

Deuteronomy Chapter 24 – John Karmelich

1. Let's start with the fact that most of the book of Deuteronomy is a God-ordained speech given by Moses to the Israelites as they're about to enter the Promised Land. The key point of the book for us, is how God expects us to live in so we can make a difference for Him in the world around us. We Christians don't have to obey all these hundreds of laws in order to be saved. However, the principals behind these laws teach us the best way to live in order to make the type of difference that God desires we make for Him. Now about Chapter 24:
 - a) Now that I've stated the obvious for us regular's, the particular laws given in this chapter is a bunch of miscellaneous laws that don't appear to have a lot in common. What Moses is trying to communicate here is "Here are some situations in every day life that we'll have to deal with from time to time, and here's the best way to deal with those situations".
 - b) One of the hardest things to deal with in our daily life of the Christian believer is trying to figure out what's God's will for me to do in any situation. Too many times I've prayed for God's will in situations not knowing what to do next. What I've come to realize is that His will is often just to realize, "Here's the situation in front of us, we realize God's guidelines as how to live, now make the best decision possible given the situation at hand and trust that He's got a plan for our lives no matter what we decide." If we make decisions just by realizing that no matter what we decide is God's will as long as we're living by principals taught in His word, it is His will that we make the best decision possible given whatever it is we have to face at that moment. My point is there is no "magic prayer" to say just the right words and then life gets better. God's more interested in how we act based on those decisions we make than what we actually decide to do in that situation.
 - c) I give that speech here as to realize we're about to study a whole bunch of miscellaneous laws given by God to help us make those daily decisions. My point is when it comes to a big decision we may have to make, most likely these laws in these chapters will not give us the exact answer we want. What they do give is guidelines as to how to make the type of decisions that God wants us to make. That's why we study these laws to begin with.
2. With that said, let me quickly go over these laws so we can make the types of important decisions we have to make in our lives:
 - a) The first is about marriage and divorce. In summary if someone's divorced and sometime later loses their second spouse due to another divorce or death, they can't go back to their first spouse. God considers that act, "a defilement on the land" as if a person went back to their first spouse, it would encourage quick marriages and divorces so people can legally "sleep with" who they want when they want. Yes there's more to this law, but the idea is to discourage remarriage to the same person once that couple is divorced.
 - b) The next one says that a man may be exempt from military service for one year after he is married. This isn't for the professional soldier, but for say, the farmer being drafted. The idea is that God's command to "marry, be fruitful and multiply" takes priority over a need to go serve in an army. One year for a young healthy couple is usually enough time to go start a family, which is the underlying point here.
 - c) The next one is about not taking a millstone as security for a debt. Think of this law as to not take away one's way of making a living as security. For example if one's a bookkeeper and we take away their computer in security for a loan, they can't make a living with that type of equipment, and that's the underlying principal here.
 - d) The next one is about a death sentence for kidnapping. In such cases we are stealing one's life away from someone in exchange for money. Such a crime was to be a death sentence as it takes away someone else's life. Since this one is pretty obvious, we can move on to the next miscellaneous law in this text.

- e) Here we get to leprosy. The short version is it is a deadly contagious disease. If someone thinks they have it, they are to do what the priests tell them to do. If someone got it, they have to do what's best for society and that may mean isolating themselves so others won't get it.
 - f) Then we get back to "loans and security for loans". The main point here is that if we agree to help our neighbor financially, we're not to go into their home and demand what they promised us in security. We're to "wait outside until they bring it to us". If what they've given us for security is something necessary for their survival, we're to return it to them at the end of the day. In summary, God expects us to be kind to others even in situations of one borrowing from the other.
 - g) Then we get a miscellaneous law about hiring a "day laborer". This is the type of person who hires him or herself out one day at a time for work. The point is we're to pay them at the end of the day and not withhold wages as they need that work for their survival.
