

The Boundaries and The Blessings

Deuteronomy 30:19-20

We are the sum total of the choices that we make. Who we are today is a result of the choices that we've made in the past. Who we will be tomorrow is the result of the decisions that we're making today. Our decisions will determine who we become and what we're able to do tomorrow. Our choices matter. We all make hundreds of decisions everyday: what to wear, what to eat, where to go, what to watch. Researchers now tell us that the average person makes over 35,000 decisions every single day. It's just that most of them are so small they don't even show up on our radar screen. Out of those 35,000 decisions, even the small, seemingly most insignificant choices can have the greatest ramifications in our lives.

Decisions determine our destiny. God wants us to be able to make great decisions in critical moments. He wants us to be able to know how to make the little decisions. He wants to put us on a path that He has planned for us. It's a path of blessing and strength and purpose. It all comes down to our choices. It all comes down to our decisions.

The Hebrew word for “decide” or “choose” means to “select” or to “pick.” The Latin word for decision means “to cut.” The act of cutting off or eliminating other options to focus on and commit to one path. Good decisions cut away distractions. They clarify purpose.

Moses, the great leader, gathered all the people of Israel together, and he gives them a charge. He points out the most important decisions that you have to make so all the other decisions fall into place. He tells us about this life-and-death decision that was before them, the same decision that's before us today that makes all the other decisions fall into place.

“This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to His voice, and hold fast to Him. For the LORD is your life, and He will give you many years in the land He swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” Deuteronomy 30:19-20

God simplifies our decision making down to two choices: the door of life or the door of death, the door of blessings or the door of curses. It all comes down to two doors, and you've got to decide which door you're going to go through. Am I going to choose the door of life and blessings or the door of death and curses?

That's an easy choice. We're all going to choose the door of life and blessings. The problem is all of those little doors that are in our path. All the decisions we make every single day don't have labels on them “life” or “death” or “blessings” or “curses.” That's what they all come down to.

Every door you walk through either fills you with life and satisfaction, fulfillment and purpose, or it drains you of life, satisfaction, fulfillment, and purpose. Every door is life or death, blessings or curses. We have to learn how to make a few big decisions, so that all the other decisions begin to fall into place in life.

The question today is, “How do I make decisions that are all about life? How do I choose the door of life and blessings?”

Deuteronomy 30 is part of Moses's farewell speeches to the Nation of Israel. He knew that he would soon die. With some of his last words to the Nation of Israel, Moses explains to the people that there is a CHOICE for them to make.

In Verse 15 he says, *“See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction.”*

In Verse 19 he tells us there is a choice, *“I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.”*

Joshua, the man who took over for Moses when he died, is getting ready to die himself. In Joshua 24 he basically tells the people the same thing that Moses had told the people. Some of the younger people who had heard the words of Moses from Deuteronomy 30 many years earlier are now hearing the words of Joshua.

Joshua says, *“Choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”* Joshua 24:15

They had to decide, and we must decide. They had to make a choice, and we must make a choice.

Moses begins this final appeal in Deuteronomy 30:11 by telling them this is something they can do. This is not out of reach for them. He tells them it is within their reach. The call to obey God is not unreasonable or impossible. The commandments of God are not in a distant, inaccessible place. They are not up in heaven, still unrevealed and hidden in the heart of God. The commandments are not beyond the sea in a foreign land, The Word of God is near us. It has been revealed by God so that we can obey it. God has demonstrated His love to us in a most wonderful way. He has not left us in the dark, groping, grasping, and stumbling about, seeking the answers to life on our own. He is going to break the task down into achievable parts and build their confidence.

We would say this:

“I know you can do this.”

“I’ve seen you handle tougher things than this.”

“This is right up your alley.”

Moses then breaks it into smaller, more manageable steps that provides a clear path forward. Then he focuses on the positive outcome.

“Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, ‘Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?’ Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, ‘Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?’ No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it. See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction.” Deuteronomy 30:11-15

God’s will for your life is not something He’s trying to hide from you or confuse you with. He wants you to see the doors that you’re to walk through, and God makes His will clear to us in the moment. He’s not hiding it. The problem we have is we want God to show us all of the future down the road. We think, “God, if you’ll show me how this all turns out, then I’ll walk through that door,” and God says, “No. This is the door you’re to walk through. Walk through this door, and even if you don’t see the results, thank Me in advance, because this is a door of blessing.” It may not feel like a door of blessing at the time, a door of life at the time, but it is, and we thank Him in advance. He tells them it is in their mouth and in their hearts, in their words and in their actions. It was in their decisions.

1. They Had To Choose WHO They Would LOVE.

“For I command you today to love the Lord your God.” Deuteronomy 30:16

The choice they would make about who they would serve was a heart decision. He made the choice plain. You can serve a real and living God or a deaf, fake false god. Moses commands the people to love God, walk in His ways, and keep His commandments, statutes, and judgments.

Part of serving a real God was that this real God expected obedience. The fake, false piece of stone or wood didn’t require anything. This is why its easier to serve a false god. They don’t ask for any commitment.

It began with a heart decision. Did they really believe in a real God? Were they willing to obey that God? The same decision has to be made today. WHO are you going to serve? What choice will you make today? It has to be a heart decision. It’s about what you say and what you do.

Paul says *“If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”* Romans 10:9-10

When the Bible talks about believing with your heart, it’s not talking about a muscle that pumps blood. The heart means the center, the very core. When we talk about the heart of something, we mean the most important part—the main part, what everything revolves around. When God speaks about the heart, He is talking about the main part of person—the very center of person's being—which means we cannot serve God on our own terms, we have to serve Him on His terms.

Early on in Deuteronomy, Moses instructs the children of Israel about their love for God.

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” Deuteronomy 6:4-9

“Fear the Lord your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name. Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; for the Lord your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land.” Deuteronomy 6:13-15

Jesus said to them, *“If any man will come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”* Luke 9:23

Serving God is a daily task. It’s a way of life.

2. They Had To Choose HOW They Would LIVE.

The call to us is direct and forceful: we must love and obey the Lord. In Deuteronomy, we have the law interpreted. Their future is bright with promise, but it is filled with difficulties. They have the promise of a new land, but that land has enemies that seek to keep them out. The path to the blessing of God was obedience. The choice for them was to live in obedience or in disobedience. The question was, how would they live their lives? There would be some problems and difficulties along the way, but God would be with them and give them victory. We live in a world of difficulties and challenges even as we walk in the promises of God.

“The LORD your God will drive out those nations before you, little by little.” Deuteronomy 7:22

The secret of their success would be connected to their obedience. When God gives His commands, it's not to restrict our lives. He is trying to expand our lives.

- The Boundaries

“These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. Hear, Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, promised you.” Deuteronomy 6:1-3

“Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land the LORD promised on oath to your ancestors.” Deuteronomy 8:1

“Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: A blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day; And a curse, if you will not obey the commandments.” Deuteronomy 11:26

Remember God's Direction.

“Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.” Deuteronomy 8:2

God may be putting you through a testing time to see if you are going to obey and serve Him. The Lord gives us the test, and then He teaches us the lessons.

“He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.” Deuteronomy 8:3

Rejoice In God's Provision.

“Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years.” Deuteronomy 8:4

Sometimes when feet swell it's an indication of beriberi, which is vitamin deficiency. God fed them with a special food in the wilderness, and He fed them with manna.

Revere God's Presence.

“Observe the commands of the Lord your God, walking in obedience to Him and revering Him.” Deuteronomy 8:7

- The Blessings

“For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills.” Deuteronomy 8:7

He repeats the promise of the Promised Land, Canaan Land, which God had promised to the children of Israel. Water is crucial in the Middle East. God gave them a land with everything they needed. God is The Source of Blessing

“When the LORD your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you—a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant—then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” Deuteronomy 6:10-12

What you and I have is because of the goodness and the grace of God.

“When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day.” Deuteronomy 8:10-11

“If you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed. Like the nations the LORD destroyed before you, so you will be destroyed for not obeying the LORD your God.” Deuteronomy 8:19-20

The children of Israel fell into a pattern: prosperity, forgetfulness, pride, and disaster.

“Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. He led you through the vast and dreadful wilderness, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had never known, to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with you. You may say to yourself, ‘My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.’ But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.”
Deuteronomy 8:12-18

“Love the LORD your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws and his commands always.” Deuteronomy 11:1

“Observe therefore all the commands I am giving you today, so that you may have the strength to go in and take over the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, and so that you may live long in the land the Lord swore to your ancestors to give to them and their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey...” Deuteronomy 11:9-10

“The land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven. It is a land the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end. So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today—to love the Lord your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul— then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and olive oil. I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied.” Deuteronomy 11:11-15

Here’s the choice that they had to make: They could live a blessed life there in the Land of Canaan, or they could live a cursed life. According to verse 16, a blessed life involved a fruitful life—multiplying, bearing and raising children, and becoming parents, grandparents, and even great-grandparents; living a life of contentment, being successful at driving the enemies out of the land.

Verse 18 tells us that a cursed life will be Death and Evil. Living a cursed life, they wouldn’t have any success of driving out their enemies. Living a cursed life, there would no future for them or their children, but the choice was up to them. Would they obey God?

People all over our world will make choices everyday about how they are going to live: About what is important in their lives and who is important in their lives. These are choices and decisions that God cares about.

The choices we make show what our priorities are.

“Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.” Proverbs 19:21

When it’s all said and done, when the service is over, the pallbearers have carried you to the grave. When you’re lowered down, and the dirt is thrown down on top of you, the choices you have made will either stand or fall. How you lived your life is all that you will be remembered for.

How are you going to live your life? By your own thoughts? Your plans? Your own ways? According to the plan of God? One won’t last, and the other will; but the choice is up to you.

“But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.” Deuteronomy 30:17-18

Right in the middle of the land of Israel, near the city of Shechem, there are two hills with a valley that runs between them. The valley is about 500 yards wide and runs for a couple of miles. On each side of this valley, there are two hills that extend about 1,000 feet above the valley of Shechem. On the southern side is Mount Gerizim. On the

northern side is Mount Ebal. When the people entered the land, they were to act out this divine drama as a giant object lesson for all to see and remember. Half of the tribes were to ascend mount Ebal (on the north). Half of the tribes were to ascend mount Gerizim (on the south). In so doing, the entire valley would become a giant theatre. So that all might see and understand what was going on in the valley below. Once all were assembled in their seats, the reading of the law was to begin. As it was read, the people on the hillsides were to affirm it. These things were so important to communicate with the people of Israel that Moses wanted this object lesson to take place. There is a way that a physical activity can help learn the lesson that is being taught. It would be helpful for us this morning to attempt to reenact this for a bit. Suppose that we transform our auditorium into the valley of Shechem. The valley is right in the middle and the mounds are on each side. Those on the south represent the blessing. Those on the north represent the curses.

“Cursed is the man who makes an idol or a molten image, an abomination to the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and sets it up in secret.” And all the people shall answer and say, “Amen.”

“Cursed is he who dishonors his father or mother.” And all the people shall say, “Amen.”

“Cursed is he who moves his neighbor's boundary mark.” And all the people shall say, “Amen.”

“Cursed is he who misleads a blind person on the road.” And all the people shall say, “Amen.”

“Cursed is he who distorts the justice due an alien, orphan, and widow.” And all the people shall say, “Amen.”

“Cursed is he who lies with his father's wife, because he has uncovered his father's skirt.” And all the people shall say, “Amen.”

“Cursed is he who lies with any animal.” And all the people shall say, “Amen.”

“Cursed is he who lies with his sister, the daughter of his father or of his mother.” And all the people shall say, “Amen.”

“Cursed is he who lies with his mother-in-law.” And all the people shall say, “Amen.”

“Cursed is he who strikes his neighbor in secret.” And all the people shall say, “Amen.”

“Cursed is he who accepts a bribe to strike down an innocent person.” And all the people shall say, “Amen.”

“Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.” And all the people shall say, “Amen.”
Deuteronomy 27:15-26

“Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the LORD your God: Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. Blessed shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground and the offspring of your beasts, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. The LORD shall cause your enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you; they will come out against you one way and will flee before you seven ways. The LORD will command the blessing upon you in your barns and in all that you put your hand to, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God gives you. The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, as He swore to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways. So all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will be afraid of you. The LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your beast and in the produce of your ground, in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. The LORD will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand; and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. The LORD will make you the head and not the

tail, and you only will be above, and you will not be underneath, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I charge you today, to observe them carefully, and do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you today, to the right or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.” Deuteronomy 28:1-14

These are incredible blessings that would come upon the people of God if they would simply obey His voice. There is blessing in believing and obeying.

3. They Had To Choose WHAT Legacy They Would LEAVE Behind.

“Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” Deuteronomy 30:19-20

- Listen Constantly.

You have to make that decision to “*Listen to His voice.*”

Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski has an elaborate system on speakers he had placed in the stands at Cameron indoor stadium through which he played fan and crowd noises during his practices, not so they would get used to the game simulation but so his players would be able to recognize his voice during the game so when he spoke to them they would know his voice.

Listen constantly to the Lord instead of listening to everyone else. What does God say? So much of God's will is in God's Word, and God's will never contradicts His Word, so the more I get to know God's Word, the more I'll hear God's voice. God speaks to our hearts, but He uses His word as well. So I need to know God's Word, because if it's in God's Word, I need to do it. If it says, “Don't do it,” don't do it. I don't need to pray about it. It's in God's Word.

Jesus said, “*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*” Deuteronomy 30:27-28

They had a choice to make where they would die. 40 years earlier, the Children of Israel had been at this same spot. They had sent out 12 spies into the Land of Canaan, one from each tribe. When they came back, they told about the wonderful things they had seen, but they also told about the giants in the land. Ten out of the 12 spies were afraid to go, and those 10 convinced the rest of the people to not cross over the Jordan River, so for the next 40 years they wandered in the wilderness. According to Numbers 14, all those over the age of 20 died during those 40 years. The only exception were the two spies who wanted to cross over the Jordan River—Joshua and Caleb. Forty years later, the Children of Israel are back at the same spot. Now do they choose to go on over, live in the Promised Land and die there, or do they choose to LIVE and DIE in the wilderness like their parents?

The Children of Israel chose Who they would serve, the true and living God. They chose how they would live, a life that was pleasing to God, a life where their priorities were right, a life where they could have children and grandchildren.

Will you live in the center of God's will and then enter the Promised Land when you die? Or will you choose to wander in the Wilderness and die there?

We ALL have that decision to make. We all have choices to make. And, I believe, God cares about the ones that affect our lives. He wants us to make the right choice.

I love how this passage also tells us that it affects our children, and so your decisions not only determine your destiny, but your decisions determine your legacy. That's so important to understand. It has a ripple effect throughout time.

“You will again obey the Lord and follow all his commands I am giving you today. Then the Lord your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the

crops of your land. The Lord will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your ancestors, if you obey the Lord your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.” Deuteronomy 38:8-9

What am I going to base all my decisions in life on?

What am I going to base every other decision on?

Am I going to base it on the Word of God or the world, what culture says, or what Christ says?

Am I going to base my decisions on what I feel like or what God says?

- Don't Drift From Him.

Deuteronomy 30:20 sums it up by saying, *“And that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life.”*

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” John 10:10

He is the door of life, and every time you choose God's will, every time you turn to Jesus, then you turn to life, and He loves you with His whole life. The story of God is just the opposite of what the world says. The world says that God is off on His own somewhere. He's distant. He's aloof way off in heaven, if He even exists, so you can't reach Him. But the story of God is that God came to us to be with us, to connect with us, to show us His heart. The story of God is that we have a God who is not distant and aloof, but we have a God who is right there to meet your needs. He's right here. Even when you've been running from God, He's been chasing after you. He's been pursuing you.

We choose life when we choose God, the giver and sustainer of life (Acts 17:25). The Bible says God breathed the breath of life into humans (Genesis 2:7). Since our lives are a gift from God (Psalm 139:13; Acts 17:28), our highest aim ought to be living for Him. Jesus said, *“If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it”* (Matthew 10:39, NLT). We choose life by letting go of selfish desires and living for His sake. Then we can say, like the apostle Paul, *“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain”* (Philippians 1:21).