

Fully Committed

BELIEVERS ARE TO BE CHARACTERIZED BY A WHOLEHEARTED
COMMITMENT TO GOD.

Scripture Passage: Deuteronomy 30:11-20 Memory Verse: Deuteronomy 30:16

In 2022, a good friend and I were considering a new ministry. We were praying together about it, and he became convinced we should start it. We agreed on a meeting time to finalize our decision, and when I walked in, he said, “So are you all in?” He wanted to know if I thought we should move ahead with our plans; but more than that, he wanted to know if I was totally committed.

God expects wholehearted commitment from His people. Sometimes, believers involve themselves in spiritual matters, but they are not totally committed. They might attend worship services, give money to the church, and come to a social event. But their relationship with God doesn’t reflect a total commitment.

As you prepare to lead this study, ask God to give you the wisdom to move past religious activity and toward wholehearted commitment to Him. Encourage the adults in your Bible study to seek wholehearted commitment to God in their own lives as well. Find ways to encourage one another to view the Christian faith not as one aspect of our lives, but as life itself.



Weekly Podcast: Group Leader Training

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Do you remember when people sat for a professional family photo? Afterward, somebody would have to decide which photo was best. It would be framed, hung, and proudly displayed. One of the best ways to pick the favorite is to not consider multiple options at once. Instead, look at only two. Of these two, which is better? Set aside the not chosen one. Place a new picture beside the chosen one and ask, which is better? By comparing only two, you eliminate choice fatigue. Eventually, you've chosen the best photo. (PSG. p. 109)

In what situation have you had so many options that it was overwhelming to pick only one? How did you eventually decide?



Understand the Context (Deuteronomy 29:1–30:20)

Moses gathered the Israelites and reminded them again of all they had experienced (Deut. 29:1-9). They had personally witnessed God's great works in Egypt and in the wilderness. The Lord had protected them from harm and provided for them every step of the way, yet some still failed to understand His purpose for them. They had defeated Sihon and Og, two mighty kings east of the Jordan River. Because of all this, Moses encouraged the people to embrace God's covenant.

Moses affirmed that God's people were standing before Him that day (29:10-15). The Lord had established His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but He was confirming it with this generation centuries later. He was ready to ratify His covenant with all who would follow Him.

Moses also warned the people to shun all forms of idolatry (29:16-18). They had seen many idols in Egypt, and they were to have nothing to do with those idols or any they encountered in Canaan. No one was exempt from God's warning or the curse for disobedience (29:19-21).

Moses said that if judgment came on Israel, the nation would provide a sad testimony to the surrounding nations (29:22-28). The land would end up like Sodom and Gomorrah, and many would wonder why the Lord had treated His people this way. Those who knew would reply that it was because they had abandoned their covenant and served other gods instead of living to please Him (29:29).

The Lord would turn the people's curse into blessing if they rejected evil and turned back to Him (30:1-6). He would gather them from all the nations where He had scattered them, restore their fortunes, and have compassion on them again. The curses that formerly rested on them would fall on their enemies (30:7). The people's faithful obedience to God would bring His abundant blessing again (30:8-10).

The message Moses had for the Israelites was not far away, but close to their mouths and hearts (30:11-14). They did not have to seek hard to find it. They simply needed to lay hold of it. In fact, Moses boiled it down to two options: the way of life and prosperity and the way of death and adversity (30:15). The people's faithful love of God, reflected in their obedience, would bring His blessing (30:16). However, turning away from Him would cost them everything (30:17-18).

God's leader called heaven and earth as witnesses to his words (30:19). He was setting before them life and death, blessing and curses. He urged them to choose life. Since the Lord Himself was their life, He would fulfill the words He had promised to their ancestors (30:20).

As you read Deuteronomy 30:11-20, identify the choices set before the people. Highlight the commands. (PSG, p. 110)

ENGAGE



PREPARE: Make copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Numbers, Deuteronomy*) and **Pack Item 13** (*Handout: Moses's Final Appeal*). Review the Plan of Salvation on the inside front cover of the Leader Guide or PSG.

READ: Direct adults to read the opening paragraph (PSG, p. 109).

ASK: **In what situation have you had so many options that it was overwhelming to pick only one? How did you eventually decide?** (PSG, p. 109)

DISCUSS: Encourage the group to share situations where making a single choice is vital. Note that some choices are fairly mundane, while others could spell the difference between life and death.