 - h) After this we get a single verse that essentially says, "Don't punish children for crimes that they're parents have done". We find this verse quoted several times later in the bible. The main idea is not to punish the innocent with the guilty, even if they're related. Children will suffer enough with the loss of parents due to their crimes. We don't make it worse by making the children pay for their crimes. The underlying point of course, is that God will judge each of us as individuals and not based on the actions of our parents. I have more to say on this verse, later, but that's enough for the moment.
 - i) It appears that Moses can't get "justice and loans" off his mind, as it appears that every 3rd law or so comes back to that topic. It's as if Moses is thinking, here is one more thing on the topic of borrowing, lending and taking things as security for that loan. The main idea here is to have kindness in lending. Just as the Israelites were slaves themselves in Egypt so they are to have kindness as they lend to others.
 - i) Let me give a practical example here. When we borrow money from a bank as to get a home loan, the bank doesn't say, "OK, we the bank get to use that house for ourselves until you pay off that loan." Instead we get to live in that house as long as we're making our monthly payments. That's sort of the underlying idea of us showing kindness when we're lending to others.
 - j) The final law of this chapter also has to do with charity. The short version is if one owns some farmland, one is not to harvest every last inch carefully. One is not to go back and clean up what they missed the first time as to leave some for the poor to eat. This was a form of charity that was required in a farm society like the Israelites lived in.
3. Now for some good and bad news. The bad news is we still have two more chapters like this one of miscellaneous laws to cover. The good news is, that's it. Then Moses will start to wrap up the book by telling us the blessings and curses associated with obedience and disobedience to these laws. My point is all these miscellaneous laws are not here, as we'll have to deal with each of the these here in this lesson and in the next lesson on a daily basis. It's more like, "If we ever get into this or that situation, here are some rules to live by in types of situations. "
- a) However as most of us know, most of life is not exactly like this situation or that situation. We have to make the best decision possible with the information we've been given. That's why my lesson title is, "How to make good decisions given the information we have about that decision." In other words the decisions we have to make today or soon, don't involve the specific examples we read of in the text of this chapter. Whatever decisions we make (I'm talking about big or life changing decisions) are usually not ones that are obvious in the biblical sense of right and wrong. It's more like God's saying to us, "Here's my set of guidelines that I want you to live by, and after that, make the best decision possible given the information we have at hand and trust that I'm guiding your lives based on whatever choices you make in regards to your decisions." With that said, let's read what God says about these specific laws and see how they do apply to our lives.

4. Chapter 24, Verse 1: If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, ² and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, ³ and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, ⁴ then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the LORD. Do not bring sin upon the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.
- a) As we go through each of the miscellaneous laws in this chapter, I'll try my best to explain what God meant as He gave them to Moses and then explain how God wants us to apply them to our own lives.
 - b) First we get into the topic of divorce. There was a Jewish debate around the time of Jesus as to what constitutes grounds for divorce. Some experts in the Jewish law effectively say that "any little old thing" was grounds for divorce. Others say it had to be something that is very serious. I mention that here as the word translated "something indecent" is what's in focus in Verse 1. Recall that adultery was a death sentence. So whatever the indecency is, it's something not as bad as divorce. Since Moses wasn't clear as to what this was, it's been a debate topic among Old Testament bible scholars for millennia.
 - c) Whenever one's in doubt about how to interpret something, the best thing to do is check if Jesus commented on this principal. The good news for us here is this debate question was asked directly to Jesus. (See Matthew 19 or Mark 10.) The short version is Jesus said that the reason Moses gave these laws here about divorce is that "people were stubborn" and it was better to be divorced than to argue all the time with a spouse we can't get along with.
 - d) Let me state a couple of obvious things here and then we get back to the specific's of these issues brought up in these verses. First, is that God's basic intent is for men and women to be married and have families. That's how the human race continues. The bible makes it clear that God hates divorce (See Malachi 2:16). In that context, God was talking about His relationship with the nation of Israel in that His promises to them are unconditional in spite of all the sins they've collectively committed against Him. The underlying point is if God's willing to put up with them despite all of their faults and not divorce them, what He desires is we put up with our spouses and all their faults as we're no better as people.
