

## Season 7: Deuteronomy

### Episode 12: Deuteronomy: Delighting and Remembering with Jen Wilkin

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**Sarah:** This season has been sponsored by Kaleidoscope Kids Bibles and 10ofthose.com. We're so thankful for their partnership with us, enabling us to record week by week. For any of the books we've mentioned this season, do head on over to 10ofthose.com to grab your copies at discounted prices. Today we're wrapping up our season in Deuteronomy and we're delighted to welcome author and Bible teacher Jen Wilkin onto the podcast as we press into what it really looks like to delight in the law of the Lord for ourselves. We were so inspired by our conversation with Jen and we really hope you will be too. Let's get to it.

**Felicity:** Welcome to Two Sisters and a Cup of Tea. My name is Felicity and I'm in the States. This is my sister Sarah, who's in the UK, and today we're delighted to have Jen Wilkin joining our conversation as we draw our season in Deuteronomy to a close. Welcome, Jen, thanks so much for joining us.

**Jen:** Thanks for having me on.

**Felicity:** Many people will know of you, may have read your books, heard your teaching, but for those of us who don't, for those people who don't, where are you at this point? Where? How do you spend your time? What is it to be? Jen Wilkin?

**Jen:** Well, I live in Texas with my husband, my two dogs and one of our grown children is with us for a temporary stay, but the rest of the kids are all out of the house, either married or into. What's next, education wise or career wise. But most of them are in the general area and we are recent grandparents and so we're loving that. I work at my local church and lead our women's Bible study there and spend the rest of my time writing and teaching, traveling around the country.

**Felicity:** That sounds about like five lives.

**Jen:** I have three jobs and I'm like, don't say it, doesn't forget. Yeah.

**Felicity:** We've both benefited hugely from your books that you've written over recent years. I mean, I try and give women of the Word to everyone. I just think that's such a great access point to be getting into the Word. And then obviously with Deuteronomy, we've been really enjoying ten Words to live by. Are you working on anything at the moment? Writing anything particular? At the moment?

**Jen:** I am actually working on a study of revelation because why not, right? What could go wrong? That's my biggest to do on my to do list right now, but I am thoroughly enjoying it.

**Sarah:** Brilliant. How about tea and biscuits? Jen, do you like a cup of tea? We're talking about the English style biscuit here. I don't know how much you appreciate a biscuit.

**Jen:** Well, so I do love tea. I drink tea in the afternoon, coffee in the morning, tea in the afternoon and biscuits. Big fan. When my kids were little, I had a British friend and my children would run up at the play dates and say, mommy, I want a cookie. Run up and say, Mommy may have a biscuit. Agreed that her child was more charming than our children and that we should have trained them into different language.

**Felicity:** That was a fair impression, to be honest. My kids are similarly, our friends around here are impressed by their requests for biscuits because of the accent, but the reality is they're just as sugary as there's no healthy kind of aspect to it. So we love the way that you teach the Bible and you clearly love the word for yourself, and you've just described quite a full life. And my impression is that you've had quite a full life all through having small children, right through to the adult children phase you're in now. But what does it look like to grow in a deep study of God's Word? I think that's really apparent from the way that you write and the way that you teach. And what does it look like to be intentional in that when work pressures and stretched family seasons and it can all just feel so overwhelming. But it seems to me that you've maintained or grown in this. Like, what's the secret? How do we grow deeply in this?

**Jen:** Yeah, well, there's nothing like the passage of time to aid in this. And I really think that more than the typical demands of family and work, it's just the general pond that we swim in of instant gratification. And I would add a second thing to that individualism that really push against any kind of discipline related to spending time in the Scriptures. So many of the resources that are created for us are created to enhance a sense of individualism and to enhance our sense of a right to instant gratification. You think about like a lot of the way that devotional material is written is so that I can spend a short period of time looking at a small piece of Scripture and have an immediate dose of satisfaction, some positive emotional response. And so when we're not aware that those factors are playing into the way that we think about scripture or also just a layer on top of that, that idea that my time with the Lord is the most precious. Way of spending time in the scriptures, often at the expense of an understanding of what it looks like to have shared time in the scriptures with other believers. So those two things, I think, are a more significant difficulty when it comes to a long view of the Scriptures and an understanding of the shared value of the Bible. So for me, I can't say that I have a quick fix or a secret sauce. It's just coming back again and again, day after day, week after week, year after year, and saying, I'm going to keep putting investments into this, trusting that the Lord is going to yield a return on them according to his own timing.

