GOD WILL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES

God’s leading and God’s will in our lives: these are two of the hardest things for people to grapple with. Israel was in the wilderness due to their own sinful and rebellious choices. And yet God led them and did not give up on them. Jesus was also led into the wilderness, but it was by the Holy Spirit, and not because He had done anything wrong (Matt. 4:1). In times of test and trial, whatever the reason, God walks with us and helps us to know His heart of love toward us, through His provision and guidance to greater trust in Him. God already knows our hearts, but the times of testing and trial help us to know our hearts, and help us to surrender to God so that we may know that we live by His word, not by earthly bread. When tempted, Jesus quoted from this passage, because the situation was so parallel to Israel’s, and yet His heart was truly humbled and trusting in God. Deuteronomy 8 is within the section of the covenant structure that focuses on the heart relationship with God as the foundation for obedience.

God wants to save us so much that He is willing to use whatever it takes. Sometimes it takes tests, other times it takes provision in those tests, and still other times it takes blessings. While God ultimately wants to just bless us, He knows that we tend to forget where the blessings come from and think that our great power and hard work have given us our wealth, like Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4. For this reason, God brings us to difficult places so that we can understand our own hearts and see clearly that everything comes from Him.
Write out Deuteronomy 8:1–20 from the Bible translation of your choice. If you’re pressed for time, write out Deuteronomy 8:11–14. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
EVERYTHING GOOD IS FROM GOD

The lack of gratitude displayed in this passage reveals a deeper heart issue. Moses delineates all the things that God has done for Israel in the past, both material and spiritual. God brought them out of slavery, protected them from the serpents and scorpions in the wilderness, provided water for them in miraculous ways, gave them food from heaven which no one else has ever known, kept their clothing from wearing out, prevented their feet from swelling (indicating dehydration and heat stroke), and then gave them power to get wealth (vv. 3–5, 15–18). Not only that, but Moses describes the good land that God is giving them, including all the water that is present (unlike the wilderness) and the plants and trees and fruit that they have not had in the desert (vv. 6–10). Wheat, barley, vines, fig trees, pomegranates, and olives all require significant amounts of water and irrigation. These are luxury items that Israel has not had in the desert. In addition, there will be good houses and many flocks, and they will have silver and gold, and multiplication of possessions (vv. 12–14). When considering all these things, it is hard to understand why Israel would not be grateful. But for all sinful humans, it is easy to forget what God has done in the past, and easy to look at life as relying on our work to get anything good to happen.

And yet, anything good is always from God. The reason we are alive is because of God. The word of God to our hearts is more important than physical food. And a humble, teachable attitude is more important than material blessings. God disciplines us like a good parent who wants the best for His children, recognizing that pride of heart is the root of all evil (v. 14). The end result is always good when God brings us to a place of testing and humility (v. 16). God wants us to live and not die!

This is a reiteration of the heart of the covenant, remembering God and reflecting on all He has done, and blessing Him for His provision for us. While we may not eat of literal manna today, we can all relate to the hard times Israel has been through, and look for how God has sought to provide for and humble us as well. We can ask God to teach us as He did Israel, so that our hearts may be soft toward Him.
FAITH AND BREAD

What does it mean that “man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord” (v. 3)? Interestingly, the word word is not in the Hebrew. Although it would be implied, as something that comes from God’s mouth, it could mean something more broad, implying a trust in all that God gives and says and means. When Jesus quotes this verse in His desert temptation, He indicates this double meaning (Matt. 4:4). Jesus realized that Satan was not just asking Him to make bread to assuage His hunger, but was asking Him to distrust His own identity and prove it by a miracle. He was also asking Jesus to doubt what God has called Him there for, which was to conquer the temptations to which Adam and Eve fell. God’s word can indeed make bread, and it does every day for the Israelites with the manna, but the main point of God’s word is to inculcate faith and trust. If you have bread, but no faith, you are poor and still hungry and are denying the power of God. But if you have faith in God’s word, you can face any trial, even poverty and hunger, with a greater view to what God is doing beyond the present moment. Your soul hunger has been filled.

When thinking about the Exodus miracle, we usually only focus on the parting of the Red Sea. However, God worked many other miracles throughout the journey from Egypt to Canaan. Similarly, it is often easy to forget all the things God does for us on a daily basis and focus on the big miraculous things that seem to happen less often. This is one of the reasons that the Israelites were in danger of forgetting God; they began to ascribe all the blessings to their own efforts. It seems that this is also tied into how the humbling and testing does the Israelites good in the end. They themselves experience the miracles in the same way that their parents experienced with the Red Sea. Now the Israelites are also experiencing the discipline that helps them to grow and soften their hearts so that they do not forget God and worship other gods instead. Just as the Canaanites before them, they were in danger of falling into the same traps and losing their land and lives due to their sins. And as Jesus affirmed in the desert, it is only God’s Word that can show them the truth about who they are and who they are following. The devil will try to distract and destroy them with lies about God, but they must hold firm to God’s truth.

Read more at www.inversebible.org/deut06-4
What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Daniel 4:28–37
Matthew 4:1–11
Deuteronomy 6:10–13
Exodus 23:20–26
Deuteronomy 9:4–29
Isaiah 33:14–22

What other verses/promises come to mind with Deuteronomy 8?
Besides being quoted by Jesus Himself when meeting Satan’s temptation in the wilderness, Deuteronomy 8 showcases the character of God in ways that cut into many preconceived notions about God. First of all, Yahweh is leading and guiding Israel, even though they have messed up (v. 2). We usually think that God leaves us when we have sinned, but here God is working with them, and helping them to know their own hearts in the trials they are facing. God does not ever leave us or forsake us, but He desires a heart change, to humility instead of pride, to relationship instead of legalism (vv. 3–5).

Second, God is the giver of all physical health and material wealth, and He longs for us to be healthy and wealthy and happy (vv. 10–18). Although we live in a sinful world, and being healthy, wealthy, and happy is not always possible due to the great controversy, it is God’s desire. Almost every follower of God in the Bible experienced difficulties and privation and trials, but this does not mean that God was not with them. Even Jesus, as the only perfect human, was not wealthy and went through much suffering and an early death. Ultimately, God will fulfill His desires to bless His people for eternity in heaven. But we have a foretaste here, in all the blessings God gives to us. Amazingly, even when we bring the dangers on ourselves, God feeds and protects us (vv. 3–5). This picture of God’s grace and forgiveness, working with our feeble and sinful selves, paints a very different picture of the Old Testament than is usually considered.

Third, God and His word are life, and forgetting God is tantamount to eternal loss. God longs for us to remember all that He has done for us in the past. Deuteronomy 8 makes it clear that our remembrance of His works is not for His satisfaction (although He deeply desires a relationship with us), but for our own good. As Yahweh is our Father, we need discipline and correction from Him. God wants to bless us with good things, but when we forget Him, He cannot do good to us in the end (v. 16), the covenant is broken (v. 18–20), and the end result is to perish.

Jesus sees the end from the beginning, and ultimately wants us to be in heaven with Him, so is willing to sacrifice our happiness and comfort on earth to bring us to Him and repentance. When looking in the Bible for God’s will, almost every passage has something to do with the big things like salvation and peace and joy, not so much individual decisions. God will pull out all the stops to change our hearts so that He can be with us for eternity!
“THE TEMPTATION”

“When Christ said to the tempter, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,’ He repeated the words that, more than fourteen hundred years before, He had spoken to Israel: ‘The Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness. . . . And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.’ Deuteronomy 8:2, 3. In the wilderness, when all means of sustenance failed, God sent His people manna from heaven; and a sufficient and constant supply was given. This provision was to teach them that while they trusted in God and walked in His ways He would not forsake them. The Saviour now practiced the lesson He had taught to Israel. By the word of God succor had been given to the Hebrew host, and by the same word it would be given to Jesus. He awaited God’s time to bring relief. He was in the wilderness in obedience to God, and He would not obtain food by following the suggestions of Satan. In the presence of the witnessing universe, He testified that it is a less calamity to suffer whatever may befall than to depart in any manner from the will of God.

‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.’ Often the follower of Christ is brought where he cannot serve God and carry forward his worldly enterprises. Perhaps it appears that obedience to some plain requirement of God will cut off his means of support. Satan would make him believe that he must sacrifice his conscientious convictions. But the only thing in our world upon which we can rely is the word of God. ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.’ Matthew 6:33. Even in this life it is not for our good to depart from the will of our Father in heaven. When we learn the power of His word, we shall not follow the suggestions of Satan in order to obtain food or to save our lives. Our only questions will be, What is God’s command? and what His promise? Knowing these, we shall obey the one, and trust the other. . . .

“And how this is accomplished, Christ has shown us. By what means did He overcome in the conflict with Satan? By the word of God. Only by the word could He resist temptation. ‘It is written,’ He said. And unto us are given ‘exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.’ 2 Peter 1:4. Every promise in God’s word is ours. ‘By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God’ are we to live. When assailed by temptation, look not to circumstances or to the weakness of self, but to the power of the word. All its strength is yours. ‘Thy word,’ says the psalmist, ‘have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.’ ‘By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.’ Psalm 119:11; 17:4.” (Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 121–23.)
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Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

How does life come from God’s Word, not bread?

What blessings has God given you that have been difficult to see as coming from Him?

How does our diligence and dedication interact with God’s blessings? In other words, if we sit around and do nothing, but pray a lot, will anything happen?

How can wealth be both a blessing and a curse?

How can we guard against ascribing our success to our own efforts?

How does God’s chastening produce fruit in our lives?

How have you seen God do whatever it takes in your own life to save you?