 - i) I'm reminded of something I heard Dennis Prager state on his radio show a bunch of times. He once held an interview with a priest, a rabbi and a Protestant minister who Dennis discovered in that interview, all came from divorced parents. While all three stated that lifelong marriage is the ideal, in cases where the parents were fighting so much it ruined the family, all three agreed that in the cases of their own families, the divorces were the best things to happen.
 - ii) My point as it relates to the text here in Deuteronomy is that while divorce is never the ideal thing to do, sometimes the best thing one can do for the happiness of all that's involved, is to go through a divorce. While it's never to be encouraged, for the sake of all that's involved, it's allowed so that individually each of the people involved can live to make a difference for God.
 - iii) That, in effect is my interpretation of "indecent". The idea of getting to a point in a relationship where it's best for everyone for the divorce to occur. The children of the marriage may hate the process, but they'll eventually agree that to not see their mother and father fighting all the time is the best for all that's involved.
 - e) In effect, all of that discussion is necessary background in order to get to the main point of the verses: Which is, once a couple is divorced, they're to stay divorced and not start that process all over again. The text says God considers it a bad thing for a spouse to take back her partner from a prior marriage. Why is that? The first marriage is defiled when one is having sex with another person. To take them back "acknowledges" the sexual act outside of marriage as part of that marriage. In effect this is part of no adultery within marriage.

- i) On a practical level, the issue is about "moving on". Remember that the main issue in the book of Deuteronomy is about being a good witness for God and doing His will as we go through our lives. To be honest, we can't be a good witness for Him if we're busy fighting with our spouses all the time. To return to a bad relationship like a bad marriage would again make us bad witnesses for God as it will start the grief all over again.
 - ii) Since most of you don't know this, I have three brothers. Two of them have been through a divorce. I have a few lifelong friends who've been through divorces. As of the time of this writing, the best man at my wedding is going through a divorce. My point is even though I've never been divorced and hopefully never will, I have personally dealt a lot with this issue from watching people around me go through the issue. What I've learned is one marriage is ideal, and to put our spouse's needs as priority over own usually makes for a lifelong marriage. However, when it gets to a point where both people are miserable no matter what they do, it is better for everyone involved to go through it and get on with their lives. Looking now at the lives of all those divorced individuals I know well, they're all much happier and a better witness for God after it's all settled and done.
 - iii) That leads back to this point: Divorce should be difficult and painful as it's never the ideal thing to do in life. However, if one has gone through it, one shouldn't go back to that relationship that caused the grief in the first place. That's what God is trying to teach us in these verses and that's why God allows divorces as Jesus said, "Due to the hardness of our hearts" (See Matthew 19:8.)
 - iv) OK, enough of that tough topic. Time to move on.
- 5. Verse 5: If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married.
 - a) This is a case of one of God's laws taking priority over what may be necessary. The issue is not about professional soldiers as much as it would apply to the "average person" called to duty, due to a war or an invasion. I suspect at a tough time like that, most men would still want to fight, but I can also see being torn between starting a relationship with a new spouse versus the call of duty to defend one's country and do the right thing.
 - b) The reason God gave this law is he wants couples to reproduce. Without the physical act of sex, none of us would be alive today. By a man staying home for a year, in most cases it would produce a child in a year's time and the family unit would continue. Living that way would also teach a young couple how to put other's needs, as priority over their own needs which is a big part of growing up.
 - c) Most men don't mature or "grow up" until they get married. I still recall many years ago being at a wedding of a friend from school. There was one single guy at the table with us. The woman sitting next to me listening to the single guy talk about all the things he does and she whispered in my ear, "He's single isn't he?" My point is it's usually obvious when a man hasn't matured and it usually requires marriage for him to mature, as then a man learns to put others needs above his own, such as his wives or later his children. I'd argue that's why God put this law here, as he's more interested in seeing men mature first, then be involved in warfare as well as the obvious of continuing family lines before war.
 - d) OK, from one miscellaneous law to another. That's how this chapter goes:
- 6. Verse 6: Do not take a pair of millstones--not even the upper one--as security for a debt, because that would be taking a man's livelihood as security.