**Sarah:** That's so helpful and I think we've been really struck with a similar kind of work. The more that we've gone along in our conversations with one another, the more our hunger to go deeper and deeper kind of grows. And therefore we're not satisfied with that kind of quick fix that so many of the resources can offer you. You do want to go deeper, don't you? But as you say, it's plowing in that time. Yeah, that's really helpful. Okay, so we're concluding our season in Deuteronomy today. It's been wonderful and epic. It's been a joy. But before we get into a couple of specific questions, Jen, we just would just love you to share. Have you got any of your own highlights from the book of Deuteronomy for yourself?

**Jen:** I love Deuteronomy. I think you probably sensed this as you were going through it. It's a neglected book in the Bible. I think there are a couple of reasons for that. One is just because in the typical year of starting a Bible reading plan, most people have fizzled by the time they get to Deuteronomy. And it can feel repetitive, right? I mean, it feels like it's just a rehash of what came in in earlier parts of the pentateuch. And so I think we miss the beauty of what it's doing. But you don't get much better than that closing chapter where Moses goes up on the mountain and then we hear this beautiful benediction spoken over his successor and over his whole life. It's cinematic the way that the book draws to a conclusion. But I think also when I think about repeated words and phrases in Deuteronomy, the phrase do not forget and the word remember just keep coming up over and over and over again. And that is worth paying attention to, right? Because Deuteronomy is only 40 years removed from that generation that was drawn out of Egypt. And the idea that so much could potentially be forgotten in just a 40 year period is so instructive to us because we have every opportunity to forget and to not remember just as Israel did. And so I think of all the care that's given to saying the same thing again in Deuteronomy that was previously said and with color added. That's the other thing I love about it is almost like you get the backstory behind. Some of it is very valuable, not just for what it actually says, but for what it's teaching us about the discipline of remembering. Now I'm going to just be bull about the book for an hour.

**Felicity:** Keep going, keep we love it about.

**Jen:** Where they're paused like they're right on the verge of entering into the promised land with Joshua. Doesn't it seem like at the end of Deuteronomy it should all be look forward, look forward, look forward. Instead you have this whole book that's saying, look behind you, look behind you, look behind you. And I think that is so instructive for us when we face uncertainty or when we face our fear, they're walking into Canaan to face their greatest fears in many regards. And rather than say, look ahead the way it's clear, God says, look behind you at the clear faithfulness that I've shown you in the past. That's what carries you forward, not sight, but faith. And I just think that's so useful for us today.

**Sarah:** And it's so sobering then when you get to whatever chapter it is in Judges and saying a whole generation didn't know the Lord, she just preached his guts out for that many chapters to get.

**Felicity:** That's been a big factor, I feel. Moses has been a big factor. He's been preaching his soul out. He's been exhorting them again and again. Exactly that. Remember, rejoice, get who you are. And then, as you say, Sarah, it falls flat. Which has been part of the challenge, actually, as we've been kind of trying to work out how it all fits together is what you do with the band.

**Sarah:** So, Jen, in your book *Ten Words to Live By*, you have a helpful phrase where you said that the law will either be our demise or our delight. And that tension seems to be set up so beautifully in deuteronomy that it is this beautiful law that people call to delight in it, and yet we're kind of told again and again that they won't and that they don't talk us through. So as people this side of the cross, how do we learn to love the law when we know and feel our sinful hearts in relation to it so much of the time and we can so easily be stuck under that condemnation that it brings? Does that make sense?

**Jen:** Yeah, absolutely. Well, obviously, this side of the cross, we know that we have the one who has obeyed the law perfectly and really that's what changes everything. I know that sounds simplistic, but I mean, it changes everything in terms of the way that we think about the law specifically, because I hear Christians say all the time, and rightly so I just want to be more like Jesus. I want to look like and we know that the New Testament tells us that we should be conformed to the image of Christ. But the piece that I think that we're missing so often is the how? How am I conformed to the image of Christ? Well, Christ loved God's law and on it he meditated day and night. He didn't accidentally obey it perfectly. He committed his life to doing that. And so we know that we do not have to obey the law to earn God's favor. But when we recognize what has been done on our behalf, it becomes our delight to want to live and look like Christ. And if you want to look like Christ, then you have to remember, well, Christ obeyed the law perfectly. So the more obedient I am to God's law not to earn but out of gratitude, the more I will look like Christ who obeyed the law perfectly, and he did so as a means of delight.

