

Focus on Deuteronomy 30:15–20

WHAT is important to know?

—From “*Exegetical Perspective*” by W. Sibley Towner

Then comes the great challenge: “Choose life!” The sense if not the form of the Hebrew verb for “choose” (*ubaharta*) is imperative. It points to an as yet unresolved decision. What do they do? At the end of the book of Joshua, in the context of a covenant ratification ceremony, the people publically commit themselves to rejecting idolatry. They say, “We also will serve the LORD, for he is our God” (Josh. 24:18). They seal the covenant with their choice and consequently are liable for their subsequent apostasies.

WHERE is God in these words?

—From “*Theological Perspective*” by Carol J. Dempsey

The people are called to live Torah as a way of life. Their reward for their fidelity and integrity will be divine blessing. To be blessed by God is to be guaranteed safety, well-being, strength, prosperity, and progeny. Furthermore, the people themselves will become “a blessing” (cf. Gen. 12:2–3). God’s commandments and ways are meant not as restriction but rather as prescriptions that lead to the fullness of life for all; in that sense, their end is not meant to constrict but to set free. Obedience is not merely doing as one is told. Obedience means “to listen,” which involves more than just hearing and following. Obedience is a discernment process that involves not only the mind and will but also, and most especially, the heart.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

—From “*Pastoral Perspective*” by Andrew Foster Connors

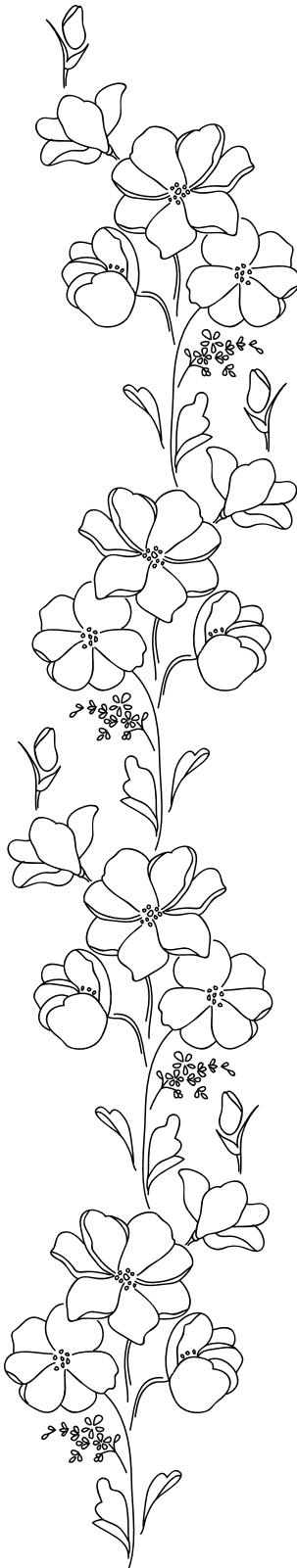
The flip side of these ominous warnings is that God desires for the community to be blessed. God desires life, not death. God hopes that Israel will make the right choice, for faithfulness. The right choice means blessings for the entire community, not just for some. The right choice means a home not just for God’s people but for resident aliens as well. The right choice means economic policies that leave enough for everyone. The right choice means an equitable distribution of resources. The right choice means life—this is what God desires for us.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

—From “*Homiletical Perspective*” by Brett Younger

Worship with all your heart. Pray genuinely. Love your church. Believe that God loves you. Remember the stories of Jesus. See Christ in the people around you. Share God’s love with someone who has forgotten it. Delight in God’s good gifts. See that all of life is holy. Open your heart to the Spirit. Search for something deeper and better than your own comfort. Live in the joy beneath it all. Let God make your life wonderful. Moses preached that we choose life in an amazing variety of ways. This text provides a wonderful chance for us to hear: “Today I set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life.”

Choose Life!



The truth, according to Deuteronomy, is that there will be hell to pay for the choices we make when those choices run counter to God's covenantal obligations. We know this is true in the lives of the people we counsel. Promises are violated in marriages. Destructive secrets erupt from the places where families hide them. Irresponsible financial decisions run their ultimate course. The predictable destruction that lies in the wake confirms that there are severe consequences for violating covenantal norms. We know this is true in the dynamics of congregational life. Conflicts arise in the absence of healthy leadership, words are exchanged, sides are taken, splits occur. It takes years for these congregations to leave the pain and isolation of congregational exile. Some never do. We know this is true in our world. As I write, the markets of the world economy are crumbling. While we do not yet know the details, we know enough to conclude that God's ethical demands for fairness in the marketplace have been violated in the name of basic greed. There will be hell to pay for the choices that we make.

Perhaps our resistance to this kind of counsel is not simply a concern about God's beneficence, but our wish to live as though God were not so attentive to the choices that we make. Perhaps we have been led further astray than we first imagined. Perhaps we have bowed down to the gods of choice more often than we have been willing to admit.

—Andrew Foster Conners, *Feasting on the Word, Year A, Volume 1* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 340.

1. List the gods that compete against God today.
2. List the gods that tempt you to follow them.
3. Now list ways you can choose life in
 - a. Your home
 - b. Your relations with friends
 - c. Your business transactions
4. Circle at least one thing you will concentrate on this next week.