 - a) The first thing I had to look up as I read this verse is learn what's a millstone? It's a round stone used to grind grain. It's a basic cooking utensil. The point of this verse is if a loan is given to another, we don't take away as security for that loan, what that person will need in order to survive. Logically, they can't pay us back, if they can't function such as eating, so it is logical to have this verse here to remind us what to take and not take in a pledge.

- b) To put this in modern terms, if one is an accountant or a bookkeeper, and we lend them some money to pay their bills or make a living. If we took away their only computer that they use to earn a living, they could never pay back our loan if we take what they need in order to survive in the first place. Another example would be if a person was trained as an electrician or a plumber. If we took their tools as collateral, he or she can't work to pay off the loan. That is what God's trying to communicate behind this law here.
7. Verse 7: If a man is caught kidnapping one of his brother Israelites and treats him as a slave or sells him, the kidnapper must die. You must purge the evil from among you.
- a) This law is in effect a commentary based on one of the 10 Commandments: Do not steal. If a person kidnaps someone in order to make them a slave or steal them to earn money by selling them, that kidnapper has to die for that crime. If you've wondered what God thinks of slavery, this law answers that question. God never wanted slavery to exist. He believed in the idea of "indentured servitude", where if one owes a debt, one can work off that debt by being a slave to pay it off. That's different from one being kidnapped as to be a slave to someone else. Since slavery involves an act of kidnapping in order for a person to be sold as slave, God is forbidding that act for the Israelites. If you read the history of the Israelites, they didn't always obey this law, but it's still here on the books.
 - b) Notice the law only applied to fellow Israelites. They did make slaves of other nations in the region around them. This idea comes back to a law I discussed a lesson or two back of the issue of warfare with a neighboring tribe. That issue had to do with giving a choice of being either killed or being a slave. It was God's way to teach people who wanted to fight against the Israelites that in order to befriend the Israelites, they had to submit to God just as the Israelites themselves had to submit to God. By being a slave to an Israelite one had to learn submission just as the Israelites were required to submit their lives to God.
 - c) OK John, this would be interesting if I lived a long time ago in a world where slavery were still common. What does this law have to do with our lives today? For starters, it shows us as a society that we're not to tolerate slavery. It also applies to cases of those who have wronged us. It'd be like wrongly thinking, "This guy owes me money, so it's ok for me to kidnap him and sell him for money to pay off the debt". An underlying point to most of the laws in this chapter about lending is there are to be limits to what a lender can do to a person who borrows out of needs. It's about being civil in our dealing with others even if they legitimately owe us for some past issue.
 - d) To use a practical example, I run my own business. Occasionally I have to deal with some client who won't pay me after the job is finished. I don't for example, have the right to go break in their house and steal something as collateral until they pay me, or I don't have a right to kidnap them to pay off the debt. Yes most society have legal means to deal with that type of situation, but I wanted to show that most societies do limit what one can do in such situations and the laws we have in these situations are biblically based.
8. Verse 8: In cases of leprous diseases be very careful to do exactly as the priests, who are Levites, instruct you. You must follow carefully what I have commanded them. ⁹ Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam along the way after you came out of Egypt.
- a) If you've ever studied the book of Leviticus, God spent two chapters (13 and 14) focusing on the topic of leprosy. The short version is those chapters focused on how to recognize it when it occurs and how to isolate a person who has leprosy. It's a real disease but it's also a model of sin, in that sin spreads if it's not contained. What's interesting is that nowhere in the Old Testament does it say how to cure leprosy, just how to isolate it. We read in the New Testament that among the first miracles performed by Jesus, is Him curing people of leprosy. It's a biblical model of how God's laws show us where we sin, but it takes Jesus to take away our sins.
 - b) That leads us back to these verses. God is talking to all the Israelites here. Leviticus was meant for the priests to study. God's saying, if you think you may have this, see a priest.