**Felicity:** And having that framework of this is a means of delight rather than salvation, or just to be the best pupil in the class kind of idea. That's at the heart of it, isn't it? I think that's something that we've noticed, again at this idea of that this word is your life like this is it's very sort of Psalm 119 kind of esque in the way that he speaks about it. And I think all throughout this we have this idea of the word, the law being a means of grace as well. What does it look like then for the Old Testament law to become a means of grace for us as believers? I think we can see how that's true for them back then, but for us now, because I think we've noticed grace threaded throughout the whole book. It's everywhere. But what does it actually look like for that to be the case for us now?

**Jen:** Well, it is significant when the law is given to Israel, right. God does not give the Ten Commandments to Israel when they're still in Egypt. Certainly think about just the Sabbath command. They can't possibly obey the command to rest when they're still in service to a king who demands work seven days a week. Right. So the law is given at the point where they are able to obey it. And there's a picture, obviously, of our salvation. We were slaves to sin and then we are drawn out through blood and water and we are then given God's good law on the other side of being delivered from sin and death, as this is the path to walk in. I mean, you've seen it all through deuteronomy. What does he say? He says this is where your safety it's not just that, it's where their safety lies. But the law is a means of shalom, of peace among the children of God, and it will exhibit peace when they enter into Canaan among people who don't observe it. Right. And so why wouldn't we want to be obedient to a law that is a means of showing the way that things were intended to be in Eden and the way that things will certainly be again one day in the new Jerusalem. The people of God, the Church of God, should be an outpost of shalom in the here and now. And that happens because we recognize that we should be living God's way in God's world and that's what his law shows us how to do.

**Felicity:** Wow. Yes. That's so desirable, isn't it? I think that's it. And the continuum you're saying, I love that. That's what it was like in Eden. That's what we're heading towards. Why wouldn't we then be eagerly walking along that path now?

**Jen:** I mean, what do we mean when we pray your kingdom come on Earth as it is in heaven. If not, that so far as it's possible with me. I will live like a citizen of the New Jerusalem right now, because that will be the only demonstration of the peace of God that

the unbeliever will ever pay attention to in their everyday life. They're not going to pick up the Bible. If they do, they will probably pick it up to denigrate it, right? But when they see someone whose life is compellingly different because they are choosing to follow God's ways in God's world, that's a compelling witness to them. And think again. You brought up the issue of grace, Felicity. Think what a grace it is that the Lord does not conceal how to live in his world, his way from us. It is a gracious act of his to say, this is the way. Walk in it.

**Sarah:** Yeah, it's really helpful. So, Jenny, you have this really helpful phrase all the way through your book exploring the idea of expansive obedience. I just wonder whether you could tell us something for those who haven't read the book yet, what this is and how it applies. As we read the law in Deuteronomy.

**Jen:** Most people, when they think about, in particular, the Ten Commandments, they kind of like run through them in their head, if that's assuming they know what all ten of them are, and that's big assumption. But let's say that they run through them all in their head, and most of us would give ourselves about an 80 out of 100 if we were just scoring ourselves on a pop quiz. We'd be like, Well, I haven't committed adultery or murder. Most of us would be able to say. And the rest of them were like, yeah, it's kind of cringey. I have blown a few of these others. But the problem I think that we have with the Ten Commandments is an overfamiliarity with them to the point that we think that, much like the Pharisees, we think there's something that we tick off. We're like the guy in the New Testament who says to Jesus, all these I have done since my youth. You walked right into his trash. I do think that we tend to read you shall not murder, for example, and we think, oh, yeah, I'm good on that one. I may have blown some of these as I'm good on that one. Or even the command to adultery, which is why I think Jesus actually singles in on those in particular in the Sermon on the Mount, to say, oh, you thought it was just knifing someone in the back. Let me connect it to anger and contempt for you. Oh, you thought it was just about sleeping with someone who's not your spouse. Let me connect it to lust. And so Jesus does what he always does. He pushes down to the heart motive. And as soon as you get there, you begin to realize that these commands are actually they touch every area of our lives. So, classic example for most of us with any familiarity with the Ten Commandments would be the Third Commandment, do not take the Lord's name in vain. I grew up with a mom who said, that means you don't swear. And you never would say, oh, my God. You would never say that because that's taking the Lord's name in vain. And I still to this day, I could not say that under any duress. I don't think I could get that phrase because it was so drilled into my head. Well, if only that were all that were in view in the Third Commandment, it would be simple to obey. But when we begin to reflect on the nature of the name of the Lord as being as encapsulating the sum total of his character and when we recognize that invoking the name of the Lord is not necessarily even just with our words. It can be done in our actions as well. Then we begin to realize that anything we do that is a misrepresentation of the character of God, which is the name of the Lord. Idea is a breaking of the Third Commandment. Well, that puts a lot of things on the list, so that's the start to the expansive obedience is to recognize the number of ways we can break it. But then the other side is, and this is the joyful part, is to recognize the number of ways in which we can be obedient to it. That that too, is a much longer list than we thought. There are a thousand ways that I can bring honor to the name of the Lord. It is not enough to simply be a not slanderer of the name of the Lord. It is to be a person who shows honor to the name of the Lord in every aspect of my life.

