

LEADER GUIDE

DEUTERONOMY

A CHALLENGE TO A NEW GENERATION

GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE A SECURE FUTURE

BIG IDEA: We can trust God through the transitions in life.

DATE: Sunday, August 2, 2026

SCRIPTURE: Deuteronomy 31:1-8; 26-27; 32:44-47

OPENING QUESTION

Write the following names on the board: Todd Beamer, Buddha, Winston Churchill and Salvador Dali

Tell your group you are going to read the last words of these four people, and they have to guess who said what. You may want to read all the quotes before asking them to guess.

"Oh, I am so bored with it all." – Winston Churchill

"Work hard to gain your own salvation." – Buddha

"I do not believe in my death." – Salvador Dali

"Let's roll." – Todd Beamer

Why is there such an emphasis placed on a person's last words? Do you know of any famous last words? What would you want your last words to be?

Now share these final recorded words:

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" – Joshua

"I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. And now the prize awaits me, the crown of righteousness" (2 Timothy 4:6-8) – Paul

Today we are going to be looking at some of Moses's final words to his people – the people he has been leading for 40 years – before his death.

SETTING THE STAGE

In this final section of Deuteronomy, we find the last words of Moses. A great deal of the Bible to this point has been about Moses. He had been a key leader since the time the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt. He gave us a record of the 120 years of his life. As he prepared to die, he proclaimed both warnings and blessings to the generation poised to claim the promised land.

SCRIPTURE READING

Deuteronomy 31:1-8; 26-27; 32:44-47 (CSB)

Then Moses continued to speak these words to all Israel, ²saying, "I am now 120 years old; I can no longer act as your leader. The LORD has told me, 'You will not cross the Jordan.'³ The LORD your God is the one who will cross ahead of you. He will destroy these nations before you, and you will drive them out. Joshua is the one who will cross ahead of you, as the LORD has said. ⁴The LORD will deal with them as he did Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, and their land when he destroyed them. ⁵The LORD will deliver them over to you, and you must do to them exactly as I have commanded you. ⁶Be strong and courageous; don't be terrified or afraid of them. For the LORD your God is the one who will go with you; he will not leave you or abandon you." ⁷Moses then summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you will go with this people into the land the LORD swore to give to their ancestors. You will enable them to take possession of it. ⁸The LORD is the one who will go before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or abandon you. Do not be afraid or discouraged."

²⁶"Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God so that it may remain there as a witness against you. ²⁷For I know how rebellious and stiff-necked you are. If you are rebelling against the LORD now, while I am still alive, how much more will you rebel after I am dead!

³² ⁴⁴Moses came with Joshua son of Nun and recited all the words of this song in the presence of the people. ⁴⁵After Moses finished reciting all these words to all Israel, ⁴⁶he said to them, "Take to heart all these words I am giving as a warning to you today, so that you may command your children to follow all the words of this law carefully. ⁴⁷For they are not meaningless words to you but they are your life, and by them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess."

DISCUSSION

TIME FOR A NEW LEADER

READ: Deuteronomy 31:1-8

Ask: How old was Moses at this point? What was his message to the people? How do you think they would have felt at this point? (They had spent the past 40 years with Moses as their leader.)

Who did Moses reveal to be the next leader?

It must have been a sad day when Moses announced to the Israelites that he would no longer be their leader. With great sadness, he informed them that he would not be accompanying them into Canaan. He was the only leader this generation had known. After their initial sorrow, their next emotion was probably fear. You can almost hear the whispered question that spread among the camp, "How will we ever make it without Moses?"

But Moses reassured the people by telling them that Yahweh was their true Leader, and He would never leave them.

How well do you handle change? Why do you think that is?

How does it strengthen your faith to know that God will never forsake you?

Ask: What was the repeated encouragement to the people and to Joshua? (don't be afraid, be strong, be courageous) Why was it important for the people and Joshua to hear this message?

MOSES'S FINAL WARNING

READ: Deuteronomy 31:26-27

Take a poll with your group with this question:

On a scale of 1 (no confidence) to 10 (complete confidence), how confident was Moses that the people would keep their covenant commitment to the Lord? Discuss responses.

