

# Deuteronomy 8: Honoring God with your Wealth

## Leader Guide



Context: The book of Deuteronomy describes the covenant love between God and His people. Passages throughout Deuteronomy (like Deut. 8) reiterate “Yahweh loves Israel with a tender, undeserved yet determined, almost fierce love!” Israel’s role in the covenant was to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength (Deut. 6:5).” The chapters that follow this command go into specifics about what a community that loves God will look like and do.

In Deuteronomy 8, we find both a recounting of God’s love (8:2-5, 7-9, 14-16, 18), and a description of how Israel should love God in response (8:1, 6, 10-11, 18). Notice that God’s love sometimes took the form of a lack of prosperity (no food, no water, lots of snakes) for the sake of disciplining the Israelites (v. 5). The purpose of God’s discipline during those hard times was that His people would learn to trust Him, even as they were about to head into times of prosperity. Deuteronomy was written to reaffirm the covenant between God and His people, as they were about to enter the Promised Land. Now that they were about to experience blessings beyond their wildest imagination, they are being told, in Deuteronomy 8 and elsewhere, to remember the lessons of Egypt and the desert. They were also told to teach their children about God’s unfailing love that they were to depend on at all times, whether they were in times of plenty or times of scarcity.

Theme: Deuteronomy 8 describes some important ways that they were to honor God in the Promised Land. Notice how the structure of the passage alternates between these two strands:

Israel Should Honor God by

- v. 1 Follow every command
- v. 6 Observe commands, walk in his ways, and revere him
- v 10-11 Praise the Lord, Do not forget what He has done
- v. 18 Remember the Lord.

God loved Israel by

- v. 2-5 God led, fed, humbled, and miraculously clothed Israel.
- v. 7-9 God is bringing Israel into the Promised Land
- v. 14-16 God brought you out of slavery
- v. 18 God gives you the ability to produce wealth.

The crux of the matter, and the tension in the passage, was whether or not the Israelites would honor God amidst prosperity as they had learned to do in the desert. The key to successfully honoring God amidst their wealth was to remember that God provided for them amidst slavery and poverty. The passage ends with a detailed description of the spiritual dislocation that can occur if we do not remember God amidst wealth (8:17-18)

Aim: Just by being American, we are in the top 5% of the richest people in the richest millennium in the history of the world. However, times are tough right now and circumstances have changed for many in our church. The application of this passage is the same for someone who is going through financial hardship as well as those who are well off financially. Either way, we must remember that the God who loves us and sustains us is the God who provides our wealth. Understanding that can encourage the person facing hardship and allow the wealthy to use their wealth in God-honoring ways. Our relationship to our wealth, or our lack of wealth, will be unsatisfactory and cause spiritual dislocation if we forget that God is the ultimate provider.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul House, *Old Testament Theology*, page 178. Downer’s Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998.

## Study Questions:

Openers: If J.D. had to boil his sermon down to one point in five minutes, what would be that one point?

Describe some ways that God has provided for you most significantly in your life.

It might be worth compiling some of these answers. In speaking about these things, your group will be honoring/remembering God's provision.

[v. 1-5] Why does God test His people?

Verses 2, 3, and 5 provide some of the answer: God is disciplining us to make us into the type of people that can live in the ultimate Promised Land- Heaven. In the meantime, God breaks us down and builds us up through prosperity and discipline so that we would remember Him and honor Him in all that we say and do.

[v. 6-9] How is our situation similar to, and different from the Israelites who moved into the Promised Land?

For most in RDU, we experience prosperity as it was for the Israelites who moved into the Promised Land. In both circumstances, there is danger in taking God's provision for granted, since it was so abundant.

How were the Israelites supposed to honor God with their wealth? What ways have you seen people use money in God honoring ways?

Isaiah 58- Honor God by caring for the needy; Lev. 19:9 and Deut. 24:19-22- Leave the extra from your fields for the poor. Hag. 1-2- rebuild the temple so that the community can worship. There are others!

[v. 10-20] Speaking first from this text, then from life experience, what effects can prosperity have on a person spiritually?

Verse 14 and 17 indicate pride, self-reliance, and forgetting God's place in your life.

What were some ways that God provided for the Israelites?

God provided in times of hardship with just enough manna and water. God also provided the abundance in the Promised Land. It will be important to discuss God's hand in both circumstances.

How can remembering the past help us understand our present circumstances?

God has revealed how much He loves us and that He is in control through past events, both in our lives and in the Bible. Remembering those aspects of God's personality will steady you to face any circumstance as a rock. You know that God is loving you and caring for you whether you are prospering or whether you are experiencing discipline.

Look at Matthew 6:19-21, 25-34? How does Jesus affirm the teaching of Deuteronomy 8? What does Jesus add?

Have your mind, and your money, on heavenly pursuits; in times of trouble, lean on God's provision.

Pulling from all the above material, what are some ways that you can use God's physical provision to honor Him?