt Canaanite societies and **throw them into great confusion** (7:23). Political structures would crumble as He would **hand their kings over** to the Israelites (7:24; see Josh. 12:7-24).

Just as God worked over a period of time to release the Israelites from the Egyptian nation, so He would **drive out** the Canaanite nations **little by little**, not **all at once** (7:22). God's measured, stepwise plan for Israel to take control of the promised land was by design; it insured that large areas of Canaan would not be underpopulated, a situation that would have permitted **the wild animals to become too numerous** to control (7:22).

The nations of Canaan would not be able to destroy the Israelites. But a threat more menacing than all the armies of Canaan awaited Israel in the promised land: the **silver and gold** encrusted idols found in the temples and certain homes in Canaan. These objects, which played a central role in ancient pagan worship, were especially attractive because of the precious metals on them, as well as the supposed spiritual power within them. These doubly dangerous objects were not to be tolerated; they were **abhorrent to the LORD** (7:25). The people must be imitators of God, choosing to **utterly detest and abhor** all idols (7:26).

Idols were so economically valuable and perversely appealing that the only way Israel could resist them was by totally destroying them. God's covenant people were to **burn** every idol (7:25). Since many idols were made of wood overlaid with a valuable metal (Isa. 40:19-20), this action would cause them to turn to ash and melt into a blob. But even a misshapen metal object could become an object of worship if the Israelites were to **covet the silver and gold on the images** (7:25). When that happened Israel would be spiritually **ensnared** and so would become **set apart for destruction** (7:26).

Sadly, Moses' prophetic words of warning were completely fulfilled almost 700 years after they were spoken. The author of 2 Kings (17:6-20) noted that Israel's destruction at the hand of the Assyrians in 722 B.C. happened in large measure because of the nation's idolatry. Israel "pursued worthless idols and became worthless themselves" (2 Kings 17:15).

Finally, in response to Moses' intercession the Lord relented of His anger and **agreed not to annihilate** Israel (10:10), though their sins made them deserving of it. Instead, the Lord ordered His people to **continue the journey** to the promised land under Moses' capable leadership (10:11).