Maintaining a God-centered perspective is essential for faithful obedience.

Our perspective in life has massive implications on the way we live and the quality of our lives. As believers we are responsible to take responsibility for our perspective. To put it in biblical terms, we are to live by faith. That is, we are to walk through this life with our eyes on God so that our default response to any given situation is to trust and rejoice in the Lord. Faith is the foundation of all obedience. Deuteronomy 8 is an exhortation to remain faithful in obedience [vs. 1, 19-20]. Generally speaking, faithful obedience to God will either be tested through affliction or through prosperity. For example, there are people who turn to the Lord and get serious about going to church or Bible study when life gets tough, and they need God; but once things ease up they fade away again. And then there are people who serve the Lord during times of ease, but when they encounter suffering they harden their hearts against the Lord. But the person who loves God with all of his heart keeps God at the center of His life through summer and winter.

Deuteronomy 8:1-20
January 27, 2013

Thanksgiving
[Deut 8]

Wilderness = testing → blessing (The wilderness was a test that would become a blessing)
Promised land = blessing → test (The promised land was a blessing that would become a test)

Let’s consider two primary ways to keep our eyes on God for a faithful life of obedience.

1. **We remain faithful in obedience by remembering God’s gracious purposes in times of affliction [Deut 8: 1-6].**

   We make an important discovery in these early vss. of Deut 8. The 40 years that Israel spent in the wilderness were not just a time of punishment and discipline from the Lord, they were also a season in which God was fulfilling His good purposes through their affliction. [vs 2-3] So what was the purpose behind this humbling, and testing, that exposed their hearts?

   According to vs. 5-6, the purpose of this wilderness wandering was to teach Israel to walk in faithful obedience. [vs. 5-6] God was training and disciplining them just as a father does for his son. He was disciplining them, not only in the sense of correction or punishment for their sin, He was also training them to live a disciplined life—to learn the discipline of trusting in God’s sufficiency rather than their own.

   Now remember, the foundation of all obedience is faith (or trusting God) So He would need to strip them of their self-sufficiency and train them to trust in Him. So how did God do that? He let them get good and hungry and then fed them faithfully every day. From the perspective of the Israelites, God was restricting them to a very limited menu. But what was God doing below the surface of their hunger? Vs. 2 says, “He humbled you, testing you, to know what was in your heart.” Did God not already know what was in their hearts? The idea here is that He was “bringing to light” or “proving” what was in their hearts by putting their hearts to the test—would they trust Him?

   **Life Principle:** God uses external circumstances to reveal inward character.

   Don’t miss the obvious: God was using affliction to accomplish good purposes in their lives—even though it didn’t look good to them at the time (hunger; being tested). He is preparing them for a life of blessing by training them to trust in His sufficiency with full obedience. This is clear in [vs. 16].

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   1 Daniel Block. NIV Application Commentary, p. 228.
**Life Principle:** God will use affliction to wean us from trusting in ourselves and to train us to trust in His sufficiency.

The climax of what God was up to is found at the end of [vs 3]. God was doing more than just meeting their physical need. He was using something as necessary as food and water to point them to the most essential need: trust in God and obedience to His Word. He was teaching them that their relationship with God is more essential to life than even the need to feed their bodies.

Sometimes it feels to us that God is depriving us of things we need or want. When God blesses us with these times of leanness, we should assume He is doing a deeper work for our good than appears to be the case at the surface of our lives.

So as you walk through times of affliction, rather than asking the question “why,” ask the questions “what.” What purposes might God be seeking to fulfill in my life?

- Is He disciplining me for some sin or waywardness in my life?
- Is He humbling me to spare me from trusting in myself rather than in Him?
- Is He testing me to reveal what is in my heart whether it is faith (confident trust in God), or whether it is unbelief and selfish motives?

I would urge you to pray during affliction—ask God to show you His purposes. But what about those times when we can’t discern what God is doing? What should our response be?

- Remember and Rehearse God’s faithfulness
- Rest in God’s goodness (His purposes are good)
- Rejoice in His grace (we have every resource we need in Christ)—rejoicing that His presence is with me.
- Return (and keep returning) to God’s Word, being quick to repent.

*You must worship your way thru affliction!

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2. **We remain faithful in obedience by rejoicing in God’s gracious provision during times of abundance** (Deut 8:7-18).

[vs. 7-9]

God is about to bring them out of the wilderness and into a land of overflowing abundance; a place without scarcity in which they will not lack anything (vs. 9). This raises an enormous question: If God used their hunger in the wilderness to develop their dependence on God, how will they keep their hearts set on Him when they are no longer hungry? Do you see what was happening: The wilderness was a test that would become a blessing; The promised land was a blessing that would become a test.

The Lord knows that when they prosper and they don’t sense their need for God to meet their daily necessities, they will be tempted to forget the Lord. And so He issues this warning through Moses in [vs. 10-14].

The solution is that they are to rejoice in Lord for all the blessing He has bestowed upon them. They are to “bless the Lord.” That is, they are to give Him praise. They are to overflow with thanksgiving. They are to attribute every good gift to the Lord their God and not forget that all they have has come from His gracious hand.

It would be a heart of worship that would guard them against deadly pride. In essence He’s saying, “If you don’t bless the Lord, your heart will become proud (vs. 14), and you will forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt.” There’s a warning here for us:

**Life Principle:** Prosperity will lead to pride if our hearts are not inclined toward God with praise.

We are talking here about the pride of self-sufficiency. The essence of pride is thinking that I don’t need God (or anyone else) because I am self-sufficient.
When the pride of self-sufficiency sets in:

- We cease being a learner—our teachable spirit dies because we think we are self-sufficient.
- We stop soaking in grace and our hearts grow hard because we lose sight of our need for God.
- We steal God’s glory by attributing our “success” to ourselves, because we have begun to believe that we have the power to provide for ourselves apart from God and His grace. [vs. 17-18]

**We must crucify pride with praise.** And the best way to keep your heart full of praise; the best way to bless the Lord and overcome pride with rejoicing is to remember where grace found you: He “brought you out the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (vs. 14) [vs. 15]

If it was not for the grace of God that rescued us and the faithfulness of God that sustained us, there would be no hope of abundance and blessing. The testimony of our lives must be: *It’s all of God and none of me!*

Some of you may have assumed that an old book like Deuteronomy written to people in ancient times could not be relevant today. Our lives are so different from theirs; we are of the modern age, the technological era. But all those things are just at the surface of life. When we dig a little deeper we discover that our lives are very similar. Our faith and obedience, like theirs, will be tested through affliction and it will be tested through abundance.

When we are tested with affliction, we must remember God’s faithfulness to accomplish His good purposes.
When we are tested with abundance, we must rejoice with gratitude for God’s generous grace.

The message of Deut. 8 is for us. We must not forget the Lord. We must remember Him by trusting everything God says with a heart of obedience. We must not let our lives be satisfied with mere food, entertainment, and pension plans. We must live as though the very essence and satisfaction of life is nothing less than God Himself.

My personal journey.