OVERVIEW: Summarize the following from PSG page 110 to set the context for today's study passage.

“For forty years, Moses had been leading God’s people from Egypt across the Sinai Peninsula. He and the Israelites were now east of the Jordan River. . . . He had spent his first forty years in Egypt, his second tending to his father-in-law’s flocks, and his final forty leading the exodus. God’s people were standing on the threshold of the promised land. Moses would only be able to view it from a distance.”

TRANSITION: *This week’s passage would be Moses’s last formal message to Israel. It was not for a select few. It applied to everyone. As we work through these verses, think about the choices you make—and how you can demonstrate wholehearted commitment to God each day.*



Group Activity Option

Music

Invite adults to scan the words of “I Surrender All” (*Baptist Hymnal* 2008, No. 433). Talk about words and phrases that challenge people to fully commit to God. Ask: **Why do many people find it difficult to stay committed to, or surrendered to, Jesus? What are some things believers can do to remain committed to Jesus?** Point out that this session focuses on Moses’s commands to the Israelites to remain committed to God. Share that he emphasized this choice knowing that the people would find it difficult to follow God fully. Affirm that this struggle is still real. Lead adults in singing the first verse and chorus of the hymn as an opening prayer.

The Command (Deut. 30:11-14)

11 “This command that I give you today is certainly not too difficult or beyond your reach. **12** It is not in heaven so that you have to ask, ‘Who will go up to heaven, get it for us, and proclaim it to us so that we may follow it?’ **13** And it is not across the sea so that you have to ask, ‘Who will cross the sea, get it for us, and proclaim it to us so that we may follow it?’ **14** But the message is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, so that you may follow it.”

(v. 11) The word *command* likely designates the entire list of laws God gave Moses to pass along to His people (v. 16). Moses first described God’s instruction as *not too difficult*. The Hebrew wording conveys the basic meaning of “extraordinary” and elsewhere describes amazing acts and miraculous works only God can do (Pss. 136:4; 139:14). The divine revelation that God was giving His people was not something beyond their intellectual grasp. They could understand it and follow it. In fact, doing so would bring blessing.

Second, Moses assured Israel that God’s message was not *beyond your reach*. It was not something distant from them, something for which they would have to travel far, at great effort and expense. They should have known God was with them after forty years of seeing His provision, but some still may have struggled with the idea of a complete commitment to God.

(v. 12) In verses 12-14, Moses elaborated on his statement from verse 11. God’s command was not in *heaven*, which might require someone to *go up to heaven* and secure it for the people. No one needed to bring it down from heaven to *proclaim it* to the Israelites, after which they could *follow it*. God already had communicated His expectations to them through Moses, who had met with Him on Mount Sinai (Ex. 19-24).

The command they were receiving indeed constituted a message from heaven, but they already had it in their hands. God had made it accessible to them, without the need for supernatural efforts on their part. They had all they needed to live as He had called them to live. The apostle Peter later wrote that through God’s power, believers always have everything they need pertaining to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3).

(v. 13) Moses also assured the Israelites that God’s command was not *across the sea*. He likely was alluding to the Mediterranean Sea, which

ultimately would serve as the nation’s western border. In this, Moses was answering another hypothetical question some people might have: *Even if they didn’t have to go to heaven to discover God’s Word, did they need to travel to some unknown place on earth to connect with Him?*

While the question was different, the response essentially was the same. Moses stressed to them that this was not the case. They certainly had much work to do to conquer and settle the land of Canaan, but God had given them His revelation that provided all they needed to live good lives as His people. Total commitment to God’s Word would bring blessing. The Israelites simply needed to commit themselves to it.

(v. 14) Moses again affirmed that *the message is very near you* (literally, “Near to you is the word—very much!”). The Hebrew word order highlights how Moses was emphasizing the nearness of the commands. Israel had received these directions through Moses at Mount Sinai, and the people had begun to follow many of them. Once they settled in the promised land, the Lord expected them to maintain that obedience—and even grow in their commitment to His ways.

The expression *in your mouth* suggests the people already had spoken of God’s commands with one another, which would have been a natural occurrence during their days in the wilderness. Perhaps they reflected on them and discussed them as they journeyed.

In your heart emphasizes that God desired His people to internalize His commands. He was not giving them an external code or checklist. Instead, He wanted His words to change them from within. Indeed, the Hebrew word for “heart” designates the seat of human intellect, emotion, and will—in a sense, the whole person.