- c) Then to emphasize the point that leprosy is associated with sin, Moses brings up his sister Miriam who disobeyed God roughly 40 years earlier. In Numbers Chapter 12, she spoke against Moses because he married an Ethiopian woman. The short version is Miriam was punished for a short period of time with leprosy. Miriam was questioning God's wisdom and sinned by going against God's authority over our lives. My point here is this example shows how God associates sin with leprosy.
 - i) So does this mean everyone who has leprosy is some sort of horrible sinner? No. Neither does it mean if we sin bad enough we get leprosy. It just means God uses that horrible disease as a model for sin and how it has to be isolated so it doesn't spread. For example, think about lying. We usually tell more lies to cover up the first one and it spreads. If we steal, we often lie to cover it up and it spreads. My point is simply that leprosy is to be isolated to prevent it from spreading just as in the case of sin it has to be isolated to be stopped.
 - ii) Once a pastor was asked how does one deal with a horrible addiction like heroin? Besides medical help, the issue is the sin must be isolated so it can suffer a horrible painful death. Just as Jesus said we each must bear our own cross (not his), so in such hard cases, it has to be painfully put to death. My point is that's an example of how we deal with sin today by isolating it and if necessary have a priest help us to deal with sin so it doesn't spread any further.
 - iii) That's enough of that difficult topic. Moses still has borrowing and lending on his mind, and gets back to that topic in the next verse.
- 9. Verse 10: When you make a loan of any kind to your neighbor, do not go into his house to get what he is offering as a pledge. ¹¹ Stay outside and let the man to whom you are making the loan bring the pledge out to you. ¹² If the man is poor, do not go to sleep with his pledge in your possession. ¹³ Return his cloak to him by sunset so that he may sleep in it. Then he will thank you, and it will be regarded as a righteous act in the sight of the LORD your God.
 - a) Before I get into the specifics of the law here, let me pause and discuss why I think Moses is so focused on the issue of being a lender. One idea is that God will bless our lives as His people, is by lending to others. A fairly famous bible proverb is that a borrower is slave to a lender. (Proverbs 22:7). My point is if we are following God's rules to live by, we'll be in situations where we can help a person in need and lend to them. The temptation when we lend is to do things to pressure them to pay us back quickly. One temptation as stated a few verses back is to kidnap them and sell them for profit. Another temptation is to take away an item necessary to work to pay off that debt. That's why these laws are here. That idea of avoiding bad temptations leads us to these verses here.
 - b) These verses essentially say, don't go into the house of someone who owes us something and steal an item as collateral. The example given is a person's sole blanket or cloak as it says in Verse 13. The underlying point is about being kind to those who owe us. In these verses the borrower is "standing outside the door". The idea is to let the borrower bring to us what is owed. The way I personally apply this principle is I make sure my clients who owe me know what they owe me. It's a matter of sending out an invoice and then turning over to God my fears that they won't pay me back. Once I've done the footwork and have prayed to God over my fears, I rarely have to take the next step of court action as usually the guilt of what the other party did, gets them to pay off that debt.
 - c) The idea is the person who owes us something will realize that because we didn't break in their home to steal collateral, or force them to pay as a threat, they'll eventually see us as a good witness for God in that we did the right thing. Most transactions in life are "fee for a service rendered". If the other party got what they want and didn't pay us for that service the bible gives examples of what is and isn't good behavior to collect those debts. The key is to do what's legally allowed and pray as to give our fears of non-collection to God.

- d) Coming back to the verse, the text even says if we take their blanket as collateral for that loan, we return the collateral at night so they can have a blanket to sleep upon. The text is implying that person still owes us the money for that loan. The principal's about showing kindness to others even if they've still owe the debt. Remember the underlying principal of most of this book is about how we're to be a good witness for God. This is one way we show kindness even in cases where something is legitimately owed to us. If you get that, you get the point being made here about returning a blanket before sunset.
10. Verse 14: Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy, whether he is a brother Israelite or an alien living in one of your towns. ¹⁵ Pay him his wages each day before sunset, because he is poor and is counting on it. Otherwise he may cry to the LORD against you, and you will be guilty of sin.
