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## ROLLING HILLS COMMUNITY CHURCH

MAKE READY • PRIORITIES • DEUTERONOMY 29-30 • 02/04/2018

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### MAIN POINT

God wants His people to remain committed to Him and return to Him when they fail.

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### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Begin by showing the [Deuteronomy video](#). You could even send it out ahead of time. It will help set the stage.

**What is something that you have remained committed to throughout your life?**

**Why have you remained committed over a long period of time? Have you ever questioned your commitment? Explain.**

Commitments are difficult to maintain over long periods of time. If you think about what has interested you over the course of your life, there are probably only a few things that have truly captured your attention for more than a short period of time. We remain committed to things when we see obvious and enduring value. This is what God was asking His people to do through Moses in Deuteronomy 29–30: Remember all that He had done and allow that memory to strengthen their commitment as they entered the land. God knew they would fail at times; thankfully, He is committed to us even when we are not committed to Him.

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## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

▮ HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DEUTERONOMY 29:1-15.

Deuteronomy chapter 29 and 30 record Moses' final speech to the people of Israel and his final exhortation before leadership was handed over to Joshua. It contains the last lessons of Moses to the people he had led.

**What did Moses want the people he led to remember about God that would help them remain committed to Him? What do you reflect on to remain faithful?**

**Moses was primarily addressing the leaders of Israel (v. 10). Where do you have the responsibility of spiritual leadership? How are you stewarding this influence to help others remain committed to the Lord? Why is this so vitally important?**

From these verses, we learn that the Israelites' commitment to the Lord was to be maintained in two ways. First, they were to remember all that the Lord had done for them. This is one of a few reoccurring themes in the Book of Deuteronomy. Moses spent a lot of time asking the people to remember how good the Lord had been to them even when

they did not deserve it. Remembering past faithfulness should drive us to remember present blessing.

Second, Moses spoke to the leaders of Israel more specifically. Commitment is taught as it is witnessed. When there is no leadership, people will go their own way. Deuteronomy places a premium on spiritual truths being taught by families. For this to happen, parents and other leaders need to feel the weight of modeling commitment to the Lord and passing it down to future generations.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DEUTERONOMY 29:16–30:10.**

As the Israelites prepared to enter the promised land, Moses essentially told them, “You’re going to mess up. You will stumble and disobey God. It’s not a matter of if, but when.” This wasn’t a vote of no confidence in their character; it was an accurate understanding of human nature. Moses knew there would still be hope even when God’s people messed up completely, because God is a God of compassion and redemption. He gives second chances. So Moses urged the people, when they did find themselves far from God, to remember their commitment to God and His commitment to them.

**How might our group embrace a culture where we openly acknowledge that we all fail, and we all want to help each other do a better job of living for Christ? How can we remind one another of our commitment to each other and to God despite our failing?**

No matter how much we love God or how determined we are to obey Him, at times we will fail Him. In those times we must remember that God has compassion on those who return to Him in repentance with a desire to obey. He willingly forgives and restores.

**What do these verses say will happen to people whose hearts have been renewed by God? Are there any commands for us in these verses? Explain.**

Circumcision in the flesh symbolized identification with the Lord in the covenant community. Circumcision of the heart (a phrase found only here, in Deut. 10:16, and Jer. 4:4 in the Old Testament) speaks of internal identification with and commitment to Him. Paul

equated circumcision of the heart with spiritual renewal. He argued that circumcision as a mere physical sign has no value at all to the disobedient (Rom. 2:25-27). What is required is inward circumcision of the heart and spirit that attests to genuine faith (vv. 28-29).

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DEUTERONOMY 30:11-20.

**What choice did Moses set before the Israelites as they prepared to enter the promised land? What's the fork in the road here? Where does each path lead? Why is it important to realize that God believed the people could obey the commandment (v. 11)?**

**What is the connection between this choice and the renewal of hearts in verses 6-8?**

In verse 19, Moses implored the people to “choose life,” that is, to choose for themselves the path of life and blessing instead of the path of selfishness that leads to death. God never forces us to adhere to His will; He always gives us a choice. But He makes it clear there are negative consequences for choosing disobedience just as there are positive ones for choosing His ways.

**Even after we trust Christ for salvation, we must daily choose to commit ourselves to Him. What resources do we have as believers to help us do what is right? How are you using these resources?**

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## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**As the experience of the Israelites shows us, remaining committed to God over the long haul is difficult. What are those things we can do to help foster that connection between us and the Lord?**

This is a great time to talk about leading your family spiritually. For those that did not grow up in an environment with this it can be very ambiguous and intimidating. Share some ideas.

1. Read a children's Bible together as a family every day.
2. Take this year's Christmas cards and put them in a basket on your dining table. Each day choose one card and pray for that family. A great way to incorporate prayer and to put others first.
3. Pray with your children when there is a decision to be made and ask for guidance.

**How has God worked through other believers and through spiritual disciplines to shape your heart toward faith and obedience? How might you help others in this process?**

**How can our group show our commitment to one another by making the choice of the right path a group effort rather than an individual pursuit?**

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## PRAY

Conclude your group time in prayer, thanking God for His commitment to you through Christ guaranteed by the Holy Spirit. Ask that He would help you to repent when you have walked astray and reaffirm your commitment to Him.