SUMMARIZE:

APPLICATION POINT: We can trust God to give us the ability to obey His commands.

Distribute copies of **Pack Item 13** (*Handout: Moses's Final Appeal*). Briefly overview the article and encourage adults to use it for additional personal study of the Scripture passage.

READ:

Invite a volunteer to read Deuteronomy 30:11-14 while adults listen for how Moses described God's covenant. Share that Moses was calling Israel to obey God wholeheartedly.

SHARE:

Remind adults again that Israel's forty-year journey through the wilderness was moving toward its completion. Note that they could see the promised land in the distance, and it provided a powerful backdrop for Moses's final words.

SAY:

As they looked toward their new home, the people of God would remember His faithfulness and anticipate the fulfillment of the promises God made to Abraham centuries earlier.

HIGHLIGHT:

Use the following information from page 112 of the PSG to explain the nearness of the covenant:

Rather than being remote and unattainable, God's message was near. Significantly, the Hebrew word translated "message" in verse 14 is not plural. Message being singular underscores the unity of God's instruction to His people. God has not left us an incoherent rambling of disconnected thoughts and teachings. He has given a unified single message to His people.

DISCUSS:

Lead adults to share what they believe having God's message in their mouths and hearts means—and how that could help believers follow Him more closely.

ASK:

How can you respond to people who say it is too difficult to know God's will or to obey His commands? (PSG, p. 112)

TRANSITION:

After emphasizing the availability of God's covenant to His people, Moses turned his attention to their responsibility before God. Once they entered the promised land, the people would have a choice to make—trust God or go their own way. As Moses would remind them, they were free to make their own decision, but they needed to understand that each option would produce a unique outcome.



The Commitment (Deut. 30:15-18)

15 “See, today I have set before you life and prosperity, death and adversity. **16** For I am commanding you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, statutes, and ordinances, so that you may live and multiply, and the LORD your God may bless you in the land you are entering to possess. **17** But if your heart turns away and you do not listen and you are led astray to bow in worship to other gods and serve them, **18** I tell you today that you will certainly perish and will not prolong your days in the land you are entering to possess across the Jordan.”

(v. 15) As Moses moved to conclude his speech, he put before the Israelites two options: **life and prosperity** or **death and adversity**. These two options represented opposite ends of the spectrum. The word “life” designated more than mere existence. It implied life to the full, life as God intended it. It was the kind of life Jesus said He came to bring (John 10:10). “Prosperity” denoted a secure quality of life in every way. They would receive the good that God had promised materially, relationally, and spiritually.

In stark contrast, Moses warned that despair also remained an option. The word translated “adversity” denotes what is harmful or even calamitous. It suggests an existence where very little goes right and where people reap the consequences of their foolish choices. God naturally wanted His people to choose life and prosperity, and He was about to tell them how.

(v. 16) The first step on the path toward experiencing God’s blessing was **to love the LORD**. This command echoed Deuteronomy 6:5, where Moses challenged them to love God with all their being. Second, they should **walk in his ways**. The term translated “ways” can denote a road where believers follow the path He has prepared for them.

Third, the people were to **keep his commands, statutes, and ordinances**. The people’s loving commitment led to their obedience and full experience of God’s blessings.

Moses encouraged the Israelites to nurture a total commitment toward God and to demonstrate that commitment through absolute obedience to His commands. If they would honor that commitment, they would **live and multiply** in the **land** they were **entering to possess**.

(v. 17) The expression **if your heart turns away** describes the people abandoning their total commitment to the Lord. When that happened, the

people would no longer **listen** to His words. Once they abandoned God’s righteous standards, they could easily be **led astray** into sin. They would give in to the temptation to **bow in worship to other gods and serve them** in the land of Canaan.

The book of Judges records how this happened when the people forgot the Lord and His great works on their behalf. Instead, they adopted the evil practices of the pagan Canaanite population (Judg. 2:10-23).

Key Doctrine

Man

By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. (See Genesis 3:6-7; James 1:14-15.)

(v. 18) The idea of **today** occurs multiple times in this core passage (vv. 11,15,16,18,19). Moses wanted the Israelites to make their total commitment while the evidence of God’s faithfulness still remained fresh in their minds. This was not a time for procrastination or delay.

