

Deuteronomy or Pseudoronomy?

By David Feddes

Deuteronomy or Pseudoronomy? Which one are you going to follow? You might say, "I know there's a book called Deuteronomy in the Bible, and I'm not sure everything that's in it. But I've never heard of this thing called Pseudoronomy. What are you talking about?"

Pseudoronomy is one of the Deadbeat Scrolls. Indiana Jones, the noted archaeologist, has been doing a lot of exploring and a lot of digging, and he found something called the Deadbeat Scrolls. And in those scrolls, there's a scroll called Pseudoronomy. That scroll of Pseudoronomy is considered by many religious scholars to be more original, more true, and more valuable than the scroll of Deuteronomy that's in the Bible.

Let's compare what those two say. Let's look, first of all, at Deuteronomy 6.

"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 upon 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).

That's a snippet from Deuteronomy. Now let's take a similar snippet from Pseudoronomy. Same passage, but a little different take:

"Hear, O people: Religions are many. You shall pick and choose beliefs you happen to like. But don't be too committed. Religion provides a nice touch of ritual at baptisms, weddings, and funerals. Keep it there. Never push your faith on your children. Let them choose their own beliefs and values, as they watch TV at home, listen to radio on the road, party with friends before they lie down, and go to a secular school when they get up. Do as you please with your hands; think what you like with your heads. Keep religion private; don't let it show in your household or your community."

There you have pieces of two different scrolls: the book of Deuteronomy in the Bible and then Pseudoronomy from the Deadbeat Scrolls.

Of course, there is no real Pseudoronomy and no real Deadbeat Scrolls. But a great number of people live as though Pseudoronomy is the revealed truth and as though Deuteronomy can simply be ignored. I want to challenge you in your own life to walk according to Deuteronomy, not Pseudoronomy. And when you lead others and teach them the ways of God, call them to walk according to Deuteronomy and not Pseudoronomy.

I want to look at five areas of contrast between Deuteronomy commitment versus Pseudoronomy compromise.

Pseudoronomy Compromise

- Pluralism
- Rituals
- Junk food
- Indulgence
- Private

Deuteronomy Commitment

- Monotheism
- Total love
- Soul food
- Obedience
- Public

Deuteronomy, the Word of God, teaches monotheism: trusting in one God and one way to know this God and be saved by him. Pseudoronomy teaches not monotheism or one way but pluralism. There are many different views and religions on God, and any one of them is just as good as any other, and all roads lead to God.

Deuteronomy commitment teaches total love for God from the heart and with the whole being. Pseudoronomy compromise says, “Hey, keep a little religious ritual in there. It’s kind of a nice part of family heritage.”

Deuteronomy commitment teaches soul food: impressing on your children the things of God and feeding their souls with the truth of God. Pseudoronomy compromise says: “Let your kids absorb whatever comes at them from the media and the culture around them and they’ll probably be okay. Feed them junk food.”

Deuteronomy commitment teaches obedience to God’s Word—God’s Word on our hands for our actions, God’s Word on our heads for how we think. Pseudoronomy compromise says to think and do whatever you like and be self-indulgent.

Deuteronomy commitment says this is not just a private matter; I’m going to go public with my faith. I’m going to display God and his truth to the world and not hide my light under a bushel. Pseudoronomy compromise says, “Shhh... don’t you know? Religion is a private thing. It’s a hobby. Keep it to yourself.”

Let’s look at each in more detail.

Monotheism vs. Pluralism

First of all, Deuteronomy teaches monotheism: “Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the Lord is one” (Deuteronomy 6:4). God said, “I am who I am” (Exodus 3:14). He did not say, “I am whoever you think I am.” He did not say, “I am whoever you want me to be.” God said, “I am

who I am. I am God, and there is no other. I am God, and there is none like me” (Isaiah 46:9). “Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is no other” (Isaiah 45:22).

What does Jesus say? “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3). “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Does that sound like all roads lead to God?

And yet Pseudonymy affirms pluralism. Pluralism is the notion that a wide variety of religions are just fine. You can worship whatever gods and goddesses—or nothing—that you please. You can be an atheist if you want and believe in no God. You can be an agnostic and say, “Well, nobody knows for sure, and I don't know either. So, whatever. Whatever, that's good enough.” You can be a pantheist and believe that everything is God, and you can be a polytheist and believe that there are many gods. You can believe whatever you want. “Hear, O people, religious beliefs are many—pick and choose the beliefs you happen to like.”