**Felicity:** Yeah, I love that, seeing both sides of it, and the delight in being able to obey, which then circles back to what we were saying earlier, isn't that why wouldn't we want to walk this way? But then I think that's the thing, isn't it? We hear it and we hear the law and we go, but I can't but that's a really helpful way of thinking about it, that expansive obedience, which is convicting, but also gives us a wider range of possibilities of obedience. I think that is really helpful.

**Sarah:** Would you say that what we found as we were working through the law is that chapters twelve to 26 really did expand on Ten Commandments in every way? It felt like they were that expansive obedience in some ways. Could you say that? Would it be all right to kind of frame it in that way?

**Jen:** Oh, absolutely. I mean, you especially see it with the Sabbath principle, right, in deuteronomy the idea of rest, that rest is not just for you, it's for everyone who labors on your behalf. Including animals, land, debts, all kinds of things are applied to that which makes you think, wait a minute, what if what's described in Deuteronomy is not an exhaustive list of applications for the principle? Just as in the New Testament, we see lists that we know are not exhaustive lists as it relates to either virtues or vices. And so I think that some of that is just an exercise in saying, hey, expand your vision on this, think much bigger about these ideas. But I would argue that the New Testament one another's all trace back to the commandments that are dealing with love of neighbor. That there's some way, an expansive idea or a reiteration of a principle that is in God's. Moral law and that all calls to obedience and all calls to worship are also callbacks to those commands that are referencing how we are to relate on the vertical plane toward the Lord. So, yes, I think that all of scripture is an exercise in pulling open our understanding of these basic principles that are articulated in those ten simple statements that turn out to be not so simple after all.

**Sarah:** I think one of the most surprising things for me going through Deuteronomy, I think we had it maybe a couple of episodes back for this realizing it doesn't say love your neighbor, it doesn't say love your neighbor in Deuteronomy at all. It's once in Leviticus and that's it. And yet the whole of the chunk of law that we've been going through, it feels like this very much is that is the summary love the Lord and love your neighbor. But I think it just blew my mind that it wasn't actually there. I was like hunting for it.

**Felicity:** Yeah, but then that is very much what's going on and I think that's really helpful during that kind of horizontal because of the vertical, we then horizontally are seeking to love one another. That kind of righteous living with one another is really key and I think that is a really helpful way to think about then approaching the law because I think that our listeners are maybe more encouraged to dig into the law where maybe still it's still challenging, isn't it? It's not quite as straightforward as well, now we know how to do it, it's going to be easy because actually we still have things about animals and hooves and all that kind of thing. But I think that's a really helpful kind of framework through which to think about it, that then what does it look like then to love one another in this expansively, obedient way and how does the law help us to do that? And I think that's been one of the things as well as seeing God's character so evidently through the law. And as we seek this side of the cross to be more and more like Jesus, we're seeking to reflect that character. It's just that continuum, isn't it? Which is just sometimes when you're in the Bible and there's so many different genres, it's really hard to see the continuum between a book like Deuteronomy and then where we are now. That's one of the challenges, I think, as we come to a book like this.

**Jen:** But it does get easier over time, which is so great. And that was one of the fun things about when I wrote the book on the Ten Commandments was like, I remember turning to my husband saying, I think I'm getting better at this. Like I'm actually drawing conclusions a little less woodenly or without having to have someone drag me there. I'm like, oh, I've seen this somewhere else. And so, over time, you do begin to store up treasures in heaven, so to speak, with regard to understanding the scriptures, and it's really a beautiful thing. I do think one of the reasons that we don't delight in the law is because, again, when you're in an individualistic, instant, gratification kind of a space, there are not always immediate rewards for obeying the law. So the instant gratification piece doesn't promote obedience to the law, but then also the effect individualism has on our understanding of the law. If I'm only thinking about obeying the law for purposes of self actualizing or my own good, then I won't understand, I will not be motivated to. The law, by definition, is collective. It is thinking about others. And so when I understand that my obedience is never just for me alone, that it has a collective element to it, in the same way that my sin never impacts just me alone, right? Like, we have to understand both sides of this, then I begin to think about the law differently. It's a big defining difference between moralism, which is obedience to the law, to self elevate, or to self actualize, versus morality, which is living rightly, because I'm commanded to do so and it's good for all of us when I do so. It is an important distinction for Christians to bear in mind. Moralism is bad. Moralism is worship of self. Morality is submission to God for the good of others, and also which is ultimately good for self as well.