- a) There's a pattern to all these laws about borrowing and lending in that the idea is for any lender to not take advantage of the fact they're the lender and the other person is a lowly borrower. What God's trying to get across here is that we're always to be a good witness for Him, no matter what the situation.
- b) The best way to relate to these two verses is to think of a "day laborer". In our society we often have poor people who are willing to do anything to make money in order for them to survive. We often see such people near large home-repair shops as that's where there is often work needed to help us in such projects. The main point of these verses is that if we do hire a day laborer, we don't say, "Come back later when I have the funds to pay you". If we know we're going to hire someone like this, we have the funds to pay them ahead of time so we can pay them when the work is done for the day. Even if we need them for a few more days, we are to still pay them daily as they depend on that income as to survive another day. Notice that God considers it a sin to without income in such situations.
- i) If we care about avoiding sin as much as possible, then in situations where others are helping us, we're to pay them daily. Even if others are not treating us fairly as they're not paying us when something is owed, we can't think, "we'll other people are not paying me on the spot, therefore I can treat others the same way". Even if we believe Jesus died for every sin we've ever committed, that doesn't give us an excuse to go sin all we want to. God holds us accountable for how we live as His disciples and He finds a way on His timing to make us aware of ways that sin is affecting our lives. A role of the Holy Spirit is to convict of us our sins so we can draw closer to God and make the effort to do the right thing in every situation.
- ii) OK, speaking of sin and punishment, time for the next verse.
11. Verse 16: Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin.
- a) Right in the middle of a whole bunch of verses about principals that focus on how to act when we borrow and lend to others, we get this one sentence principal about how we're not to punish children for the bad deeds of parents and vice-versa. Yes we can find places in the bible where this law is applied to any sin and the idea that one's children don't have to suffer the same fate as one's parents where sin occurs. (Jeremiah 32:18 and 2nd Kings 14:6 are good examples.) However, since this chapter mostly focuses on laws that deal in issues of borrowing and lending, let's look at that principal first.
- i) The point is we can't harass the children of those who owe us a debt. I thought of situations of car loans and home loans. If we die and the car or house is past on to our children, is the debt wiped out? No. If the children want to keep that car or that house, they must still make the payments. The children can decline to keep an item, but they can't be forced to pay if they don't keep what's used as collateral.
- ii) In much of history, there was a place called "debtor's prison". This is where people were sent when they couldn't pay off a debt they owed. The point here is we can't send children to pay off debts owed by parents.

- iii) What about the "indentured servitude principal" stated earlier? Weren't children sold as slaves to pay off debts? Yes there were. It doesn't make it right, but that did exist throughout history. The underlying point is that a debt is supposed to end with the death of a person and the debtor has the right to keep the collateral at that point and not force the children suffer to pay off a debt owed by a parent.
 - b) With all that said, notice the last part of the verse: "each is to die for his own sin".
 - i) If that isn't a New Testament principal, I don't know what is. That half a verse is stating that all of us die because of sin. We may be hit by a car or die of old age or some horrible disease, but we are still responsible for our own sins. What about a baby who die at birth? I'll let God judge such situations, but I do believe there will be a lot of people in heaven because they never reached an age of accountability before they past away. (See Romans 7:9 on accountability and age,)
 - ii) What's implied in this verse is that we all bear the responsibility of sin assuming we do reach an age of accountability to God. Some people ignore God existence. A majority of people in the world who think their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds and God will let them into heaven for that reason. However that false idea of salvation leads us right back to each is to die for his or her own sin. That's why Christianity is such a wonderful principal of we don't have to work hard to prove our worth to God, but we just trust that God Himself paid the price for our sins. We avoid sin as it's the best way to live, but not to prove our worth to Him.
 - iii) I know I'm "preaching to the choir" here, but I wanted to show that the idea of all people being responsible for their own sins is not just a New Testament principal but was also found in a number of places in the Old Testament as well. If you do search a bible for this principal, you'll find a number of references to it in the Old Testament as well as the New. (For example, Jeremiah 31:30 or Ezekiel 18:4.)