God says, “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). The apostle Peter proclaimed, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). As a person seeking to know God and to be saved by him, there is one God and one way, and you had better be clear about what God that is, and about what way he has provided in Jesus Christ.

Also, if you are to lead others, you cannot think that just any old religion and any old path is as good as any other. If you're going to lead others, you need to know the living God, and then share him with others. You need to know the living Christ and salvation in him and have his life in you yourself. And then you can proclaim that life in Christ to others. Away with Pseudonymy compromise on this matter of pluralism. Embrace monotheism.

I did my doctoral dissertation on Lesslie Newbigin and C.S. Lewis and their approach to modern society. Newbigin was a missionary in India for many years, and then he moved back to England in his retirement. Newbigin saw some church people and was in a meeting of scholars and pastors who were discouraging evangelism and missions. They said that it was *theological imperialism* to try to persuade people to believe in the God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ and to find salvation in him. Newbigin told them to beware of *theological prostitution*. He believed not that missions is theological imperialism, but that refusing to do missions, refusing to speak of the one true God and salvation in him, is prostituting yourself to many gods. Choose monotheism, not pluralism.

Total love vs. Rituals

Another thing about Deuteronomy is it calls for total love. It calls to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength. “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts” (Deuteronomy 6:6). True faith is a matter of the heart, and out of the heart, it flows to encompass your whole being. The Bible mentions heart more than 500 times, and the book of Deuteronomy mentions the heart again and again and again. The Lord calls on us to seek him with all our hearts.

What does Pseudoronomy say? “Don't be too committed. We like a little religion here and there. Religion provides a nice touch of rituals at baptisms, weddings, and funerals, and so you ought to keep it there.” As one jokester put it, “We like to have a little religion when we're hatched, matched, and dispatched.” You know, when the baby needs baptizing, when we get married, and when we die. So when we're hatched, matched, and dispatched, we'd like a little bit of ritual. Baptisms, weddings, funerals—fine. For the rest, keep it away and don't get too carried away. Religion is to be treated like frosting on a cake or maybe even more accurately, like parsley on a steak. That little sprig of parsley is there, it's kind of cute, it's kind of nice, but who needs it? Well, Jesus spoke of people who honor him with their lips, but their hearts are far from him (Matthew 15:8).

When Jesus was recommissioning his apostle Peter, what question did he ask him? What was the first question Jesus asked Peter? “Do you love me?” What was the second question? “Do you love me?” What was the third question? “Do you love me?” When Jesus was asked, “What is the greatest of all the commandments?” it was this: Love the Lord your God. He quoted Deuteronomy 6: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:5). And he said there's a second commandment like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37–39).

Real religion is about love, not just about a few rituals and a few little hobbies of religion here and there. The Bible warns that people can have the form of godliness but deny the power of godliness (2 Timothy 3:5). People can be lovers of self and lovers of money and not lovers of God. They have a form of religion but not the real living power of God in their heart.

Again, total love is what Jesus calls for. Do you love Jesus? If you don't love Jesus, please do not get into religious leadership. You will just be a time-server, a money collector, somebody who's trying to use religion to either manipulate others, or to pat people on the head and tell them they're okay, or do a few nice little rituals for them now and then. Please, if you want to be a leader of Christians and an evangelist to non-Christians, be a lover of Jesus Christ. Otherwise, stay out of religious leadership, and go get real job, okay? I'm not trying to discourage you. I'm just calling you to be a person who, like Peter was asked, “Do you love me?” And if you can say, yes, I do love you, then Jesus says, “Okay, now feed my lambs. Feed my sheep” (John 21:15–17).

Soul Food vs. Junk Food

Another difference between Deuteronomy commitment and Pseudoronomy compromise is: What kind of food? And how do you deal with your children? Deuteronomy says, “Impress God's words 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” (Deuteronomy 6:7).

What does Pseudoronomy say? “Never push your faith on your children. Let them choose their own beliefs and values.” And how do they do that? Well, as they watch TV at home and listen to the radio on the road and party with their friends before they lie down and go to a secular school when they get up.

