

Youth Teaching Resources

September 8, 2019



Season After Pentecost (June 16-November 24)

On the Road with Jesus

Luke 14:1-14 (RCL 1, 7-14) – “A Way to the Top”

Choices That Matter

Deuteronomy 30:15-20 – “Make the Right Choice!”

Jeremiah 4:11-28 (RCL 11-12, 22-28) – “Delay and You’ll Pay”

Jeremiah 8:18-9:3 (RCL 8:18-9:1) – “Go on and Grieve”

Jeremiah 32:1-15 (RCL 32:1-3a, 6-15) – “Never Give Up”

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Find links and videos related to this lesson.

Make the Right Choice!

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Jeremy Colliver

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

PARENT PREP

Who sets the rules in your house? By-and-large it is the adults of the house. This is probably the most common, and overwhelming, answer. When do you let your students start making some of the rules? Have you ever thought about it? If they are to create their own rules when they move out, shouldn't there be a trial period when they have something to fall back on? Rules should provide structure for life that allow one to live, not to restrict someone. Create rules with your students and see what happens. You will probably be surprised.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Fellowship

Begin your session by showing the clip "To Life" from *Fiddler on the Roof*. If you are unable to show the clip, summarize it to the best of your ability, and then facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) What starts all the singing and dancing?
- 2) What are they toasting?
- 3) How are they "choosing to live life" in this scene?
- 4) How does your faith help you choose to live life?

Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading Deuteronomy 30:15-20. Allow the students to ask any initial questions they have about the text. As you answer their questions, you may want to provide some of the information found in Tony's commentary to answer their questions. When the students have had an opportunity to share their initial thoughts, continue the discussion by facilitating a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) What is Moses calling the people of Israel to do in this passage?
- 2) How must the people of Israel go about living life the way that Moses prescribes?
- 3) Why would Moses need to insist that this way of life was not too hard for the people?
- 4) What choice does Moses give to the people of Israel? What will the outcome of their different choices be?
- 5) How are we to choose God in our lives today?

Information *continued*

If your group would like to dig deeper in their discussion, share some of the insights that Tony provides in the “Digging Deeper” portion of his commentary. You may want to use some questions like the following to facilitate your discussion:

- 1) Where is Sinai? What importance does it play?
- 2) What role does the sea play in the narrative of the people of Israel?

You may also want your group to discuss “The Hardest Question” if they would like to continue their discussion on this passage. Tony poses the following question to consider as “The Hardest Question”: Did Moses really preach this sermon?

Transformation

Conclude your session by creating small groups of 2 to 3 people and challenging them to list all of the different choices that they make on a daily basis. Encourage them to list the small choices and the big choices and then have them discuss how they make these decisions. After allowing the small groups time to discuss, bring everyone back together and facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) Were you surprised by how many decisions you make a day? Explain.
- 2) Which are the easy decisions? The hard decisions?
- 3) What do you do when you can’t make a decision?
- 4) Who are the people that help you make a decision?
- 5) Who, or what, are other influencers in your life?
- 6) How would you rank these influencers? Are you happy with them? What would it take for you to switch the order up?

Close with a prayer thanking God for the choices that we have in life and especially the choice that we have to follow in the way of Christ.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Deuteronomy—The Deuteronomic writers built their work on the theme of blessing and cursing, the premise being that God would bless the righteous and curse the wicked. Later writers in Judah used this same theology as the basis for the books of Joshua – 2 Kings (with the exception of Ruth), commonly known as the “Deuteronomistic History.” Their purpose was to explain the exile by showing that Yahweh had not been defeated or deserted his people. Rather, the exile was a natural result of Israel’s sinful ways that had been practiced over many years. Even Josiah’s revival, they concluded, was too little and too late to stop the impending invasion of the Babylonians, which was nothing more than God’s punishment for Israel’s errant ways.

Context—Here’s one way to outline the book of Deuteronomy.

