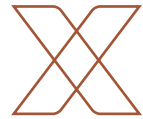




Undivided Worship

Session 10 • Deuteronomy 12:1-11, 29-32



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 6** (*Poster: Ancient Covenant Structure*) on a focal wall. Make copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Numbers, Deuteronomy*).

READ: Invite a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 85. Encourage adults to create a list of reasons why people don't come to church. Record their responses on the board and discuss which excuses might be the easiest to use and why.

ASK: Do you think God cares about where and how people worship Him? If so, why? (p. 85)

EXPLAIN: Share that a significant issue that God led Moses to address with His people was how and where they worshiped Him, especially compared to how other people in Canaan worshiped their deities.

TRANSITION: *As the Israelites prepared to enter the promised land, God provided specific instructions about their worship practices. He had high expectations for them to follow those instructions. As we dig into those expectations in this passage, reflect on your own worship and any adjustments God might be leading you to make in that area.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

SUMMARIZE: Use this content from **Understand the Context** (p. 85) to overview briefly Deuteronomy 12:1–26:19:

- This week's study comes from the latter part of Moses's second message (12:1–26:19). . . . These applications addressed specific matters the Israelites would face in the years ahead. Moses's words would teach the Israelites how to live as God's people in the land He was giving them.

READ: Point out **Pack Item 6** (*Poster: Ancient Covenant Structure*). **As a volunteer reads aloud Deuteronomy 12:1-7**, direct adults to listen for the parts of the covenant listed on the poster. Invite adults to match words and phrases from the Scripture passage with the parts of the covenant.

DISCUSS: Direct adults to review Deuteronomy 12:1-7 and to look for God's instructions about idolatry in the promised land. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share what they found. Lead a brief discussion about how Israel's worship of God should differ from pagan worship in Canaan.

- **(12:2-3)** The Canaanites often used high mountains and hills as holy sites because

they believed it put them closer to their gods. They also might establish a shrine under a green tree that could suggest fertility. The Israelites often violated God's command against worshiping Him at the high places (Deut. 12:13-14). Kings such as Hezekiah and Josiah tried to rid the land of these sites, but with limited success (2 Kings 18:4; 23:8-9). The Israelites were to "tear down" their altars and "smash their sacred pillars" that represented the gods of Canaan. "Asherah poles" were wooden poles that represented Asherah, the consort of Baal, Canaan's chief god. God's people were to burn these, along with cutting down "carved images." The Israelites were to "wipe out their names" from the land. Only the name of Israel's God would stand in Canaan!

ASK: Why was it important for the Israelites to focus first on ridding the land of the pagan worship sites and related objects? (p. 87)

TRANSITION: *The Lord knew that pagan influences would compromise Israel's worship. He also knew that adopting His standards would help Israel avoid idolatry in the future.*

READ: Call on a volunteer to read aloud Deuteronomy 12:8-11 as adults listen for the differences between the Israelites current behavior and what they would experience in the promised land.

ASK: Why is it dangerous to follow our own ideas about worshiping God instead of following His design? (p. 87)

EXPLAIN: To explain God's plan for the Israelites' worship in the promised land, share this content:

- In the wilderness the Israelites sacrificed whatever and however they wished. Rather than having multiple or even a portable worship hub, they needed a centralized site where they could celebrate, worship, and participate in their God-directed rituals and services. Having a set place would give the Hebrews a sense of permanence.

ASK: Why did God want to designate a certain place for His people to worship Him? Why was that important to Him—and to them? (p. 87)

DISCUSS: Highlight the ideas of "resting place" and an "inheritance" for the people. Lead a brief discussion on how the promised land would provide those things for the Israelites and how that should have informed their worship of God. Emphasize how attractive security and stability would have been to a people who had wandered in the desert for forty years.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Deuteronomy 12:29-32 while adults listen for what God would do and what the Israelites were to avoid in taking possession of the land.

LIST: Draw two columns on the board, *God* and *The People*. Direct adults to scan Deuteronomy 12:29-32 and call out actions of God and actions of the Israelites. Record responses in the proper columns on the board.

DISCUSS: Facilitate a discussion about the dangers the Israelites faced. Summarize the following:

- “Having promised His people military victory, God knew the Israelites faced another threat—spiritual defeat. He did not want His people to go after foreign gods. A concern was that the Hebrews would attempt to incorporate some of the Canaanites’ religious practices and beliefs into Judaism. The word for this type of mixing is ‘syncretism.’ . . . Verse 31 twice mentions their gods. The Egyptians and Canaanites worshiped multiple gods. Temples and altars dotted the landscape. Verse 31, though, speaks twice of the Lord, singular. Worshiping one God differentiated the Israelites from all other people groups”

ASK: How do we draw the line so we practice only what God finds acceptable in worship? (p. 87)

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: List the following points on the board from this week’s Bible passage:

- Believers should be prepared to recognize and avoid false gods.
- We are to worship the Lord by bringing our offerings to Him.
- Believers should be strong spiritually, worshiping God alone.

RANK: Guide adults to reflect on the statements and to rank them from easiest to most difficult. Allow volunteers to share which

statements they find easiest or most difficult to do and to explain why.

REFLECT: Direct adults to find the **Apply the Text** question on page 91. Guide them to consider how they can avoid being drawn away from faithfulness to God in their daily lives.

PRAY: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Numbers, Deuteronomy*). Lead adults to use the prompts on the handout to pray Deuteronomy 12:32 back to God. After a few minutes, close in prayer, asking God to help adults honor God and His Word through genuine worship.

AFTER THE SESSION

Text or email adults to remind them of the prayer exercise from the Challenge activity. Encourage them to continue using the prompts from **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Numbers, Deuteronomy*) to pray that the Lord will lead them to remain faithful to Him as they worship and serve Him.