Again, he emphasized the consequences of turning from God: **you will certainly perish**. The Hebrew literally says “perishing you will perish” and stresses the devastating results that would ensue. The word also occurs in Psalm 1:6, where it describes the way of the wicked.

Moses warned that the Israelites would **not prolong your days in the land**, a direct contrast to the results of faithful obedience he described in verse 16. Their total commitment to God would yield a life beyond what they could imagine, but rebellion would bring disaster.



APPLICATION POINT: People must choose whether they will follow God or not.

RESEARCH:

Guide adults to work in pairs and provide each pair with paper and pencils. Direct one person in each pair to read and write a paraphrase for Deuteronomy 30:15-16, while the other person does the same for Deuteronomy 30:17-18. Suggest adults use content from pages 112-114 of the PSG to assist them. Encourage adults to share with one another what they found.

DISCUSS:

Invite volunteers to share their paraphrases. Guide adults to provide additional clarification they may have discovered during their research. Summarize this content from page 114 in the PSG to emphasize the seriousness of Moses's warnings:

Verse 17 contains a progression of action. The first step begins in the heart, maybe unseen by others. . . . Second, the person no longer listens to what God has said. . . . This leads to step three; the person is led astray. . . . Growing more comfortable in the presence of the ungodly can lead to steps four and five. The person will begin to bow in worship and ultimately serve other gods. . . . Those false gods will get the person's time, attention, energy, and resources. This is what it means to serve them.

ASK:

How are people today fooled into thinking there is no penalty for sin? (PSG, p. 115)

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Choose a snack

Display a bowl of bite-sized individually wrapped candy or snacks, along with a separate bowl of kibble dog food. Pass the bowls and invite adults to select a snack from one bowl or the other. Comment that this choice seems easy enough. Ask: ***Why doesn't the choice between the options in verses 15-16 and verses 17-18 seem just as easy? Why would anyone follow false gods instead of obeying the Lord?***

The Challenge (Deut. 30:19-20)

19 “I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, **20** love the LORD your God, obey him, and remain faithful to him. For he is your life, and he will prolong your days as you live in the land the LORD swore to give to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

(v. 19) Moses’s proclamation called *heaven and earth* to be *witnesses* that God had given Israel a choice. Other ancient treaties called on the pagan gods to bear witness, but this was inappropriate for Israel. The heavens and the earth had metaphorically witnessed all that God’s people had experienced since Egypt, and they would witness Israel’s actions in Canaan. The heavens and the earth also bore witness to Moses’s words to a nation poised to receive God’s promise.

One last time, Moses identified Israel’s options: *life and death* or *blessing and curse*. Again, the term “life” denoted more than mere existence. The people would know God’s blessing at every level, in every aspect of life (Deut. 28:2-14), for generations to come.

However, rebellion and idolatry would lead only to the curses Moses had pronounced earlier (28:15-68). They would experience God’s hand against them in every aspect of life, until they perished. Sadly, God’s people fell away from the Lord. As a result, the curses reserved for other nations instead fell on them (2 Kings 17:7-20).

Moses admonished the people to *choose life*, for their benefit and for the benefit of their *descendants*. God’s blessing awaited if the people simply would affirm their total commitment to Him.

(v. 20) Moses challenged the Israelites to demonstrate their total commitment to God in three ways. First, he told them to *love the LORD* (see v. 16). That should include everything within them—heart, soul, and strength (Deut. 6:5). They were to love Him above all else.

Second, he told them to *obey* the Lord. It was not enough to know about Him or His expectations. Rather, Moses urged them to “walk the walk” spiritually. Obedience, not words, provided the clearest evidence of the people’s total commitment. If they truly loved the Lord, they would show it by obeying His commands.

Third, Moses told the people to *remain faithful to him*. The Hebrew wording used here is similar to the descriptions of husbands and wives

(Gen. 2:24 “bonds”) and Ruth’s determination to stay with Naomi (Ruth 1:14). Such examples pointed to the wholehearted commitment God required from His people.

Moses then explained why the people should love God so deeply: *he is your life*. The people’s relationship with God was more than their most important relationship in life; it was life itself! Everything would flow from that core relationship. It still does for God’s people.

Later, Moses would tell the people that God’s Word was their life (Deut. 32:47). The Israelites needed to yield to God through His Word. Jesus also affirmed that eternal life consisted in knowing God through Him (John 17:3). Wholehearted devotion begins with a recognition that God is life.