Discuss how these verses answer the poll question.

Ask: Has much changed between these early followers of God and believers today? Why? Explain.

Read Moses' further description in Deuteronomy 31:29 of what he expected would happen.

For I know that after my death you will become completely corrupt and turn from the path I have commanded you. Disaster will come to you in the future, because you will do what is evil in the LORD's sight, angering him with what your hands have made."

Explain that Deuteronomy 32:1-43 is referred to as "The Song of Moses" and is the beginning of his last words to the people. Highlight the importance of these words by reading aloud Deuteronomy 32:3 - *For I will proclaim the LORD's name. Declare the greatness of our God!*

Give a summary of the following content:

Deuteronomy 32 is often called the "Song of Moses." It should probably be identified as the "Sermon of Moses." And like many sermons, Moses had an introduction, three main points, a strong conclusion, and then he gave the invitation.

In the introduction (32:1-4), he began by exalting the greatness of God. He said, "For I will proclaim Yahweh's name. Declare the greatness of our God! The Rock—His work is perfect; all His ways are entirely just. A faithful God, without prejudice, He is righteous and true" (32:3-4).

In the first point of the message (32:5-14), Moses recounted how God had brought the Israelites from bondage into liberty. He employed the beautiful imagery of how God cares for the Israelites the way an eagle hovers over his young.

In the second main point of the sermon (32:15-18), Moses pointed out how Israel rejected God's gracious care. He called Israel "Jeshurun" which means "Upright one." He might have even been using the term sarcastically, because Israel had been anything but upright. He said, "Jeshurun became fat and rebelled ... He abandoned the God who made him and scorned the Rock of his salvation" (32:15).

In the third, and climatic point (32:19-42), it is no longer Moses speaking; instead, God spoke through Moses. And what He said wasn't pleasant. God announced,

They have provoked My jealousy with their so-called gods; they have enraged Me with their worthless idols. So I will provoke their jealousy with an inferior people; I will enrage them with a foolish nation (32:21).

READ: Deuteronomy 32:44-47

Ask: What was Moses' challenge to the people in these verses? Why did Moses have to present

similar challenges over and over again to the people? Are we any different in needing reminders?

Ask: Like the Israelites, how can you “take to heart” the truths in God’s Word? How does God’s Word give us “life”?

Would you live your life any differently if you knew for certain that you would die on a certain day?

None of us know exactly how or when we are going to die. But God favored Moses by telling him that he would soon die. God said:

Go up Mount Nebo in the Abarim range in the land of Moab, across from Jericho, and view the land of Canaan I am giving the Israelites as a possession. Then you will die on the mountain that you go up, and you will be gathered to your people (32:49-50).

Moses is a great example to us of how to deal with disappointment. His entire life’s dream was to lead the Israelites into the promised land. But God told him that, like Aaron, he wouldn’t be able to fulfill that dream. The reason? God said, “For both of you broke faith with Me among the Israelites at the waters of Meribath-kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin by failing to treat Me as holy in their presence” (32:51).

Explain that as Moses prepared for his death, he offered a blessing over the people of Israel, a common practice in that day and time.

MOSES’S DEATH

SUMMARIZE Deuteronomy 34:1-12 to your group. (note Who buried Moses)

Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which faces Jericho, and the LORD showed him all the land: Gilead as far as Dan, ²all of Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Mediterranean Sea, ³the Negev, and the plain in the Valley of Jericho, the City of Palms, as far as Zoar. ⁴The LORD then said to him, **“This is the land I promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I have let you see it with your own eyes, but you will not cross into it.”**

⁵**So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the LORD’s word. ⁶He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab facing Beth-peor, and no one to this day knows where his grave is. ⁷Moses was one hundred twenty years old when he died; his eyes were not weak, and his vitality had not left him. ⁸The Israelites wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. Then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses came to an end.**

⁹**Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites obeyed him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses. ¹⁰No prophet has arisen again in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. ¹¹He was unparalleled for all the signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do against the land of Egypt—to Pharaoh, to all his officials, and to all his land— ¹²and for all the mighty acts of power and terrifying deeds that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.**

God showed Moses the land He had promised – a bittersweet yet loving gesture. Moses died alone but God is the One who privately buried him. God had already prepared a new leader in Joshua.