 - iv) With that speech out of my system, time to get back to borrower's and lenders.
- 12. Verse 17: Do not deprive the alien or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge.¹⁸ Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this.
 - a) Most of us know the phrase "helping the widows and orphans". That just doesn't refer to helping those without a husband or parents, but refers to the less fortunate in life. That's the idea here. We've spent most of this lesson talking about lending and God's rules for such situations as to not cross the line of harassment over what is owed to us or what we owe to others. Let's be honest, those who are less fortunate in life need compassion if we choose to help them.
 - b) In effect, these verses preach against bigotry. Notice the verse mentions "aliens", which is referring to anyone not from "around here". The fatherless refers to those who don't have anyone else in their family they can depend upon for support. God wants us to not look down on the less fortunate in life and think, "That's someone's else's problem, or I've got mine, let them get there's" when we can help them. This doesn't mean we give away all we have to help others. On the other hand, to not care about the life of others is not the type of Christian attitude that God wants us to have in life.
 - c) Of all things, consider why God created us in the first place! Why did God bother? The answer is He is a God of love and wants something to show that love too. One can also argue that God is a God of justice, and He needs something or someone to express His justice upon. Therefore, He created the human race so He can express His eternal love for those who freely choose to love Him in return and show His eternal justice to those who freely choose to turn from His desires. I mention that here, because that's the underlying point. God rescued the Israelites listening to Moses speak just as He rescued us Christians out of the world in the sense that we realize who He is and He desires we serve Him out of a mutual love relationship. We choose to do as He desires for our life.

- d) That little speech leads me back to these verses. Notice it says that the Israelites were to help the less fortunate because they as a nation were slaves themselves. OK, we all know that the Israelites were slaves in Egypt for 400 years. How are or were, we as Christians ever slaves? Whenever we chose to do God's will for our lives, we are in effect slaves to our own desires and not His. We're rescued from that by realizing God desires to show us what's best for our lives and teach us the principals by how He wants us to live by His set of laws which are these principals He wants us to live by.
 - e) Of all things, that gets me back to my lesson theme, about making good decisions. All of the laws given in this chapter most likely, are not going to be directly related to whatever decisions we have to make this day. That's why I pray for God to give me the wisdom to make the right decisions given the circumstances in front of me and not violate any of the principals that God teaches as I make those decisions. The purpose of God's laws are not to just say "do this and don't do that". It's to get us to think about others or the long term consequences of decisions we have to make in life. It's not so much that we follow to the letter the exact situation described in each law, but that we consider the big decisions we have to make in life from "God's perspective" in terms of what's the best decision to make in any given situation.
 - f) Believe it or not, that leads me back to these verses. The underlying idea is to not just help those we love or support, but to care about the less fortunate around us. Just as we are or were "slaves" to our own desires outside of the consideration of God's existence, so there's all around us, people who also need God's love. My point is if we can think in terms of putting the needs of others as priority over our own needs we get the general idea of how God wants us to live our lives. The rest as they say, are the details. One of those details is to help the less fortunate in life and not just care about "us or our family". That's why God put these verses here about helping the aliens and widows. It's not just those specific type of people, but the idea of caring about the well being of others around us, especially those who our society would consider less fortunate.
 - g) Well, I hate to stop when I'm on a roll, but I have one more law to cover in this chapter as taught in principal by the last four verses of this chapter:
13. Verse 19: When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. ²⁰ When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow. ²¹ When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow. ²² Remember that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I command you to do this.
- a) The short version of these verses is to not keep all we own for ourselves, but be willing to share some of what we have with the less fortunate. One has to remember that there were no "government welfare" requirements in that culture. There was no taxation of income in order to feed the poor. However, God does care for those who are less fortunate in life and the way He cared for them is taught in these verses.
 - b) The specific's here are about those who own farms. When it was time to harvest what was grown in the farm, the farmers are not to take every last piece of fruit or vegetables, but to also leave a little behind so that the poor could come around and eat what wasn't taken. The idea is the less fortunate can't come around with buckets and steal what we have, but at the same time, they can take what they eat in their hands.