**Felicity:** So helpful. And I think one of our kind of questions for you is how have you grown to delight in God's law? I think we're hearing there that over the course of time, the more that you've been in it, the more that you're in the Word, then the more you kind of delight in it. Any other ways in which you have grown to delight in God's law as you studied it over the years?

**Jen:** Well, I mean, once you studied it, you stop sinning and then you're like of course, it does feel like the better we get at not sinning in one way, the more we sin in another way. But I actually think that is the sanctification process. It's not that you're sinning more in other ways. It's that your awareness, since you still have to grow in being holy as he is holy, it's just more pronounced for you. And this too is a grace, right? It is a grace. And I think it's gracious of God that he doesn't show us all of the things that are waiting for us to work on, to become more Christ like all at once. He does that in a progressive way, which I think is his kindness. We would be crushed, I think, if you kept a record of sins. Right? And so I would say that my delight has grown, because I can see that I am not who I was ten years ago, and I'm not who I was 20 years ago. And I know that if that's true, then ten years from now, should the Lord give me another ten or 20 years from now, should the Lord give me another 20? What else might he change in me? What else might he conform to the image of Christ? I think the battle is in this life that even though we come to saving faith, sin still feels more natural to us than holiness for a long time. And it takes a long time for the spirit's work. There are sometimes that people are delivered from things instantly, praise the Lord, but most of us would attest that that is not the normative experience of growing in holiness. And so it takes time for someone who was dead in sin and knew the patterns of slavery in Egypt to unlearn them and to learn what it looks like to dwell as God's people. And that's actually the story of Exodus through Deuteronomy is we get Israel out of Egypt in Exodus, and then from Exodus through the end of Deuteronomy and beyond, we're trying to get Egypt out of Israel because Israel out of Egypt and realizes the problem was not all external, it was also internal. And isn't that the story that all of us is dealing with? So they will certainly fight battles with enemies who are external to them, but they are also dealing with their own internal desires that keep them looking over their shoulder, not at God's faithfulness, but at Egypt itself.

**Felicity:** So true. So true. I wonder, Jen, as we wrap up, whether you might pray for us to that end, that we would delight in this, and if you could pray for us, that would be great.

**Jen:** I would love to, Father. We pray that we would have the heart of Christ, that we would delight to do Your will and that Your law would be written on our hearts. Lord, we think to all of the places in the Old Testament. I think of Ezekiel and I think of Jeremiah, where the promise was given that the law would no longer be written on stone, but would be written on hearts of flesh. We pray that it would be true of us, that our hearts. That have been turned from stone to flesh by the finished work of Christ. The perfect law obeyer the embodiment of what it means to be holy as you are holy. That as our hearts are increasingly transformed by that relationship that has been restored, that we would grow in recognizing the beauty and the practicality and the gracious nature of your moral law. That shows us what it means to look like Christ and shows us what it means to live as citizens of heaven even as we await the day when sin will be no more, when the law will be perfectly fulfilled, not just by our brother Christ, who has gone before us, but by all of us in each and every moment. We thank you, Lord, that a day is coming where no one will break your law ever again. Help us to be those who strive to obey it. Now, in eager anticipation of that day, we ask these things in Jesus name. Amen.

**Felicity:** Amen. Amen.

**Sarah:** Thank you so much, Jen. It's been such a delight and joy to have you on and just your wisdom really benefited from this conversation. Thank you for those listening. Do pick up Jen's books, ten Words to Live By from ten of those. I'm sure there's a good deal on there somewhere. And this is the end of season seven for us, so we will be back for season eight at some point. But until then, see you soon.

**Felicity:** See you soon.

**Sarah:** What a gift of a conversation that was. Do head on over to [tenofthose.com](http://tenofthose.com) to pick up any of Jen's books, and that's a wrap on season seven. We're so thankful for our season sponsor, Kaleidoscope Kids Bibles, and our long term sponsor, [tenofthose.com](http://tenofthose.com). We really

hope you've enjoyed the season. Please do leave us a rating or review to help others find us. And we really look forward to being back in your earbuds in the coming weeks as we kick off season eight.