What are some challenges a new leader would face having to follow in Moses' footsteps?

LEADERS, take time to discuss: What are some challenges Pastor Tyler might have in following in Pastor's Spike's footsteps? How can we support him?

As we prepare for a new leader at Chets Creek next Sunday, we can thank God for providing a faithful leader through Pastor Spike and we can trust God in providing us a new leader to follow in Pastor Tyler. Empathize with your group that change can be hard. Share excitement for this next chapter in the life of Chets Creek Church. Commit to pray for this transition and this new chapter in the life of our church.

RESPONSE

Most of us will never know when our last words might be. What would you want to express? If you had to sum everything up in one important phrase or statement, what would it be? What are you doing to live up to these last words?

COMMENTARY

Good leaders provide needed supervision, helping us avoid problems while taking advantage of opportunities. They instruct, encourage, and warn us. Godly leaders also lead us by example to greater Christlikeness. In this section, we focus on the Lord's provision of godly leadership for His covenant people as they were poised to enter the promised land.

DEUTERONOMY 31:1-8

With the events of this chapter, Moses proved why he was one of the greatest leaders of God's people in all the Bible. Interestingly, he didn't prove his greatness here by performing some iron-fisted deed that demonstrated crushing authority over the Israelites. Instead, he did it by doing four things that went in completely the opposite direction.

First, Moses publicly admitted his own limitations. Speaking to all Israel (31:1), the esteemed leader began by acknowledging his advanced age. Moses was now 120 years old (31:2). No Israelite leader after Moses would live that long, though Joshua came close, living 110 years (Josh. 24:29).

Moses had served as Israel's leader for 40 years. He still had good health; "his eyes were not weak, and his vitality had not left him" (34:7). Even so, Moses knew he could no longer act as Israel's leader (31:2), the LORD had told him so (31:2). God had already made it known that he would not cross this Jordan to enter the promised land (31:2; see Num. 20:12). The Lord had also previously indicated that Joshua would serve as God's under-shepherd in bringing Israel in (31:3; see Num. 27:18-23).

Moses demonstrated his excellence as a leader secondly by publicly placing his confidence in God's leadership over the nation. Though Moses himself would not accompany his people into Canaan, he reminded the nation they would have someone far better: The LORD would cross the Jordan ahead of them (31:3). He would destroy the nations of Canaan before Israel's armies, and as a result, Israel would drive the land's current residents out (31:3).

Third, Moses demonstrated his fitness for leadership over God's people by exhorting and encouraging them. Positively, Moses gave them two things to do: Israel must be strong and courageous (31:6). Negatively, Israel was not to be terrified or afraid of the pagans in the land

(31:6). They must also remember two game-changing truths: it was the LORD their God who would go with them, and He will not leave them or forsake them (31:6).

Fourth, Moses' greatness as a leader showed in the way he worked with his successor, Joshua. Moses publicly affirmed and encouraged him. In the sight of all Israel, Moses summoned Joshua (31:7) and publicly stood with him. He expressed confidence in the younger man by declaring that Joshua would enable the Israelites to take possession of Canaan (31:7). Moses then challenged him to be strong and courageous, for he would go with this people into the land the LORD swore to give to their fathers (31:7). He reminded Joshua that the LORD would both go before him and be with him; He would never leave him or forsake him (31:8). Therefore, Joshua must not be afraid or discouraged (31:8).

DEUTERONOMY 31:26-27

These verses testify to the hardness of the human heart. Despite the freshness of the memory of Yahweh's redeeming acts, the covenant renewal ceremony on the Plains of Moab, and Yahweh's imminent deliverance of the land into the people's hands, both Yahweh and Moses recognize the inevitable – the people will abandon him and the covenant in favor of the lusty gods of the land.

DEUTERONOMY 32:1-52

The 52 verses of this chapter contain what is often known as the **Song of Moses**. Three ideas stand out: God's grace and kindness, Israel's wickedness, and God's resulting judgment.

