



LEADER'S GUIDE

Week 7: Deuteronomy 29 & 30

Choose Life, that You May Live

October 30, 2016

Day 1: Read Deuteronomy 29

- 1. Where are Moses and the Israelites as this chapter begins? (see map from first week)** Moses and the Israelites are in Moab when chapter 29 begins. Moab is southeast of Jerusalem on the far side of the Dead Sea; this is in modern-day Jordan. They are being prepared to finally enter the promised land. Ruth was from Moab.
- 2. Moses is instructed to convey the terms of the covenant in Moab. The wording reflects the renewal of the Mosaic covenant and also indicates an addition to it. What is the covenant that God made with them at Horeb?** Horeb is used in the book of Deuteronomy to indicate Sinai. In Exodus 19:5-6 God tells the Israelites: "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." The Israelites agreed for their part to love God and to obey His commandments.
- 3. What is the point that Moses is making in verses 2-8? Most all the people who left Egypt have died at this point. What do you think Moses meant in verse 3 when he says "With your own eyes you saw those great trials..."?** God is reminding His people in this passage of all He has done to care for them while they were in the wilderness. He cared for their every need and allowed them to defeat the enemies that attacked them. The people He is speaking to did not all see all the trials that occurred from Egypt until this time, but they did all see some of these, and would have heard from their elders, true eye witnesses, what had transpired.
- 4. In verses 9-15, it is clear that this covenant is unconditional, but that they will prosper, or be able to enjoy the full benefits of the covenant through obedience. Have you ever repented of sin to find that your life was fuller and more enjoyable once you gave up that which you thought you needed or wanted?** In verse 12, the Israelites are told that they are standing there to enter into a covenant with God. It will be sealed. In verse 14, they are told that it will hold not only for those gathered, but for those not present. It can be inferred that this covenant is with Israel – at that time and forever.
- 5. Verses 22-28 are prophetic. Do you think that these verses apply to the Babylonian Exile or to the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions and captivity? Why or why not? (See 2 Kings 17: 1-8; 2 Kings 25: 8-12; Isaiah 1: 7, Isaiah 8: 4; Isaiah 9: 19; Isaiah 10: 5-6; Jeremiah 44: 2-6; Micah 5: 10-15.)** The Northern Kingdom of Israel was exiled to Assyria and Samaria was laid waste in the process. The Southern Kingdom of Judah was exiled to Babylon. Jerusalem was destroyed and plundered at that time. The Temple was completely destroyed. In Jeremiah, God's great anger about idolatry is offered as a reason for the destruction. The verses in Deuteronomy most likely look forward to these occurrences. However, the land is still not the land of milk and honey that the Israelites found when they entered the Promised Land. Even though there is a state of Israel today, it does not come close to the borders of the land that Abraham was given for him and his descendants.

Digging deeper: Why are some people able to hear and understand? Study Deuteronomy 29:4, Matthew 13:11-15 and Romans 11:7-10.

God makes a distinction between those that have hardened hearts and those that do not. For seekers of His truth, the Spirit works to help us understand the scriptures. If our hearts and minds are turned off to the Word, it is not comprehensible. For those that are looking for His true understanding, the Spirit will provide it. In Matthew 13:13 Jesus talks about speaking truths in parables. He uses everyday situations to explain spiritual truths. It takes some effort to glean the truths illustrated. Without our effort, the parable just seems like a story. Whether we hear with understanding depends on our effort to truly hear the truth that God wants to convey. Often we don't want to hear God's truth, but want confirmation of the "truth" we devise ourselves.