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## COMMENTARY

### DEUTERONOMY 29

29:4 Despite Israel's seeing everything the Lord did in Egypt and in the wilderness (vv. 2-3), He had not given them a mind to understand. He had not forced them to believe against their will, but He had given them every opportunity and inducement to believe. It is at this point that divine sovereignty and human choices intersect. God makes His truth available

to all people, but they can choose to harden themselves against it and thus deny themselves its blessings (Isa 6:9-10; Rm 11:8).

29:9 In light of all of God's mighty acts on Israel's behalf (vv. 5-8), He had every right to expect them to observe the Deuteronomic covenant and thus ensure their success, but human nature being what it is, even miraculous displays of power did not always lead to faith and repentance (Jn 12:37).

29:12 Deuteronomy is a covenant renewal document founded on the covenant first made at Mount Sinai. The idea that Israel was now about to enter into the covenant of the Lord means, then, that they were renewing the covenant commitment their fathers had made nearly 40 years earlier, assuming its privileges and responsibilities.

29:13 Once Israel had pledged its covenant fidelity, the Lord would reciprocate by establishing Israel as His people and Himself as their God as promised to their forefathers (cp. Gen 17:7; Lv 11:45; 26:12). The verb translated establish is a technical term referring to the ratification of an already existing agreement such as this one (8:18; 9:5; Gen 6:18; 9:9; 17:19,21; Ex 6:4). God had not just introduced a new covenant arrangement with this generation, but had also confirmed one made with the patriarchs and their fathers at Sinai.

29:15 The covenant was being reaffirmed by the Lord not only with Israelites of that generation (v. 14) but with those who are standing here—non-Israelite proselytes who had also embraced the God of Israel (cp. v. 11; Ex 12:38). Beyond that, it was being made with those who are not here today—the unborn generations who would also need to affirm their commitment to God (4:9).

29:17 The detestable images and idols of the nations through which Israel had just traveled (v. 16; Num 25:1-5) would continue to be a snare to Israel. Sinful human beings prefer gods of their own creation to the living God.

29:18 Because Israel would be attracted to gods they could see, they had to avoid the temptation to idolatry. The first two commandments—the heart of covenant confession—called for Israel to acknowledge the existence of the Lord as the only god and forbade representing Him or any other deity in visual form. The root that Moses warns against here no doubt refers to the concept of idolatry which, if allowed to grow in the human mind and heart, would produce the fruit of idolatrous practice.

29:19 The well-watered land as well as the dry land is a proverbial statement suggesting that no person who sins willfully against the covenant can expect to escape the judgment of the Lord, no matter how pious his confessions of faith.

29:20 The fate of a person who sins willfully (lit “with a high hand”; Num 15:30) is serious indeed— the Lord will blot out his name under heaven (cp. 9:14; 25:19; Ex 32:32-33), implying that he would be forgotten by future generations.

29:24-26 When future generations saw the awful destruction of the land and inquired about its cause, the answer would be immediate and clear: because they abandoned the covenant of Yahweh. This most egregious of sins violated the foundational element of the relationship between the Lord and His people—the first two commandments (5:7-8).

29:29 How could the nation continue to exist in light of its promised destruction? The best solution to this apparent contradiction between hidden things belonging to God and revealed things belonging to Israel is to view it as the perception of the other nations. They would observe Israel’s outcome and conclude that the covenant relationship had been terminated, but they would be unable to understand that God’s word to His people could never be canceled. God would bring His people to repentance so they could enjoy unending fellowship with Him (30:1-10; cp. Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:24-38; Rm 11:1-32).

## DEUTERONOMY 30

30:1-3 The grammatical structure of this passage suggests that Israel’s repentance and return to the Lord would be at His initiative, an act of His grace wherein God’s promises and Israel’s need to be obedient to the conditions of the covenant would be reconciled—one of the hidden mysteries of the mind of God (29:29).

30:6 The image of circumcising the heart derives from the occasion of Abraham’s having been physically circumcised, along with his household, as a sign of his covenant relationship with the Lord (Gen 17:9-14). Jeremiah also spoke of this mark of covenant reality in terms of spiritual circumcision (Jer 4:4; cp. Jer 31:33; Ezek 36:26), and Paul compared it to the new life and relationship to God to be found in Christ (Col 2:11).

30:9 Israel's return to the Lord would bring about a reversal of the curses they had suffered, and they would enjoy the blessings of covenant obedience rather than suffer the consequences of disobedience (28:4).

30:11-14 Lest Israel should protest that the demands of the covenant were too difficult to obey, Moses reminded them that the power to do so resided within them (v. 14). This refers to the revelation of the Lord's mind and purposes to the Israelites at Sinai and now in the plains of Moab. Moses had instructed them about these matters (6:1), and they were to impress them upon their own hearts and souls as well as those of their children (11:18-19). Paul cited this text with reference to the proximity of the gospel and the ease with which it could be understood and appropriated; like the words of the OT covenant, those of the NT message of salvation are ready at hand and made available to all who will believe (Rm 10:6-10).

30:19 In a setting similar to a courtroom, the Lord summoned witnesses to His offer to Israel of life and death. Since these witnesses must be enduring and objective, He called not on human beings or even angels, but on heaven and earth (cp. 4:26; 31:28; 32:1; Isa 1:2; Mic 1:2). He appealed for Israel to choose a life of blessed obedience so they and their descendants might live.