You say you're going to "let them make up their own mind." But what are you putting into "their own mind"? You say, "I'm not going to push my faith on them. I'm not going to try to influence them." Well, if you're not going to try to influence them, you're about the only one who isn't going to try to influence them. I can assure you that the people who are peddling beer and alcohol want to influence your kids. I can guarantee you that the cigarette sellers would like to influence your kids. I can tell you that drug dealers really want to influence your kids. The people who peddle pornography are eager to impress it on your children.

The people who want to lead them in a worldly and wicked way of life are doing all in their power to influence your kids. If you're in a certain city area, I can assure you, the gang members would love to impress their ways on your children. So, if you're going to take a pass and say, "Oh, I wouldn't want to push my beliefs on my children," well, you might be about the only person who's not trying to influence your children. The media moguls, and the people who publish books, and the people who make the films and the movies and who make the music—they want to make an impression on your children. They want to sell product to them. And they want to influence their minds. And they are going to try.

But if you follow God's ways and you seek to impress God's Word on your children and do that as a way of life—not just dragging them to church or mailing them off to Sunday school—but as your daily way of life, when you sit down with them every day to read the Bible with them and to pray with them and to sing God's praises with them, and also bring them to church on Sunday to praise God with other people, and not only to quote the Bible and read the Bible to them, but then in the way you live and just the way your natural conversation flows, to keep talking about the things of God with them—that is going to make a huge impact.

Again, to refer to my own doctoral research, a big part of that was researching what happened to faith in Europe over the last century or so. There was a time when more than 60% of people in Great Britain attended church every week. Now it's 8%. There was a time when a profession of belief in the truth of the gospel was very widespread throughout Europe. Now it's much, much lower.

There are a variety of factors for that. I'm not going to get into all of them, but I want to get into two of them. One is that people stopped going to church. They said, "Oh, you can be a good Christian and not go to church." Yeah, right. And within a generation or two, their children had lost interest in Christianity altogether. Along with not attending church came a second thing: family time together reading the Bible and praying together used to be a very common practice in many British and other European homes. And as that practice slid, so did faith in the teachings of the gospel.

So, we need to be feeding our children soul food, not junk food.

In other aspects of life, what would you do with your children? If your child says, "I don't like to eat fruit and vegetables and meat, and I want to have ice cream for breakfast. I'd like ice cream for lunch. I'd like ice cream for supper. I'd like ice cream before I go to bed. I'd like to live on a diet of ice cream." What do you say? Do you say, "Sure, go ahead"? You say, "No, you don't live on a diet of ice cream, not while I'm your mom or dad. You are going to eat healthy foods.

Sometimes a little ice cream might be okay, but you can't live on junk food, or you would grow up to be a wimp."

Or if your child says, "I don't like books. I don't like to study. I don't like learning. What I do like is TV and video games. And so I would like to spend all my waking hours of every day playing video games and watching TV." Do you say, "Sure, go ahead, no problem"? Not if you're a half-decent parent. You say, "If you do that, you're going to be a mental midget. You're just going to be a dummy. And I don't want you to be a dummy. So I'm going to make sure you get educated and learn the things that you need to learn."

If you don't want your kids to be wimps and dummies, you make sure they have the right diet for the body and the right diet for their mind. So why would you not give them the healthy diet for their soul? Give them soul food—the living Word of God—not junk food. Feed them that. Feed yourself on that. Meditate on God's commands day and night and keep learning and teaching them to your children. And then you'll be ready to teach them to others as well. As a leader in the church, your faith starts at home. Your ministry and your evangelism start at home. Your teaching ministry starts at home. And if it falls apart there, you can't make up for it anywhere else.

Teach your children well. Impress God's commands on your children as a nonstop lifestyle—as a daily time in the Bible, as well as a constant conversation with them. And then teach other people how to do that. Teach other people the practice of home discipleship. And you will again see lives transformed. And you will again see people who don't find that 80% of their children are ditching the church, as is so common in American life today. Up to 80% of young adults who grew up in the church are abandoning it. And a great deal of that is because of what their parents are simply not doing. They're expecting the church or some program to take care of it.

Christian Smith, the number one sociologist of religion in America, says that mission trips sponsored by a church have almost no impact in making people still be involved in the church when they've grown up. He said that involvement in a youth group or in a Sunday school has very negligible impact—or almost none—in whether they grow up to be involved in the church and to be active Christians. The number one factor is their parents. And the number two factor is other adult Christians in their life. If they develop a connection with another adult Christian in a youth group or somewhere else, that might have an impact. But just the program itself does almost nothing. It's the feeding on the Word of God that you do together and home discipleship that is the number one predictor of whether your children grow up to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

It's God's sovereign work. We can't push buttons. We can't make everything happen. But God does tell us the means of grace. And the Word of God is the number one means of bringing his grace and his truth into people's lives.