Praying Scripture

Deuteronomy 30:19

Spend time praying Scripture using Deuteronomy 30:19. Read the verse, then respond to these questions:

- How does God reveal Himself in this verse?
- How should I respond to what He reveals?

Example: Ask God to provide others who can be “witnesses” for you. Thank Him for the life that He alone provides and ask for the courage to choose life for yourself and future generations.

During the session, invite adults to pray this Scripture, as well. You and the adults in your group can also take advantage of the Explore the Bible Prayer Guide. This QR code also appears on page 72 of the *Personal Study Guide*.



Prayer Guide

Scan here for a weekly prayer guide based on this quarter’s Bible passages.



APPLICATION POINT: Our desire to follow God influences our descendants' choices to follow Him.

READ:

Invite a volunteer to read Deuteronomy 30:19-20 while adults listen for the choice Moses put before the Israelites and how he challenged them to choose life.

EXPLAIN:

Emphasize the challenge that Moses put before the Israelites. Mention the witnesses he called, as well as the urgency of the decision he presented. Point out that Moses made a strong appeal for the people to choose life so that they and their descendants would live in the land God was giving them.

ASK:

What does it mean for you to say God “is your life”? In this context, what does it mean for you to “choose life”? (PSG, p. 116)

RECAP:

Summarize this content (PSG, pp. 115-116) to highlight the three elements of Moses's command to Israel:

“Like mixing water and dye, which cannot be separated, loving, obeying, and remaining faithful to God affects every area of life. Why the connection? Because God is your life. . . . This was the essence of the old covenant. It is also the core of the new covenant, which God revealed in sending Jesus to live among us and die for us. . . . He said of Himself, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life’ (John 14:6).”

PRESENT:

Explain that individuals still have a choice. Share the Plan of Salvation from the inside front cover of the PSG and urge those who have not followed Jesus to make that choice today.

Group Activity Option

Bible Skill

Direct adults to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 116 in the PSG. After a few minutes, talk about how the verses compare. Lead them through the questions included in the activity. Challenge the group to identify some intentional steps they can take toward a deeper commitment during the week. Remind them that good intentions are not enough when it comes to obedience. Say: *God longs for His people to act with devotion and full commitment toward Him.*

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE:

Review the following points from Apply the Text on page 117 of the *Personal Study Guide*:

- *We can trust God to give us the ability to obey His commands.*
- *People must choose whether they will follow God or not.*
- *Our desire to follow God influences our descendants' choices to follow Him.*

REFLECT:

Guide adults to select one statement that is most relevant for their lives. Ask: **Why did you choose that statement?**

DISCUSS:

Direct adults to read the first set of questions on page 117 in the PSG. Challenge them to consider ways they can get to know God better through His Word. Lead them to list some ideas in teams of two or three. After a few minutes, allow the teams to share their ideas and record them on the board. Encourage adults to adopt one idea from the list this week.

PRAY:

Distribute copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Numbers, Deuteronomy*) and encourage adults to spend a few minutes praying Deuteronomy 30:19 using the “Praying Scripture” prompts on page 136 of the Leader Guide. After a few minutes, encourage adults to identify silently one person they know who needs to choose life in Jesus. Invite a volunteer to close the session praying that each adult will get a chance to share the gospel with their person this week.



AFTER THE SESSION

To follow up on this session, send the group an email or text with an encouragement to continue living faithful lives that draw them closer to the Lord. Remind them to be praying for an opportunity to share the gospel with people who still need to follow Jesus. Reach out to any adults who professed faith in Jesus for the first time as a result of presenting the Plan of Salvation.

LEADER BLOG



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EXPLORE  THE BIBLE.

Blessing and Curses in the Old Testament

Robert C. Dunston

The Old Testament contains traces of a somewhat magical understanding of blessing and cursing in which the individual who spoke expected his desire to be accomplished by his own authority. Israel's King Saul placed a curse on any soldier who ate before he was avenged of his enemies (1 Sam. 14:24). Such an understanding is rare, however. While Jacob used a symbolic gesture, as well as words, to impart a greater blessing on Joseph's younger son, he rightfully attributed the power to bless exclusively to God (Gen. 48:15-16).¹

The blessings and curses in passages like Leviticus 26:1-46 and Deuteronomy 28:1-68 resemble the blessings and curses contained in suzerain treaties that were common in the ancient Near East. A suzerain treaty defined the relationship parameters between a dominant party and a subordinate party and contained stipulations for keeping that relationship peaceful and beneficial. Keeping the treaty meant the subordinate party would enjoy the blessings of a continued, peaceful relationship with the dominant party. Not abiding by the treaty brought severe consequences to the subordinate party. The treaty listed the benefits of keeping the treaty as blessings and the punishments for breaking the treaty as curses.²

The primary setting for blessing and cursing in Israel occurred in worship settings. In these settings, authoritative individuals, such as family heads, priests, kings, and prophets, pronounced



blessings or curses on behalf of God. Jacob blessed Joseph's sons (Gen. 48:13-20); David blessed the people after bringing the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:18); and Solomon blessed (and received blessing from) the people at the temple dedication (1 Kings 8:54-66). The prophets' words about salvation (Isa. 9:2-7)

and judgment (Amos 1:3–2:16) announced blessing and curse. Balaam provides an example of a non-Israelite prophet that a king summoned so the prophet could pronounce a curse on the enemy (Num. 22:1–6).³

Priests, in particular, functioned as pronouncers of blessing and curse. The Aaronic blessing in Numbers 6:22–26 was probably later pronounced in temple services and continues to be used as a benediction by Jewish rabbis and Christian ministers. The Psalms provide examples of both blessing (Pss. 72:15–19; 118:26) and cursing (35:4–6; 137:8–9).

Both blessing and curse implied the existence of a relationship. The relationship could be social as in a father blessing his son. The relationship might be legal as in a suzerain treaty. Finally, the relationship could be sacred as between a deity and the people.⁴ The nations around Israel believed a blessing or curse needed the power of a deity behind it to be effective. For Israel, a blessing or curse required a relationship with God and His permission and power to be effective. A blessing or curse that a human uttered—without God’s sanction—accomplished nothing (Prov. 26:2). Even Balaam knew that simply speaking a curse would not bring the desired outcome (Num. 22:18–19).⁵

The relationship between God and His people determined whether they would experience blessing or curse (Deut. 11:26–28). If the people obeyed God, they would enjoy His blessing and security. However, if they disobeyed God, they would experience the difficulty and disaster from His hand.

The Old Testament enumerates the results of God’s blessing and curse (Lev. 26:1–46; Deut. 28:1–68). God’s blessings brought reward from labor, abundance of food, safety from enemies, and respect from other nations. God’s curse brought things like labor with no reward, crop failure, dying animals, disease, and conquest by enemies. Moses, speaking for God, listed far more curses for disobedience than blessings for obedience. Just as the threat of being cursed should have dissuaded individuals from sin (Deut. 27:15–26), so the threat of God’s curses should have encouraged faithfulness. Unfortunately, Israel often chose sin.

The Israelites’ choice did not determine the future of the nation for all time because God could turn a curse into a blessing. Even though Jeremiah did not use the words “bless” and “curse,” he stated clearly that God responds when people renew their commitment to Him (Jer. 18:1–11). Curses can become blessings if God’s people return to Him, and blessings can become curses if they turn from Him.

God’s relationship with His people comprises a covenant rather than a contract. God is not obligated to do something good for us every time we obey Him. Nor is He obligated to punish our every sin immediately. The Northern Kingdom of Israel fell prey to the Assyrians; and because of their continual disobedience to God, the Southern Kingdom of Judah fell prey to the Babylonians. Those conquests, though, occurred after several centuries of continual disobedience to God. During those centuries, God sent many prophets to call His people back. He gave His people opportunity after opportunity to return to Him. Eventually God disciplined His people by letting them suffer the curses He had warned them would occur if they disobeyed.

God wanted Israel—and He wants us—to develop a relationship with Him and experience blessing. We can focus on the long list of curses and obey out of terror. But we also can focus on the shorter list of blessings and realize God’s desire is that we love Him as He loves us and enjoy the blessings of fellowship with Him.

Robert C. Dunston served as a professor and department chair at University of the Cumberlands in Williamsburg, Kentucky. He remains an adjunct professor with the school’s Christian Studies and Missions and Ministries departments. This article originally appeared in the Winter 2015–16 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*.

1. F. Rachel Magdalene, “Curse” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 301.

2. *Ibid.*

3. William J. Urbrock, “Blessings and Curses” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. in chief David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:758.

4. Magdalene, “Curse,” 301.

5. E. Ray Clendenen, “Blessing and Cursing” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, gen. eds. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 224.