Introduction and Moses’ First Sermon (1:1-4:43)

Historical review of the wilderness journey (1:6-3:29)

Exhortations to give heed (4:1-43)

II. Moses’ Second Sermon (4:44-26:19)

The giving of the law at Sinai (5:1-11:32)

Additional statutes and ordinances (12:1-25:19)

Rituals, and an interlude (26:1-27:26)

Conclusion (28:1-68)

III. Moses’ Third Sermon (29:1-30:20)

IV. Moses’ Last Days (31:1-34:12)

A final charge and the writing of the law (31:1-13)

The commissioning of Joshua as Moses’ successor (31:14-23)

The Song of Moses (31:30-32:47)

The blessing of Moses (33:1-29)

The death of Moses (34:1-12)

Horeb/Sinai—Different sources of the Pentateuch call the place of Israel’s initial covenant by different names. In Exodus, both the “Yahwist” (who calls God Yahweh) and the Priestly source use the term “Sinai,” while the “Elohists” source (which calls God “Elohim”) uses the term “Horeb.” The author of Deuteronomy, generally referred to as the “Deuteronomist,” also uses the term “Horeb.”

Digging Deeper *continued*

Heshbon and Bashan—Little else is known about these two reported kings. The land of Bashan was a hilly but fertile area east of the Sea of Galilee, known for its rich pasturage. Amos would later excoriate the luxurious lifestyle of the rich by describing them as “fat cows of Bashan” (Amos 4:1). Bashan extended southward to meet Heshbon, which was later controlled by the Ammonites. The northern part of this territory was then assigned to half of the tribe of Manasseh, and the southern part to the tribes of Reuben and Gad.

Across the sea—The writer’s claim that the word enabling Israel to keep the commandments and find life did not require a journey to the heavens or beneath the sea may recall familiarity with the Mesopotamian “Epic of Gilgamesh.” In it, a powerful king named Gilgamesh is distraught when his friend Enkidu dies, prompting him to go on a quest to find the key to eternal life. He ultimately comes to an island in the sea, where Utnapishtim, the Babylonian equivalent to Noah, told him of a plant beneath the sea that could give new life. Gilgamesh dove into the sea and retrieved the plant. But later lost it while bathing in a forest pool. A serpent ate the plant and slithered away, shedding its skin as if attaining new life.

Adding color—The NRSV translates v. 15 as “See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity.” That gives a rather floral cast to the Hebrew’s straightforward “life and good or death and evil.” Prosperity is not quite the same thing as good, and adversity is not the same thing as evil. Good can lead to prosperity (though not always), and evil can lead to adversity – but good people may also face adversity.

The black-and-white portrayal of obedience = blessing and disobedience = cursing fits the rhetoric of the Deuteronomistic covenant, but does not reflect the realities of life.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

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Did Moses really preach this sermon?

The book of Deuteronomy is shaped in the form of one or possibly three connected sermons that Moses reportedly delivered as Israel stood on the verge of entering the land of promise. As presented, it amounts to a lengthy challenge and farewell address from Moses before his death. The book includes a restating of the ten commandments, along with supplemental commentary and additional laws. This gave rise to its English name: “Deuteronomy” means “second law” (from Greek *deuteros* [second] *nomos* [law], used as a title in the Greek translation known as the LXX). The Hebrew name of the book is *haddebarim*, meaning “The Words,” because that is the first word in the book.

Deuteronomy is written as if these are the very words of Moses, who supposedly wrote them down as well. But did he? During Moses’ lifetime, so far as we know, Hebrew had not yet become a written language: the earliest proto-Hebrew inscriptions we have found are 200 years later than the time attributed to Moses. Traditions and stories associated with Moses, like the rest of the Pentateuch, were passed down in oral tradition for hundreds of years.

While the speeches in Deuteronomy may have roots in ongoing Mosaic traditions, it’s likely that they are the work of someone who lived long after Moses, constructing speeches designed to support the theological agenda of the priests in the late seventh and early sixth centuries, BCE. Purporting that Moses was responsible for the law would give the writing an added sense of authority.

The final edition of Deuteronomy was probably compiled during the exile, but an earlier version was known as early as 621 B.C., when it was “found” during renovations in the temple ordered by King Josiah and presented to the king as a book of law that had fallen from use and been lost. Josiah apparently used the teachings of this book as the basis for promoting a revival of Yahwism and various religious reforms in Judah (2 Kings 22-23).

Thus, while Deuteronomy is written as an address to Israelites who had not yet entered the land, it was mainly a message to people who had lived in the land for many years but were in danger of losing it – or had lost it already.

We do not live under the same covenant as Israel, but we can learn from Israel’s experience and profit from the challenge to serve God faithfully – not just to gain rewards, but because it is the right way of life.