Day 2: Read Deuteronomy 30: 1-10

- 1. This passage begins with the word "When", not "If". How certain can we be that these things will come to pass?** The Israelites were taken into captivity in Assyria and in Babylon because of the disobedience of the people. Many of the people were returned to the land following the exiles. Some stayed in the lands they were taken to or land they escaped to (such as Egypt). The passage speaks of gathering all the people back to the land given to Abraham. This has not yet happened. We can be certain that this will occur if we believe that God is as good as His word.
- 2. God makes some wonderful promises to Israel in this passage. What is the promise of verse 1? Verse 2? Verses 3 and 5? Verses 3-5? Verse 6? Verse 7? Verse 9?** Verse 1 promises that Israelites will be dispersed among all nations. Verse 2 promises that Israel will repent and return to God. Verses 3 and 5 guarantee that God will restore their fortunes and prosper them. In verses 3-5, He makes clear that despite being in all corners of the earth, they will be gathered back and have possession of the land. Verse 6 indicates that there will be a full conversion. They will love God with whole hearts and souls. Verse 7 promises that God will punish Israel's enemies. Verse 9 promises that Israel will be fully blessed.
- 3. In verse 6, what is meant by "God will circumcise your hearts"? (See also Genesis 17: 11 and Deuteronomy 10: 16.)** In Genesis 17, God says that circumcision is a sign of the covenant relationship between God and His people. As this physical change reminded Israel that they were a people set apart, the physical change would be meaningless if there were no spiritual change that accompanied it. So, circumcision of the heart means that the people were to be spiritually changed by the covenant relationship.
- 4. Look at Ezekiel 36:24-28. Compare and contrast this to Deuteronomy 30:1-10.** Ezekiel 36:24-28 prophesies a day when Israel will again be gathered from all the nations and restored to the land. God will purify her and cleanse her of idolatry. He will put the Spirit into her and cause her to then be obedient. The Ezekiel passage guarantees much of the same promises of Deuteronomy 30:1-10. Israel's restoration is assured. The Deuteronomy passage says that when Israel repents, then all the blessing will be given. The Ezekiel passage indicates the God himself will perform the cleansing. This is the result of God's grace, not the following of the law.
- 5. Compare the covenant described in Deuteronomy 30: 1-10 with the covenant described in Exodus 19: 3-6. What similarities and differences do you see?** The covenant described in Deuteronomy is primarily a land covenant. It describes a restoration to a land already given to Israel but not inhabited yet by a people fully committed to God. That this will happen is not in question, for the covenant indicates that when certain things come to pass, then God will act. The covenant in Exodus 19 seems more conditional – that *IF* Israel is obedient, *THEN* they will be blessed. This blessing meant that they would be a holy nation. See also Genesis 17: 7-8 for more on God's covenant with Abraham.

Day 3: Read Deuteronomy 30: 11-14

- 1. Who is the speaker of this passage? What is the commandment discussed here? What does God say about what He is commanding?** Moses is speaking to the people in this passage, but he is speaking for God. The commandment spoken of is obedience to God. God says that it is within our reach. We don't need to go to great lengths to find it, that the word is very near to us. God brought his words directly to the people. We who live where the word is available have it very close as well. We have no excuse to not know it.
- 2. In verses 12 and 13, where is God's command not to be found? What is the significance of using these phrases? How might we say the same thing today?** For the Israelites, God's command was with them on the tablets of stone and with Moses as their leader. The word does not have to be found in heaven or beyond the sea. We might say that we need not travel to find the word. If we have a Bible, a radio, or the internet, we have it at our hand.
- 3. Read Isaiah 45:19. Does this passage illuminate the Deuteronomy passage more fully? What precisely is God communicating to His people? What challenge or responsibility is inherent in each of the passages?** This passage in Isaiah says that God has not spoken in secret. He has not expected us to be unable to find him. He makes Himself available to all who seek Him. Our responsibility, those of us who know Him, is to be a resource to seekers. We need to spread the Gospel.
- 4. Look at Romans 10: 6-10. In this passage, Paul gives us an application of the Deuteronomy passage: he applies the passage to Christ. Do you see Christ clearly in Deuteronomy 30:14?** The Deuteronomy passage says that the word is close – in our mouths and in our hearts. In Romans, Paul relates that salvation is available to all who acknowledge Christ with the words of our mouths and the belief of our hearts.