 - c) There are a couple of wonderful examples of this in the bible. The most famous is in the book of Ruth. It's a cute story of a woman who lost her husband and her daughter in law who also lost her husband. They financially survive in Israel by applying this law and go eat what was left by the farmers picking their crops. The farm owner in that story is kind to Ruth and eventually marries her as that farmer applied these laws to his life.

- d) Also keep in mind as one reads the Gospels, that Jesus had so little money, He Himself along with His disciples ate this way at times by walking into fields and eating what was left that was not taken in harvesting the crops. The next time you think you're not wealthy enough to give to others, realize that the God who created our world as well as someone who was part of the direct line of people leading to Jesus coming in this world used this system to live and survive.
 - e) My point is these verses don't just apply to landowners or anyone who the world would consider to be successful. They apply to you and me and our attitude about our desire to help those who are less fortunate than ourselves. Being a Christian means we're always looking for opportunities where we can be of service to others. Jesus calls us to go into the world and be a witness for Him. We do that by being of service to others and putting the needs of others as priority over our own needs. That's why "welfare" is not an idea for the government to force upon us, but an attitude of our willingness to help others and not just care about say, us or our family.
 - i) I'm not saying we have to give away all we own and not care for our own families. God's saying that He wants us to care for the less fortunate around us and a way for us to do that is not keep "all we own" for ourselves. It's the idea of thinking of others and not just ourselves.
 - f) You may have thought that I've wandered away from the text of the last few verses of this chapter, but I haven't. The text talks about different types of produce that could be grown in Israel and what the Israelites attitude should be toward keeping all they owned just for themselves. God wants us to show kindness to others around us and one way of doing it is by our willingness to not hold so tightly to "what is ours" that we're never willing to go help the less fortunate of those around us. This welfare method of not harvesting every last bit of crop in a farm is a wonderful illustration of how God expects us to live as to be a witness for Him in the world around us. Again, it's the principal behind the law that is important and not the specific law itself. Again, it comes back to the idea that God wants us to make decisions about our lives that don't violate His principals about how He wants us to live as we're always witnesses for Him whether we realize it or not.
 - g) That leads me to the final sentence of this chapter. It says once again that the Israelites are to remember that they were once slaves in Egypt and because they were slaves they're to show kindness to others. I won't beat that point to death again, but the idea for Christians is that we too "slaves to sin" were before we're saved, and whenever we choose to not do God's will at any moment, at that moment are slaves to sin whether we realize it or not.
 - h) The reason I'm pounding this point over our heads over and over again, is I'd like you to see the text as not just applying to an Israelite audience thousands of years ago. I also am trying to get you to see beyond the "I'm a Christian and not under God's law" catchphrase and see the big picture. The big picture is that as a Christian, God wants us to be a good witness for Him in the world around us. All of these miscellaneous laws given here in the middle of the book of Deuteronomy teach us principals to live by so that whatever major decision we do have to make today doesn't violate God's will for our lives, which is to be a good witness for Him to the world around us.
14. With that said, I figure that's enough for one week. I'm not going to try to squeeze in my usual two chapters per lesson. There are two chapters left of the "miscellaneous laws" and my plan is to combine them for the final lesson of this section before we move on to other topics that cover the remainder of this book. The bad news is we have one more lesson on miscellaneous laws to take on. Therefore, I ask that you put up with me one more time in the next lesson as we go through the last of the miscellaneous laws in this book in the next lesson.
- a) That's enough preaching for one lesson. Let us close in prayer as we ask God to guide us so that we can use the most valuable thing we own, our time to make a difference for Him in the world around us:

15. Heavenly Father, all of us have tough decisions we have to make that will effect not only our own lives but the lives of people around us. Give us Your wisdom as we live by the principals taught in Your word, so that we can make a difference in the world around us. Help us to remember we too, we're once "slaves in Egypt" which refers to our sinful nature that doesn't desire Your will for our lives. Help us to use the most valuable thing we own, our time and our possessions so we do make a difference for You in the world around us. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.