Obedience to Scripture vs. Indulgence of Self

And to go with that, you don't just teach Scripture to others. You value Scripture. You obey it yourself. There's a huge difference between being a person whose pattern of life is obedience to Scripture or just indulgence of yourself. Deuteronomy says, "Tie these commandments as

symbols on your hands; bind them on your foreheads” (Deuteronomy 6:8). In other words, the Word of God should control your action and your thinking. But Pseudoronomy says, “Do what you like with your hands. Think what you like with your heads.”

It’s so common in our culture to just go with the flow and go with whatever we feel like doing. I remember a conversation with a churchgoer. I told him what the Bible taught on the matter and that he was living in sin. He replied, “I know what the Bible says, and I still don’t like it.” Well, that’s about as straightforward as you can get. And this was a churchgoer. He knew what the Bible said, and he was not going to live by it because he wanted something else.

Obey the Scripture. Don’t indulge yourself.

Public vs. Private

Do we just keep our faith a secret? Is it a matter for private consumption only? Or is it something to be displayed and shown to all? Deuteronomy says, “Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates” (Deuteronomy 6:9). Make it public in your home. Make it public in the gates of your community. But Pseudoronomy says, “Shush it. Come on, come on, come on—don’t get noisy about this. Don’t get public about it. Don’t let anybody find out about it. You know, it’s okay to have religion as long as you keep it a private hobby.”

Faith is always a matter of the heart. It is always personal—but it’s never just private. If it’s really in your heart that you love Jesus, and if the life of God is in you and the Spirit of God is living in you, you can’t contain it or keep it to yourself.

The apostles Peter and John once said, when they were ordered not to speak about Jesus anymore, “We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). The prophet Jeremiah once was getting discouraged because people weren’t listening to him because he was preaching the message of God. So Jeremiah said, “I will not mention him or speak any more in his name.” But he could stay silent. Jeremiah said, “His word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot” (Jeremiah 20:9).

That’s what the life and the truth of God do in you. You cannot hide the light of the world. Jesus is the light of the world, and when he has come into you, you become the light of the world. Jesus says, “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16). So, have a heartfelt religion, but don’t just hide it in your heart. Let it shine forth to those who need to know the way of Christ.

Deuteronomy, not Pseudoronomy

Forget those Deadbeat Scrolls. Forget Pseudoronomy. Worship the one God and proclaim the one way of salvation through Jesus Christ. Give him your total love—not just a little bit of religiosity and ritual now and then. Feed yourself and your children with the soul food of the

Word of God. Feed on it and meditate on it. Don't settle for the junk food the world has to offer. Obey that Word—not just whatever you happen to feel like doing. And then display that Word—don't keep it private.

What a glorious thing it is to discover what it really is to know God—who the real God is and how to live for him! “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 upon 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).

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Pseudoronomy

4 Hear, O people: Religions are many. 5 You shall pick and choose beliefs you happen to like. But don't be too committed. 6 Religion provides a nice touch of ritual at baptisms, weddings, and funerals. Keep it there. 7 Never push your faith on your children. Let them choose their own beliefs and values as they watch TV at home, listen to radio on the road, party with friends before they lie down, and go to a secular school when they get up. 8 Do as you please with your hands; think what you like with your heads. 9 Keep religion private: don't let it show in your household or your community.

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Pseudoronomy Compromise**Pluralism**

Hear, O people: Religious beliefs are many. You shall pick and choose beliefs you happen to like.

Deuteronomy Commitment**Monotheism**

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

I am who I am.

One God, One Way

Pseudoronomy Compromise**Rituals**

Don't be too committed. Religion provides a nice touch of ritual at baptisms, weddings, and funerals. Keep it there.

Deuteronomy Commitment**Total Love**

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 upon your hearts.

Pseudoronomy Compromise**Junk Food**

Never push your faith on your children. Let them choose their own beliefs and values as they watch TV at home, listen to radio on the road, party with friends before they lie down, and go to a secular school when they get up.

Deuteronomy Commitment**Soul Food**

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.

Pseudoronomy Compromise**Indulgence of Self**

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