Day 4: Read Deuteronomy 30: 11-18

- 1. In verse 15, what choices is God setting before the Israelites?** Life and prosperity vs. death and destruction
- 2. In verse 16, what is involved in choosing life and prosperity? What are the people to do? What will God do?** For life, they were to love God with all their hearts, souls, minds and strength. They were to follow His commands. He in turn would bless them in the land they were entering.
- 3. In verse 17, what behaviors are described? In verse 18, what will happen if people choose these behaviors? Do you agree with Deuteronomy 30: 11 that these commands are not too difficult or beyond their reach?** The behaviors leading to death are described as disobedience, idolatry, and worship of false gods. The consequences would be destruction and removal from their land. How can total obedience to God be not too difficult? Scripture declares that all have sinned (Romans 3:23). On our own, we cannot obey what God commands, but thanks be to God that our Savior, Jesus Christ, has released us from the power of sin.
- 4. In John 14: 15-21, Jesus speaks to us too about obedience. What does He promise us? What assistance will He provide?** In John 14:16-17 Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit to lead us in truth. He will not leave us as orphans, but will be with us. He tells us that if we love Him, He will be in us as He is in the Father.
- 5. Read Jeremiah 24. Jeremiah warned God's people that an exile was coming. In this chapter, he tells them that God will work on the hearts of the exiles that they might turn back to Him. In Deuteronomy 30:14, Moses tells Israel that the word was very near to them. Have there been times in your life when you turned away, but through the estrangement you see that God prepared you to once again have a heart to know Him?** Jeremiah 24 tells of God's love toward those whom He disciplines. If we can accept the discipline of the Lord, He will work in our hearts to bring us back to Himself. See especially verses 6 and 7 for the wonderful promises of God.

Day 5: Read Deuteronomy 30: 19-20

1. In verse 19, God calls heaven and earth to witness against the people. What impact do you think this statement had on the people? (See Deuteronomy 31: 28 and 32; Joshua 24: 22; Psalm 50: 4; Isaiah 1: 2.)
2. In verse 19, God asks His people to choose life. What will this allow? What blessings does this bring? Choosing life amounts to choosing blessings. Longevity for them and their children.
3. In verse 19, note the pairings: life and death; blessing and curse. See Deuteronomy 11: 26-32. What is the blessing? What is it dependent on? What is the curse? What is it dependent on? God's blessing is dependent upon the people following His laws. They were to be obedient. The curse, or destruction, inability to stay in the land would occur if they followed other gods.
4. Verse 20 says that the Lord is our life. Read Deuteronomy 32: 46-47; Deuteronomy 30: 20; and John 11:25 and 14:6. In all of these verses, what does life refer to? The Lord is our life. His word is our life. Jesus is our life. It is through Jesus, the Word, that we will have life and have it abundantly.

Day 6

(If you have the book Leaving Egypt, read chapters 13 and 14. If you do not have the book, consider how you might respond to these questions based on your own experiences and understanding.)

1. On page 175, DeGroat states that "like the Israelites, we can leave Egypt but it takes a long time for Egypt to leave us. We carry around our hurts and resentments like weapons." **How do you effectively let go of hard feelings, anger and bitterness? Do you resent being told to let go of things? Jesus teaches that not holding on to things brings us closer to God. Look at Matthew 19:21 and 5:44. Do these passages help you to progress or do you find them discouraging?**
2. Look at page 186. The theologian Nouwen teaches: "Each time you dare to let go and to surrender one of those many fears, your hand opens a little and your palms spread out in a gesture of receiving." **Do you ever look back at something you hung on to emotionally to find that when giving it up you received grace?** He believes we need several things in order to relinquish the things which possess us. These are:
 - a. We need trusted friends, others who are on the same journey.
 - b. We need the spiritual practices of the church for strength and an understanding of our true needs.
 - c. We need scripture in order to live faithfully.

How have your friends, your church family and practices, and your Bible study equipped you to let go of things that hold you in bondage? Do you find all of these to be of equal value in your struggles?

3. On page 193, DeGroat says "Entering the promised land, however, requires us to become unburdened, freed from the many false selves that hold us captive. While the wilderness exposes false selves, it is difficult to live honestly, to live consistently, to live wholly. This is why we need community." **Where do you find community? What does it offer you? What has helped you to see your false selves?** (Note: a false self is an identity we create to protect us from further pain, to gain acceptance and approval: this usually results from difficult things we experienced early in life.)