The Lord is flawless in His character – just, faithful, righteous, true, and without prejudice (32:4). He is good toward all people; for example, He gave the nations their inheritance (32:8). But the Lord was especially good to Israel. The Lord served as Israel's Father; He made and sustained Israel (32:6) and counted them as His own inheritance (32:9). Yahweh surrounded Israel with a wall of protection, cared for him, and protected him as carefully as He would the pupil of His own eye (32:10). Like a parent eagle with his young, the Lord hovered over Israel, spread His wings, and caught the nation as it faltered in flight (32:11). He led Israel through the desert (32:12). God supplied His people with honey from the rock, oil, cream, milk, the fat of lambs, grain, and wine from the finest grapes (32:13-14). Following a later period of judgment, Moses prophesied that **the LORD** would vindicate His people and have compassion on His servants (32:36).

However, it seems that Israel was as bad as God was good. As Moses characterized them, the Israelites were a foolish and senseless people (32:6; see also 32:28) who had abandoned the God who made them (32:15). They provoked the Lord's jealousy with foreign gods **and** enraged Him with detestable practices (32:16). If Israel were a grapevine, their vine would have been grown from the cuttings of the vine of Sodom and their grapes would be poisonous (32:32); any wine produced from those grapes would be like serpents' venom, the deadly poison of cobras (32:33).

Due to Israel's stubborn wickedness, Moses foresaw that the Lord would bring His heavy hand of judgment against the land. He would pile disasters on them (32:23). Acting as the Divine Warrior, the Lord would use up His arrows against His own people (32:23). As a result, the Israelites would be weak from hunger, ravaged by pestilence, mauled by wild beasts, and attacked by venomous snakes (32:24). A sword would be unsheathed in the land, and it would take the lives of children ... the young man and the young woman, and the infant and the gray-haired man (35:25).

But God's judgments would not last forever. The hard times would come to an end as the Lord restored His people. At that time the Lord would avenge the blood of His servants and purify His land and His people (32:43).

After Moses had finished reciting all these words to all Israel, he challenged those under his watch care to take to heart all the words (32:46). They were not just for the benefit of the adults in the crowd; they were for the entire community. Therefore, parents were to command their children to carefully follow all the words of Moses' law (32:46). As Israel submitted to God's law, they would discover that it was their **life**; obedience to the Lord was also that which enabled Israel to live long in the land (32:47).

After Moses had finished speaking to the group, the Lord ordered him to go up alone on Mount Nebo (32:49), a 4,000-foot-high peak located 12 miles east of the spot where the Jordan River empties into the Dead Sea. There Moses would **die** and be gathered to his people (32:50). Before he died, however, he would be able to view the land of Canaan that God was giving the Israelites (32:49).

DEUTERONOMY 34:1-4

After speaking his final words to the people he knew and led so long and so well, **Moses went up** from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo (34:1). There the LORD showed him all the promised **land**. Moses could see it, but **not cross into it** (34:4). Only in the days of Jesus would he actually enter into that blessed land (see Matt. 17:3). (A related *Biblical Illustrator* article, "Mount Nebo," is on the CD-ROM.)

DEUTERONOMY 34:5-12

And so it was that **Moses the servant of the LORD died** (34:5); he **was 120 years old** at the time of his death (34:7). The Lord Himself **buried Moses in the nearby valley**, but **no one knows to this day where his grave is** (34:6). The Israelites **wept for Moses for 30 days** (34:8). In all the history of Israel, no one person had a ministry as impressive as Moses. His successes in confronting Pharaoh, in leading Israel out of Egypt and through the Red Sea, in receiving the Law at Mt. Sinai, and in leading Israel through 40 years of desert wanderings gave him a unique place in biblical history. But more impressive than all his accomplishments was this one simple fact: he was a **prophet** whom the LORD **knew face to face** (34:10).

Moses was gone, but Israel was not leaderless. Under God's leadership (see Num. 27:18-23), **Moses had laid his hands** of ordination on Joshua son of Nun (34:9). Now Joshua **was filled with the spirit of divine wisdom** (34:9) and a readiness to lead God's people to fulfill their destiny in the promised land.