

## Leviticus Chapter 19 – John Karmelich

1. Chapter 19 continues our discussion from the last lesson of “Life after salvation”. As opposed to earlier chapters of Leviticus that focus on forgiveness, these chapters deal with life “after” forgiveness. In other words, “I’m saved, I’m forgiven, now what?”
  - a) Chapter 19 can be called “A commentary on the 10 commandments”. Almost all of the 10 Commandments are mentioned or at least hinted at in this chapter. Chapter 19 repeats some of those Commandments directly and adds further commentary upon them.
  - b) Chapter 19 reads like a bunch of miscellaneous “do’s and don’ts. The common thread is that this chapter is a good summary of how we as Christians are to behave. It does not follow the same order of the 10 Commandments. Many of the laws are combined in groups to make specific points.
2. My title for Chapter 19 is “God and daily living”. The previous few chapters dealt with our behavior in primary needs (the need to live, the need to respect life, the need for sex). Once our “primary drives” are dealt with, now it is time to discuss “God and every day living”. That is, issues that affect our lives every day other than primary needs such as life itself and sex.
  - a) An expanded title would be “How the believer in God should act in every day living”.
  - b) There is a major flaw for many Christians who think, “All I have to do is believe Jesus is God and then I can go do whatever I want”. Too many people treat Christianity like a life-insurance policy in that they make their payments once a month, trust in that, and then don’t think about it too much. Christianity is about a full-time commitment. Yes, our salvation is based on faith alone, but if one has faith, then one acts upon it.
  - c) There is an illustration I gave in the last lesson applies here. We believe Jesus is God. Demons believe Jesus is God too. How are we different from demons, other than our good looks? ☺ The answer is we are obedient to God and His commands as compared to demons that choose to disobey God.
  - d) Going way back to my first lesson on Leviticus, the key phrase is “Holiness”. That term simply means “separation”. The idea is we act differently (i.e., separate ourselves) from how the world (i.e., nonbelievers) act around us. The idea of how to live the holy life is the key theme to all of Leviticus. It is to affect every aspect of our lives.
3. Let’s discuss the 10 Commandments themselves. They were first introduced in Exodus Chapter 20 and repeated in Deuteronomy Chapter 5. The bible is full of commandants. Religious Jews count 613 laws in the first five books of the bible. The “Big 10” ☺ are considered special. One can read the 10 Commandments as a good summary of all of the bible commandments.
  - a) A reason this chapter is here is to reiterate those commandments. Remember this section of Scripture is about “life after salvation”. A point here is once one is saved, you are still required to be obedient to God.
4. When one reads Chapter 19, one has to study it with a balance from the Christian perspective.
  - a) For example, we as Christians are not bound by the “law”. The requirements of fulfilling the law were fulfilled on the cross by Jesus. Therefore, we are not legally bound to keep all the rules of this chapter. When I say, “legally bound”, I mean that our salvation is not dependant upon perfectly keeping these laws.
  - b) On the other hand, what God finds sinful in the Old Testament He still find sinful in the New Testament. If we love God and want to be obedient to Him, the concepts taught in these laws do apply to our lives.
  - c) Finally, one has to remember the principals behind the laws are what are important. For example, many of the laws applied to that historical situation of when the laws were given. For example, one of the laws is not to make a molded image of a false god. Not many people make molded images today of what they worship. The principal of that law still applies today, which is about not worshipping false gods.

5. One last thing before I start: A key phrase of Chapter 19 is "I am the Lord Your God".
  - a) Get used to that phrase. It is used 15 times in this chapter.
  - b) To paraphrase God, He is saying, "You want a reason to obey these laws? I'll give you a reason. I'm God and I say so. Any questions?" ☺
  - c) Remember what the term "Lord" means. It means that if we call someone "Lord", it means we obey whatever our "Lord" tells us to do. In other words, it isn't just that this is God himself giving the commandments, but the Lord who desires to be in charge of us.
  - d) Remember that salvation and obedient living (i.e. "holiness") is all about living on God's terms and not our terms. We can't approach God on our terms. God is saying to us in effect, "You want to spend eternity with me in heaven? Terrific, here are My terms, don't deviate from them. You want to please Me here on earth? Terrific, here are My terms, don't deviate from them". You want to live a happy and fulfilled life? Terrific, here are my instructions on how to do so."
  - e) The point is the phrase "I am the Lord Your God" is repeated over and over again for our benefit. We tend to question, "Do I really have to obey this rule? The answer is, "I am the Lord Your God", or loosely translated, "Shut up, ☺ I (God) know what's best for you!"
6. Verse 1: "The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup>"Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.
  - a) Let's start by recapping the last few chapters to put this verse in perspective:
    - i) Chapter 16 described the "Day of Atonement". This is an annual ritual for the Jewish people where one asks for forgiveness of all "outstanding" sins, including ones that one is not aware of at this moment.
    - ii) Chapter 17 begins the series on the "I'm saved, I'm forgiven, now what?" issue. This chapter focused on "blood" issues. The word-picture has to do with life-itself, which is why it came first. "Blood" was a word-picture for life itself.
    - iii) Chapter 18 dealt with sexual issues. One of the greatest human instincts after the need-to-live is the need-for sex. God discusses the dos and don'ts of that issue.
    - iv) Now in Chapter 19, we get into "all the other stuff". It would be like saying, "OK, I, God have covered all the primary need issues, now let's cover daily living".
  - b) With the idea of "daily living" in mind, the key words of Verse 1 is "Be Holy".
    - i) To expand upon this idea, God is saying in effect, "Look folks, I want followers of me to act differently. When I say differently, I mean to act in a way that I want you to act. The way you behave reflects Me. Be like I want you to be."
    - ii) This is the idea of acting holy. People have this mental image of "holy" is about going to church around the clock or talking about God in every conversation. The idea of "holy" is that our behavior is pleasing to God in all that we do. God understands we have needs for rest, family time, errands, work or whatever. God wants to be part of our life in whatever we do and wherever we are. That is the idea of "holy". Again, the word simply means "separate". It is not about isolating ourselves, but to act differently than nonbelievers around us.
  - c) In case one is confused about what God means by "be holy", the good news is the rest of the chapter is examples of how to be holy in daily life. Remember that the last two chapters already covered the basic instinctive drives such as life itself and sex. In this chapter we get into examples that are about "daily living" over and above those drives.
7. Verse 3: " `Each of you must respect his mother and father, and you must observe my Sabbaths. I am the LORD your God.
  - a) You would think the first thing God might say is something to effect of, "Don't forget to pray or don't forget to go to church this Sunday". Don't get me wrong. Those issues still make the top 10. ☺ In fact, the second thing listed is to "observe" the Sabbath. The first one listed is to honor the mother and father. It is "coupled" with observing the Sabbath. Let me talk about each one individually and then tie them together.

- b) One of the 10 commandments is to “Honor one’s mother and father”. (Exodus 20:12). Here, a different Hebrew verb is used. Instead of “honor”, the text is correct as the English text says to “respect” one’s father and mother. What does that mean?
- i) I looked up some definitions of respect. The one I like best is “an attitude of admiration or esteem.”
  - ii) In context of this text, it means one is to respect the family structure.
  - iii) I’ve yet to meet one teenager or adult who doesn’t struggle in some way with their relationship with their parents. I don’t think this command is about obeying every decision of our parents. All of us would be in big trouble if that were true.
  - iv) Respect and honor would include taking care of them and at least “listening” to what they have to say. For most people, one’s parents know us better than anybody else does and they have more years of experience.
  - v) At one time Jesus condemned a group of Pharisee’s because they argued that it was ok to not take care of parents if that same money was given to God. Jesus called them hypocrites for that action and avoiding God’s laws with that tradition. (Reference Matthew 15:4-6).
- c) People always wonder about the issue, “What if my parents don’t believe in God? What if they tell me not to go to church or to perform some act that is a sin?”
- i) There is a biblical principal of “higher laws”. For example, if a parent asks you to steal for them, one could correctly argue that this is sinful and one should not participate.
  - ii) Just because one’s parents don’t share our faith, doesn’t mean we shouldn’t still stay in contact with them and if necessary, help financially support them. Respecting one’s parents has nothing to do with their relationship with God.
  - iii) When Paul wrote to Timothy, one of the issues he brought up was taking care of one’s elderly parents. Paul never said anything about parents being “believers”. This is about honoring this commandment. (Reference: 1st Tim. 5:4).
- d) In the same verse as “honoring the parents” is the command to keep the Sabbath.
- i) This is a complicated topic. The “Sabbath” is the idea that one day out of seven is to rest from whatever work is to be done. The idea is not to lie around and watch television all day. The idea is to take one day and make it special to God. It should include some sort of worship service.
  - ii) The classic questions include things like can I mow the lawn on Sundays? I always say, “It depends if you make a living as a gardener.” ☺ Another issue is small children. How can one “rest” on a 7<sup>th</sup> day when one has small children in the house? The answer is “the best one can”. It may be as simple as just taking time for a worship service. For the Jewish nation, it meant taking one 24-period and “ignoring the world” to just spend time with God and with the family itself.
  - iii) One has to remember that God set up the family structure as a model for our relationship with Him. We struggle in our marriages and struggle with our parents, but we still honor that commitment. That is how God wants that relationship with Him to be: We struggle at times to be obedient, but we know that our commitment is there and like our family, come back to that commitment.
- e) OK, so why are both verses together? Why does God combine honoring one’s parents with honoring the Sabbath? Notice the way the 10 Commandments are structured:
- a) The first 4 commandments are about our relationship with God Himself.
  - b) The last 6 commandments are about our relationship with other people.
  - c) The “last of the four” deals with God is about keeping the Sabbath.
  - d) The “first of the six” deals with people is about honoring our parents.
  - e) Getting back to Chapter 19, Verse 3 of Leviticus, our “daily living” is about bridging our relationship with God and our relationship with people.

- ii) In order to have love for other people, we need to draw upon God's strength. To me, "Honoring the Sabbath" is a word-picture of "refueling our spiritual tank" so we have the power to obey the last six commandments, or in other words, we draw on God's strength in order to have love for other people.
  - iii) One of the practical reasons to obey the Sabbath is for us to draw close to God. We draw on His strength in order to have the power to love other people. To "love other people" is a good summary of the last six of the 10 Commandments. It starts with the family and then spreads to other people. That is why honoring the parents is the first of the six commandments that deal with other people.
- 8. Verse 4: " `Do not turn to idols or make gods of cast metal for yourselves. I am the LORD your God.
  - a) Verse 4 is an expanded commentary on another of the 10 Commandments. One of the 10 Commandments is to not make an idol of a false God. (Exodus 20:4.) The expanded commentary here in Verse 4 includes the "methodology", which is an idol of cast metal.
  - b) One of the common practices of the other nations around Israel is to make little statues to represent their gods. When people worshipped these little statues, it represented "good luck charms" and symbols of their gods. God is saying in effect, "Don't be like the nations around you. I am your God, not these worthless things".
    - i) What you may find interesting is the Hebrew word for "idol" literally means "nothing". It describes the worthlessness of the item.
  - c) Today, the vast majority of people don't have idol statues in their closet. I am a big believer that everyone worships "something". To find out what is someone's "god", find out where they spend their spare time and spare income. I am not preaching against hobbies. What I am saying is that if you find someone's all-consuming passion, you will find their "god". If people spend far more time with some "thing" than they do with time and money for the true God, than that "thing" is an idol.
- 9. Verse 5: " `When you sacrifice a fellowship offering to the LORD, sacrifice it in such a way that it will be accepted on your behalf. <sup>6</sup> It shall be eaten on the day you sacrifice it or on the next day; anything left over until the third day must be burned up. <sup>7</sup> If any of it is eaten on the third day, it is impure and will not be accepted. <sup>8</sup> Whoever eats it will be held responsible because he has desecrated what is holy to the LORD; that person must be cut off from his people.
  - a) If you have been with me in every lesson so far in Leviticus, you just can't seem to make past one or two chapters without a trip to our old friend, the sacrificial barbeque pit. ☺
    - i) We are back to the topic of animal sacrifices. This particular offering was discussed in detail in the first few chapters of Leviticus. This is about the "fellowship" offering (or the "peace" offering in other translations). The basic idea is "Lord, I've already completed the rituals for sin offerings and I know I am forgiven. Now I just want to spend time with You (God) and be with You."
    - ii) The idea is to offer and eat an animal with the priests. It is "shared" with God.
  - b) Remember for the Christian, what God "desires" in the Old Testament is still what God "desires" in the New Testament. The applications changes, but not the principals.
    - i) The principal of the fellowship is that God wants us to spend time with Him. That includes a one-on-one basis as well as group-worship.
    - ii) God no longer desires animal sacrifices as Jesus fulfilled all the "requirements" of the law for us. It is because Jesus paid that price that we can have peace with God.
    - iii) The modern equivalent of the "fellowship offering" is time in prayer and time in God's word. That is our time to be intimate with God.
  - c) Now let's get back to this paragraph. What it is saying that "if" one offers an animal as a peace offering, it must be eaten on Day 1 or Day 2. If it is still there on Day 3, toss it out.
    - i) On a practical matter, there are no refrigerators and this is desert country. Imagine eating meat left out in the sun for three days!

- ii) Remember that a peace offering is not compulsory, but it “should” be done. God wants us to come to Him because we desire to do so, not because we are forced to. There are no set guidelines on when a peace offering is made. The text focuses on how the offerings are to be made, and not when. In other words, God lays out how we approach Him, but gives us the free will to decide when to approach Him.
    - iii) The main idea is to avoid procrastination. If one is going to offer an animal to have “food-time” with God, He wants us to get on with it and not procrastinate.
  - d) Verse 8 specifies the punishment for disobedience. If one eats the meat on Day 3, one is to be “cut off”. The exact meaning is debatable, but it can range from ex-communication to the death penalty.
    - i) Think of it this way: Imagine a person who says, “Church? Yeah, I’ll get around to it one day, just not today. They procrastinate their relationship with God to a point where it gets too late. They may have made an initial commitment to God at one point in their life, but they never followed through with their actions. A commitment to God is just that, a commitment. It is a lifetime’s work, not just a one-moment-and-forget-about-it commitment. That is the idea of “holy” living.
10. Verse 9: “When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest.”<sup>10</sup> Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.
- a) The basic idea of the 10 Commandments is to love God as much as possible and love one’s neighbor as oneself.” Jesus said all the commandments “hang” on those two principals. (Ref: Matthew 22:40). If we are to love other people, then that must include taking care of those who can’t take care of themselves.
  - b) This leads to Verse 9 and 10. The verses say in effect, “When you harvest your fields, don’t harvest 100%. Go through it once, and whatever you “miss”, leave for the poor. In fact, be a little sloppy in your harvesting so the poor have something.
  - c) These two verses are great examples where the principal is more important than the literal illustration. Obviously not everyone makes a living as a farmer. The idea is to give something of what we have to help the less fortunate.
    - i) What is interesting is to think about how one is helping the poor. The poor still have to go and collect the food left out in the fields. It is not handed to them. The idea is that the poor still have to go and work for it. Obviously, we need to make exceptions for those who are crippled in some way.
    - ii) This law comes into play in the Book of Ruth. Ruth was a poor woman and she supported herself and her mother in law by collecting wheat in the fields that were left for the poor (Ruth 2:2). The field owner Boaz had the “hots” for Ruth ☺ and told his workers to leave some extra wheat for her to collect (Ruth 2:16).
  - d) Leaving some grain for the poor is also less income for the farmer. This is another method of trusting God to provide for our future provisions.
  - e) Again, we have the phrase, “I am the Lord Your God”. It is God saying in effect, “You want a reason to obey these commands? It is because I say so, that’s why”.
11. Verse 11: “Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not deceive one another.
- a) Now we are back to the “10 Commandments” again. Two of the 10 commandments include not stealing (Exodus 20:15) and “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.” (Exodus 20:16 NIV). To not lie is an example of being a false witness. The verse expands the comment on not lying by saying, “do not deceive one another”.
  - b) The idea is to have a reputation as a truth teller. If people can’t trust us at our word, how are they ever going to believe us when we talk about God?
  - c) I’ve yet to meet a person who hasn’t lied sometime. There are also issues where I think its ok to lie. (E.g., To lie about one’s whereabouts in order to save one’s life from a murder).

- d) One has to keep the idea of truth telling in balance with love for others. One has to be a truth teller, but one also has to have tact and say things in a loving way.
  - e) The basic principal is to be men and women of our word, and when we make a truth-commitment statement, we are to stick to it.
  - f) Let's talk a little about stealing. Stealing is to take what is not yours. It is saying, "I don't trust God to provide for my life and therefore I am stealing what is not mine."
    - i) Again, God wants us to be His witnesses to the world. If we are more interested in someone's "stuff", people won't care what we think about God.
    - ii) This law also implies that private ownership is acceptable. In a way, it is a rebuke against the idea of "communism" where everything belongs to everyone. If God says don't steal what is not yours, God is condoning private ownership.
12. Verse 12: " `Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.
- a) One of the 10 Commandments is to "not take God's name in vain". (Exodus 20:7). The basic idea is that when we take an oath and say, "I swear by God I will do this", we must then follow through as God's name is now on the line. God's reputation is now at stake.
  - b) Jesus added to this Commandment by saying in effect, "If you are going to do something, don't say, "I swear to God", just say "yes" or "no" and follow through with one's commitment. (Reference: Matthew 5:33-37).
    - i) The basic idea is that if someone says, "I swear to God this is true", does that mean we can't trust that person when he or she doesn't say, "I swear to God"? The point is to have a reputation as a truth teller.
  - c) I always like to point out that to violate this command is far more than just making an oath. When we act in a way that is displeasing to God and do so publicly, we are being a "false witness" to those around us.
13. Verse 13: " `Do not defraud your neighbor or rob him. " `Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight.
- a) In these two verses, we have more commentary on "Do not steal". Let's face it, if we are to love one another, why would we want to steal from those around us?
  - b) The reason these verses are here is one might think, "Well, I shouldn't steal or defraud from a fellow believer. But everyone else is going to hell anyway, so they are fair game!
    - i) This sort of perverted thinking is what God wants us to avoid. God cares about His reputation. We are His representatives to the world around us. If we steal or defraud people around us, why would nonbelievers be "like us"?
    - ii) In way, we are all "salesmen for God". Jesus called us to tell others about God. That is not just verbally telling others, but also to be aware that the world is watching our action and our behavior. Again, the primary issue at hand here is "holy living". It is the idea of not living like the world around us.
  - c) Which leads us to the second sentence in Verse 13: `Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight.
    - i) This is an example of "do not steal". If we are the boss, we pay the person when the work is done or on "pay-day". It is a sin to withhold payment when it is due.
    - ii) Applying the underlying principal, it is wrong of Christians not to pay bills when they are due. I don't have a problem with "borrowing" as long as we make the payments as promised. (Almost all Christians "borrow" whether they realize it or not. Paying one's electric bill is "borrowing" as we pay it after we have used it!)
14. Verse 14: " `Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the LORD.
- a) A deaf person is one who cannot hear at all. If one curses a deaf person, they have no idea they are being cursed. It is only "funny" to the cruel person making the curse.

- b) The same principal idea applies to the second sentence, which is to put a stumbling block in front of a blind person. It is a command against cruelty to the less able.
    - i) In both cases, God is giving examples of cruelty. Only a weak person mentally picks on a weak person physically. If we are to love one another, then that requires compassion for those that are less fortunate than we are.
  - c) The verse ends with "fear your God". Let me paraphrase God here: "Yeah I know that person is blind. I allowed that person to be blind, ultimately for My glory. You may not understand why they are that way, but I do. Further, you may not care for them, but I do, and I know they are less fortunate and I watch out for them. If you mess with them, you mess with Me. Don't even try it".
  - d) The point is not the specific's as much as to have compassion for the less fortunate. It is to remember that God is always watching our behavior.
15. Verse 15: " `Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.
- a) Let's talk about "judging" in the Old Testament. When a civil dispute arose within a city, the accused and the defendant were usually brought to elders at the city gates to judge the case. The cases could then be appealed to a king if the elders could not decide.
  - b) My point is anyone could be a judge or a juror. Getting back to the verse, the point is when one is called to be a judge or juror, don't show any partiality whether or not the defendant is rich or poor. Some show favor to the rich in order to get favors and some show favor to the poor out of compassion. The point is God wants us to be honest in our judgment and not look at the person's financial status.
  - c) This is a good time to bring up Christianity and "judgment".
    - i) Jesus said, "Do not judge" (Matthew 7:1). Yet in the Gospels, Jesus harshly judged the Jewish leadership and forgave others. Jesus was busy "judging" people's behavior. The New Testament epistles are full of examples of how and when to judge people's behavior.
    - ii) What Jesus meant by "do not judge" is similar to the expression, "What goes around comes around". If we spend all of our time putting down others in judgment, it will come back to haunt us. Judgment needs to be balanced with compassion.
    - iii) Getting back to this verse, there is nothing wrong with judging behavior. God calls us to judge behavior here in Verse 15. We can't read people's minds, so all we can do is judge behavior. God is saying here to not pre-judge people based on financial status in a "judgment" situation.
16. Verse 16: " `Do not go about spreading slander among your people. " `Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. I am the LORD.
- a) Verse 16 is another expanded commentary on the Commandment to not "bearing false witnesses" (i.e. lying) (Ref. Exodus 20:16). This first sentence is about spreading rumors.
  - b) If I had to speculate as to which sin does the most damage to society as a whole, I would say spreading rumors. There may be more evil sins such as murder, but in terms of which one does the most long term damage to society, rumors are it. It is also one of the hardest things to undo is to stop a false rumor about someone.
  - c) In a sense, this gets back to the idea of "having love for one another". If we have such love, why would we tell stories about people without verifying our facts first?
  - d) The classic joke in church is rumors are usually spread with the line, "Let me tell you who we have to pray for today". The proper way to respond to a rumor is to ask the person telling it, "What did that person say when you confronted them with that issue?"
  - e) The New Testament has similar condemnation against this topic. The book of James emphasizes the danger of spreading rumors. (James 1:26, 3:5-9).

- f) Getting back to Verse 16 here in Leviticus, the second sentence is about making a false accusation against a neighbor. It is another type of rumor being spread.
  - g) Again, it comes down to having the reputation as a truth-teller. If people can't trust us with rumors and accusations, how will people trust us when we tell them about God?
17. Verse 17: "Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt.
- a) The Gospel writer John comments on the first sentence. I can't top that. ☺
    - i) Here's a sample: "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." (1<sup>st</sup> John 3: 14-15, NIV)
  - b) First of all, the term "brother" does not refer to a sibling, but a fellow believer. If we have hatred toward a fellow believer, God considers this a sin.
    - i) There are two dangers toward such hatred: The first is it blocks our relationship with God. When we are consumed with anger, we can't focus on prayer. The second danger is we can "let it out" on them, or innocent people in a harmful way. Stop and think about all the times in our lives where we have hurt or just yelled at innocent people because we are angry about something.
  - c) The second sentence deals with how we should handle anger against a neighbor who commits a sin. The idea of this verse is that we can be "guilty by association" if we do not say something. I would personally add the importance of having tact in this situation.
    - i) Paul himself comments on this issue: "Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. (Ephesians 4:25-27 NIV)
    - a) Notice that Paul assumes the "neighbor" is a Christian.
18. Verse 18: "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.
- a) Verse 18 is arguably one of the most important in the bible. My authority is Jesus himself, which is a good reliable source. ☺ He stated the two most important laws in the bible are to love God with all one's heart, soul, mind and strength (Deuteronomy 6:5) and to love one's neighbor as oneself (here in Verse 18). Jesus said that all the laws "hang" on these two verses. (Matthew 22:40). In other words, one can obey these two verses, and the others are "just further commentary"
    - i) "Once can thus say the way to become holy is to keep the commandments, but the way to keep the commandments is by loving God and loving people". (Allen Ross)
  - b) When making a decision about dealing with a neighbor is to ask yourself, "Am I treating them as I want to be treated?"
  - c) Now let's go back to the first phrase: "Do not seek revenge...against one of your own people". It is saying if another believer hurt you, let God take care of the situation.
  - d) Let me put Verse 18 in a prayer: "Lord, that person really hurt me. The pain is real and what they did was wrong. Yet, I know that person is a believer in You. That means You are in charge of their life and You are working out their lives for Your glory. Take this situation and this pain and use it for Your glory. Help me to see that person as someone You love and not as someone who hurt me. Give me Your power to get through this situation, Amen."
    - i) I would also add, it is good to stop and praise God here. Read some Scripture verses if that helps. The point is to get one's mind off revenge and onto God.
    - ii) In situations where I can get my ego out of the way and pray like this (rare as that is! ☺) I have found God does wonders.



- iii) I should also add that if this is a violent situation, God does not expect you to sit there and take it. In the Gospels, Jesus “left” potentially violent situations, until the time of cross, when He knew it was His destiny to fulfill His role.
  - iv) I also want to add the importance of still “going to the police”. To not seek revenge has nothing to do with filing criminal charges if needed. Paul says that all government is “God ordained” (Romans 13:1) and a main purpose of government is to protect the people from harm. In other words, it is ok to forgive a person for the sake of one’s own peace, but at the same time, file charges against them for the sake of society.
19. Verse 19: " `Keep my decrees. " `Do not mate different kinds of animals. " `Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed. " `Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material.
- a) Verse 19 is about “mixing together what God has separated”. For example, God declares it is a sin to breed to different types of animals or cross-pollinate two different types of seed. The final one is not to mix two different types of garments.
  - b) This was historically important. The worship of many pagan gods involved some of these practices. It is another example of not being like the nations around them.
  - c) Does this mean Christians can’t wear polyester? ☺ That’s not the point. The application has to do with not “mixing with what God has separated”. It is another reminder of “separating ourselves” for God. Remember the term “holiness” is about separating ourselves for God’s purposes.
  - d) Going back to the idea of breeding different animals or combining different seeds, it is the idea of telling God indirectly, “Yes, I know you created this animal and this plant life, but we as humans can do better by combining them”. There is arrogance to that. It is to say that somehow “we can do better” than what God has created.
20. Verse 20: " `If a man sleeps with a woman who is a slave girl promised to another man but who has not been ransomed or given her freedom, there must be due punishment. Yet, they are not to be put to death, because she had not been freed. <sup>21</sup> The man, however, must bring a ram to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting for a guilt offering to the LORD. <sup>22</sup> With the ram of the guilt offering the priest is to make atonement for him before the LORD for the sin he has committed, and his sin will be forgiven.
- a) Let me explain the situation: Let’s say there is a slave-girl who is engaged to a man. That slave girl then has sexual relations with another man. We’ll discover in the next chapter that adultery is a death penalty. Here, the penalty is less severe. The adulterer must bring a sin offering (a ram) to the priest and the sin will be forgiven.
  - b) OK John, what’s the deal? The assumption is because the girl is a slave-girl, she was not able to resist. Therefore, she is not deserving of death. Because she is no longer a virgin, her “value” has decreased. The man who had sex with her is now obligated to marry her (Ref.: Deuteronomy 22:28) and pay for the “damage” to the owner of the slave girl.
  - c) Does this verse (and the bible) condone slavery? This is a complicated question.
    - i) The Israelites came from a society where slavery was commonplace. The Israelites were slaves themselves and used to the idea. Slavery was a way of settling debts, as there were no jails wandering through the desert.
    - ii) A good answer to the slavery issue might be the way Jesus talked about divorce. When asked about divorce, Jesus said in effect that God “permitted” divorce due to the hardness of our hearts, but it is not God’s ideal for mankind. (A paraphrase of Matthew 19:8). I believe the same principal applies to slavery. It is not God’s ideal. God tolerated it due to the sinfulness of mankind, but it should be eliminated whenever and however possible.

21. Verse 23: " `When you enter the land and plant any kind of fruit tree, regard its fruit as forbidden. For three years you are to consider it forbidden; it must not be eaten. <sup>24</sup> In the fourth year all its fruit will be holy, an offering of praise to the LORD. <sup>25</sup> But in the fifth year you may eat its fruit. In this way your harvest will be increased. I am the LORD your God.
- a) Remember the Israelites were in the desert between Egypt and the Promised Land. God is saying that when they enter the Promised Land and plant fruit trees, they are not to eat any of its fruit until the 5<sup>th</sup> year. The fruit in years 1-3 are to be thrown away (or pruned). The fruit in Year 4 is to be given to God. In Year 5, it is theirs for the pickings. ☺
  - b) OK, what's the point? Most fruit farmers will tell you that a fruit is best after three or four years. It is good for the trees to prune off any fruit branches for the first 3 years.
  - c) The practice of this had broader applications: The idea is about trusting in God. It is tempting to eat the fruit in the early years. It is also difficult to give to God what is produced in Year-4. The idea is about trusting that God will provide in future years.
  - d) In a few chapters, we are going to discuss the Jewish holiday of "first fruits". The idea is to trust God for future provision, just like what is going on with fruit from new trees.
  - e) Does this mean God wants them to go "fruitless" for five years? Of course not. The Israelites can still purchase the fruit from other trees as well as eat other food sources.
  - f) Notice that there is a promise in this verse. The first word is "when". There is no condition to this verse. God is promising the Israelites will enter the Promised Land.
    - i) If you know your bible, the Israelites of that generation messed up big time, and God said only their children could enter. The point is this promise of Verse 23 came true, only in a way they did not expect.
22. Verse 26a: " `Do not eat any meat with the blood still in it.
- a) Back in Chapter 17, we had a whole chapter dealing with the issue of avoiding blood. The main idea is that blood represents life to God and we are to respect life. I'm not going to elaborate much further on this verse, as it is discussed in detail in Chapter 17.
  - b) So why repeat that here? This chapter is all about the "practical, day-by-day" living for the Israelites. God is reminding them that as part of this practice to avoid blood.
23. Verse 26b: " `Do not practice divination or sorcery.
- a) Notice that right after "blood" comes a warning against divination and sorcery. It is to be avoided like the plague. We'll read later the penalty for this is death.
  - b) I am convinced that some divination power is real. God allows this demonic based power to exist. It would not be a temptation if the power was not real. Since God created Satan, God is greater and so is His power.
  - c) The main idea is that we are not tempted by false gods and focus on the living God.
  - d) For those who don't know this, the movie "The Exorcist" is based on a number of actual case studies combined into one movie. I don't believe a demon can "enter" a believer as we are protected by the Spirit of God. There is a big difference between a demon tempting us and actually "entering" us. Demon possession is rare in Christian-based countries mainly because we pray too much around here. Still, it exists. Getting back to the verse, it usually begins with some sort of occult practice, even done in innocence.
24. Verse 27: " `Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard. <sup>28</sup> " `Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the LORD.
- a) Here we have prohibition against certain types of haircuts and tattoo's. Given the popularity of tattoo's today, a lot of people can be in trouble. ☺
  - b) Notice the words "for the dead". That is the key. It was a cultic practice at that time to have a tattoo to remember a dead loved one or to cut oneself for the sake of the dead. In other words, this verse is not anti-tattoo for fashion sake. It is anti-tattoo for the sake of a cultic practice. The same principal applied to shaving and haircuts for the sake of specific pagan worship.

- c) Getting off topic a little, I've never been a personal fan of tattoos. I think the human body is very beautiful just as God made it. With that said, I'm not anti-tattoo for fashion sake. It is something one has to accept about a person. Christians are not to treat people with tattoos any better or worse than other believers.
  - d) The same principal applies to haircuts and beards. The warning to the Israelites was to "not be like the pagan nations around them". They made certain statements with their hair and beard to honor their pagan-gods. The idea is to avoid that practice.
25. Verse 29: " `Do not degrade your daughter by making her a prostitute, or the land will turn to prostitution and be filled with wickedness.
- a) OK, why would anyone want to make their daughter a prostitute? The temptation has to do with money. Unfortunately, this practiced existed back then and still exists today in some parts of the world.
  - b) Whoever says, "The bible is anti-women" never contemplated this verse. Here God wants us to show respect for the family structure. This is for men to show respect for their daughters. Yes, women were second-class citizens during those days. The bible is teaching us men to treat women with respect.
  - c) I stated in the introduction that Chapter 19 can be seen as an expanded commentary on the 10 Commandments. One of the Commandments is not committing adultery (Ref.: Exodus 20:14). To allow prostitution is to encourage adultery and fornication (sex outside of marriage). God calls this "wickedness" here in this verse.
26. Verse 30: " `Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the LORD.
- a) Another of the 10 Commandments is to "Observe the Sabbath" (Ref.: Exodus 20:8). I've already discussed this, but to reiterate, the idea is to take one day of the week and make it "special" for God. That is the idea of "reverence" as used in this verse.
  - b) Why is this principal repeated? Verse 3 stated to "Observe the Sabbath". I believe the idea here in Verse 30 is to expand upon the Commandment with "reverence for my (God's) sanctuary. The idea is: "Don't just observe the Sabbath any old way you feel like it. Do it the way God prescribes".
    - i) In practical terms today, that would mean going to some sort of group-oriented worship service (i.e., church) as opposed to just sleeping in on the Sabbath. The idea of the Sabbath is to rest, but it is to rest-in-God and not just sleep.
27. Verse 31: " `Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God.
- a) Here we have another warning against the occult. In Verse 26, it says for us to not turn to sorcery. Combining Verse 26 with Verse 31 it is saying, "Don't practice any occult stuff yourself and don't turn to other people who practice such things".
  - b) A few centuries later, King Saul of Israel disobeyed this commandment and turned to a medium for help. The medium then raised the prophet Samuel up from the dead so he could talk to Saul. I am convinced that really happened and the power is "real". The point is God wants us to avoid this practice, but the power is real. (See 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel Chapter 28 for this related story.)
  - c) Notice that sandwiched between these two verses here in Leviticus on the occult is the reminder to "observe the Sabbath". Other verses in the middle of this section also have to do with pagan practices of the surrounding nations. A reason "observe the Sabbath" is placed in the middle of this section is to remind us to stick to God and not "these things".
  - d) Remember that the purpose of this whole chapter of Leviticus has to do with "every day living" of the believer in God. