

The Book of Deuteronomy, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 2: Victories East of the Jordan

Deuteronomy 2:24–3:29

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This lesson centers on a great covenant truth: God gives what He promises, and the Lord Himself fights for His people. The victories over Sihon and Og are not merely military history; they are demonstrations that the same God who was doubted at Kadesh-barnea is mighty to save when His people trust and obey. The student must see that the confidence of God's people rests not in their own strength or in the size of the enemy but in the word and presence of God.

Doctrinally we also handle the land inheritance with care. The settling of the eastern tribes is a downpayment on God's promise, but the New Testament teaches that the deepest fulfillment of the inheritance promise is in Christ, in the church, and finally in the better, heavenly country the faithful were truly seeking (Hebrews 11:13–16; Galatians 3:29). We do not read these conquests as a template for a future earthly political kingdom of national Israel, but as part of the unfolding plan that finds its yes in Christ.

Finally the lesson aims at the formation of the student through Moses himself. Here is a leader who accepts God's no without bitterness, who refuses to let personal disappointment poison his trust, and who pours his last energy into preparing his successor. The student is invited to learn the hard grace of submission, to lead and serve for the sake of those who come after, and to find that God's purposes are large enough to hold even our unanswered prayers.

Question 1

Student Question:

From Deuteronomy 2:24–37, how is the defeat of Sihon described, and what does the account, including God hardening Sihon's spirit, reveal about God's sovereignty and His role in giving Israel the land?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The turning point comes in 2:24 with God's command: Arise, I have given Sihon into your hand, begin to take possession. Moses first offered terms of peace (2:26–29), but Sihon refused and came out to battle. The Lord then gave him over completely, and Israel devoted his cities to destruction (2:33–34).

The text says the Lord hardened Sihon's spirit and made his heart obstinate so that he would not let Israel pass peacefully (2:30). This recalls the hardening of Pharaoh and raises the question of God's sovereignty. Scripture presents God as sovereignly working His purposes even through the

resistance of the wicked, yet without making God the author of anyone's sin. Sihon was a hostile, aggressive king; in giving him over to the obstinacy he had chosen, God brought about the judgment Sihon's own hostility deserved and accomplished His promise to Israel.

We must be careful not to read this as Calvinistic determinism, as if God arbitrarily forces individuals to sin and then condemns them. The broader scriptural witness is that people are genuinely accountable for their own hardness (Romans 1:24-28 describes God giving people over to what they have already chosen). Sihon's defeat displays God's sovereign rule over the nations to fulfill His covenant, not an arbitrary decree of reprobation.

For the student, the central truth is that the land was God's gift. Israel fought, but the victory was the Lord's. He governs even the resistance of His enemies to accomplish His good and faithful purposes for His people.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The land as God's gift, won by His power
- God's sovereignty over hostile kings and nations
- Hardening without God being the author of sin
- Human accountability for one's own hardness of heart
- Guarding against deterministic misreadings
- Offering peace before battle

Discussion Prompts

- How is the defeat of Sihon presented as God's doing?
- How do we hold together God's sovereignty and human responsibility?
- Why does it matter that Israel first offered peace?

Question 2

Student Question:

Israel was commanded to begin to take possession and to contend with Sihon in battle (2:24). Where in your walk is God giving the victory yet still calling you to actually step out and act? What does faithful action look like for you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Notice the partnership in 2:24: God says I have given Sihon into your hand, and then begin to take possession, contend with him in battle. The victory was guaranteed, yet Israel still had to march, fight, and act. God's gift did not cancel their responsibility; it grounded it.

This is the rhythm of the life of faith. God supplies the power and the promise; we step out in obedient action. Faith is never passive presumption that sits still and waits for God to do everything. It trusts enough to move.

In our walk God often gives a victory that we must still actively lay hold of: a sin to put off, a relationship to mend, a service to begin, a word to speak. The promise is sure, but it is realized as we obey.

The student is asked to identify where God is giving the victory yet still calling him to act, and to name what faithful action looks like there. The point is to move from passive waiting to obedient stepping out.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Divine gift and human action working together
- Faith that acts rather than sits passively
- Laying hold of what God has promised
- Obedience as the path to realized victory

Discussion Prompts

- How does God's gift and Israel's action work together here?
- Where is God giving you a victory you must still step into?
- What does faithful action look like in your situation?

Question 3

Student Question:

In Deuteronomy 3:1–11, Og king of Bashan, a giant, is defeated. What does the fall of such a formidable enemy teach us about trusting God's word, do not fear him, against intimidating obstacles?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Og king of Bashan was a giant, the last of the Rephaim, with an iron bedstead more than thirteen feet long (3:11). He was precisely the kind of fearsome enemy that had paralyzed the previous generation. Yet God's word to Moses was simple: do not fear him, for I have given him and all his people into your hand (3:2).

The victory was total. Sixty fortified cities, high walls, gates and bars, all fell (3:4–5). The lesson is unmistakable: the size of the enemy means nothing when God has spoken. The same giants that once produced despair now produce only testimony to God's power.

This directly answers the failure of chapter 1. There the people saw the giants and shrank back. Here the giants fall because the people trusted and obeyed. God had been telling the truth all along; the obstacle was never the giants but the unbelief that magnified them above God.

For the student, Og is every intimidating obstacle that whispers you cannot. God's word stands over every such giant: do not fear, for the battle is Mine. Trusting that word is the difference between Kadesh-barnea and Bashan.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The size of the enemy means nothing when God has spoken
- Do not fear as God's repeated command
- Giants that once caused despair now testify to God's power
- The contrast with the unbelief of chapter 1
- Trusting God's word against intimidation

Discussion Prompts

- Why was Og such an intimidating enemy?
- What made the difference between Bashan and Kadesh-barnea?
- How does God's word stand over the giants you face?

Question 4

Student Question:

Og was the kind of giant the previous generation feared. When you face something intimidating, how do you preach God's promises to your own fearful heart? Describe how you do it, or how you could.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Joshua would later be told, and Israel had just seen, that the way to face a giant is to remember what God has said and done. The defeat of Og became a sermon Israel could preach to its own fear.

We all must learn to preach God's promises to our own hearts. The fearful heart speaks lies, you are too small, this is too big, God will not come through. Faith answers those lies out loud with God's own word: do not fear, for the Lord your God fights for you.

This is not denial of the difficulty but a deliberate refusal to let fear set the terms. David did this before Goliath by rehearsing the lion and the bear (1 Samuel 17:34-37). Israel could rehearse Sihon and Og before the next battle.

The student is asked to describe how he preaches God's promises to his own fearful heart, or how he could begin. The aim is a practiced habit of answering fear with the spoken truth of God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Preaching God's promises to your own heart

- Answering the lies of fear with God's word
- Rehearsing past deliverances to face present giants
- Faith as a practiced habit, not a feeling

Discussion Prompts

- What lies does fear tell you when you face something big?
- How can you answer those lies with God's word?
- What past deliverance can you rehearse before your next battle?

Question 5

Student Question:

From Deuteronomy 3:12–20, how is the land distributed to Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh, and what is required of the fighting men of those tribes? What does this arrangement reveal about God's order and shared responsibility among His people?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The conquered land east of the Jordan is given to Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh (3:12–17). But the gift comes with a condition of solidarity: their fighting men must cross over armed before their brothers and help them take the land west of the Jordan before returning to their own inheritance (3:18–20).

This reveals God's order and the principle of shared responsibility. No tribe was to rest secure in its own blessing while the rest of the people still struggled. The inheritance of each was bound up with the welfare of all. God's people are a body, not a collection of independent interests.

The women, children, and livestock could remain in the settled cities, but the able men were to go to war for their brethren (3:19). Blessing received was not permission to disengage; it was a summons to serve those not yet blessed.

For the student, the arrangement teaches that God's gifts are meant to flow outward. To be blessed is to be enlisted. The eastern tribes model a faith that does not say I have mine, but stands with the whole family of God until all have entered in.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's order in distributing the inheritance
- Shared responsibility among God's people
- Blessing received as a summons to serve
- The people of God as one body, not independent interests
- Solidarity until all have entered the promise

Discussion Prompts

- What was required of the eastern tribes after receiving their land?
- Why was no tribe allowed to rest in its own blessing alone?
- How does this shape the way we view our own blessings?

Question 6

Student Question:

The eastern tribes received their inheritance but still had to cross over and fight for their brothers (3:18–20). Where might God be calling you to keep serving others even after your own needs are met? Where are you tempted to stop short?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The eastern tribes had their inheritance in hand, yet God called them to keep fighting for their brothers until everyone had rest (3:20). The temptation must have been strong to settle down, enjoy their fields, and leave the western campaign to others.

We feel the same pull. Once our own needs are met, the urgency to serve can fade. We are tempted to stop short, to coast, to consider our obligation to others discharged because we are comfortable.

The gospel calls us further. Having received, we give; having been served by Christ, we serve. Paul kept laboring for churches he would never see flourish; Jesus poured Himself out for those who came after. The pattern is to keep serving until the whole family enters its rest.

The student is asked where God may be calling him to keep serving even after his own needs are met, and where he is tempted to stop short. Honesty here exposes the comfortable disengagement that can quietly replace faithful service.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The temptation to disengage once comfortable
- Serving others after your own needs are met
- Coasting versus continued faithfulness
- The gospel pattern of giving as we have received

Discussion Prompts

- Why might the eastern tribes have wanted to stop short?
- Where are you tempted to disengage once comfortable?
- How does Christ's example call you to keep serving?

Question 7

Student Question:

In Deuteronomy 3:21–22, Moses charges Joshua: do not fear them, for it is the Lord your God who fights for you. What does this commissioning teach about godly leadership succession and the true source of a leader’s confidence?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Moses charges Joshua directly: your eyes have seen all that the Lord has done to these two kings; so will the Lord do to all the kingdoms into which you are crossing. Do not fear them, for it is the Lord your God who fights for you (3:21–22). This is the commissioning of a successor, and it is built entirely on the character and power of God.

Notice where Joshua’s confidence is anchored. Not in his own gifts, not in Israel’s army, but in what God has done and will do. Godly leadership succession transfers not a personality but a trust, the same trust in the same faithful God from one generation to the next.

Moses models how to hand off leadership well. He does not cling to his role or undermine his successor. He strengthens Joshua publicly, points him to God, and prepares the people to follow him. This is the opposite of the insecure leader who must remain indispensable.

For the student, the passage teaches that the true source of a leader’s confidence is the conviction that the Lord fights for His people. Leaders rise and fall, but God endures; and the best leaders point their people past themselves to Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Godly succession that transfers trust, not personality
- A leader’s confidence anchored in God, not self
- Strengthening rather than undermining a successor
- Pointing the people past the leader to God
- The Lord as the one who fights for His people

Discussion Prompts

- Where is Joshua told to place his confidence?
- How does Moses model handing off leadership well?
- What is the true source of a godly leader’s courage?

Question 8

Student Question:

Joshua was strengthened by remembering what God had already done to the two kings (3:21). What past victories of God in your life can you rehearse to strengthen yourself for what lies ahead? Name a few.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Joshua was strengthened by looking back: your eyes have seen all that the Lord has done to these two kings (3:21). Memory of past victory became fuel for future courage. God's track record is the believer's best argument against fear.

We can do the same. The God who has carried us through past trials is the same God who goes before us now. Rehearsing His faithfulness is not nostalgia; it is a discipline that arms the heart for what lies ahead.

Every believer accumulates a history with God, answered prayers, providential rescues, strength supplied in weakness. Forgetting that history leaves us defenseless before new fears; remembering it steadies us.

The student is asked to name a few specific past victories of God in his own life that he can rehearse for strength. The exercise turns vague trust into concrete confidence rooted in real experience of God's faithfulness.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Memory of past victory as fuel for courage
- Rehearsing God's faithfulness as a discipline
- The danger of forgetting God's track record
- Turning vague trust into concrete confidence

Discussion Prompts

- How did remembering past victories strengthen Joshua?
- What specific things has God done for you that you can rehearse?
- How can remembering steady you for what lies ahead?

Question 9

Student Question:

Deuteronomy 3:23–29 records Moses pleading to cross over, God's firm refusal, and the instruction to view the land from Pisgah and commission Joshua. What does Moses' response to God's no teach about accepting divine discipline, submitting to God's larger purposes, and the difference between God's no and God's rejection?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Moses pleads earnestly: O Lord God, you have begun to show your servant your greatness, let me cross over and see the good land (3:23–25). The desire is deep and the prayer is sincere. Yet God answers no. He tells Moses, enough, speak to me no more of this matter (3:26).

This no was a real discipline. Moses was barred from the land because he had broken faith with God at the waters of Meribah (Numbers 20:12; Deuteronomy 32:51). God's leaders are held to

His standard, and even Moses bore the consequence of his sin. The text does not flinch from this.

Yet God's no was not God's rejection. The Lord still calls Moses His servant, still shows him the land from Pisgah, and still entrusts to him the commissioning of Joshua (3:27–28). Moses receives a tender mercy within the discipline: he sees the land with his own eyes, even though he will not enter it. This is the crucial distinction. God can deny our request while never withdrawing His love. A closed door is not a closed heart.

Moses' response is one of the great pictures of faith in Scripture. He does not grow bitter, rebel, or sulk. He accepts God's verdict, climbs the mountain, looks at the promise, and turns to invest his last strength in the next leader and the next generation. He trusts that God's purposes are larger than his personal desire to cross a river. There is more grace in this surrender than there would have been in the crossing.

For the student, this is a profound and practical lesson. We will all face a no from God we did not want. The question is whether we will receive it as Moses did, refusing bitterness, trusting God's larger purpose, distinguishing His discipline from rejection, and continuing to pour ourselves out for what we may never personally see completed. Paul faced his own end this way (2 Timothy 4:6–8), and the faithful of Hebrews 11 died without receiving the promise yet trusting the God who keeps it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Real discipline for Moses' sin at Meribah
- God's no is not God's rejection
- Accepting divine discipline without bitterness
- Trusting God's purposes larger than our desires
- Mercy within the discipline, seeing the land from Pisgah
- Investing in the next generation when our own course ends
- Faith that dies without yet receiving the promise

Discussion Prompts

- Why was Moses barred from entering the land?
- How can we tell the difference between God's no and His rejection?
- How does Moses model accepting God's discipline with grace?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking across the whole passage, the victories God gave, the inheritance distributed, the charge to Joshua, and Moses' gracious surrender, name one specific way Jesus is forming you to trust that the Lord fights for you and to accept His purposes even when they cost you something.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Across the whole passage the refrain is the same: the Lord your God is the one who fights for you. He gave Sihon and Og, He parceled out the inheritance, He charged Joshua, and even in barring Moses He remained faithful and good. God gives what He promises, and the battle is His.

Jesus forms us through this account on two fronts. First, He teaches us to trust that the Lord fights for us, so that we face our giants in obedient confidence rather than shrinking back. If God is for us, who can be against us (Romans 8:31)? Second, He teaches us, through Moses, to accept God's purposes even when they cost us something, surrendering our preferred outcome to the wisdom and love of the Father.

These two lessons belong together. The same trust that lets us march against Sihon and Og is the trust that lets us climb Pisgah and accept a no with grace. Both are faith; both rest on the goodness of God.

The student should name one specific way Jesus is forming him here: a giant to face in God's strength, or a no to accept with grace and continued faithfulness. The goal is a heart that trusts God whether He gives the crossing or withholds it, confident that He is good and that the battle is His.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Lord fights for His people as the unifying theme
- Facing giants in obedient confidence
- Accepting God's no with grace, as Moses did
- Trust that holds whether God gives or withholds
- Naming one concrete area of formation

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that the Lord fights for you?
- Where do you most need to accept God's purposes even at a cost?
- How is Jesus forming your trust through this passage?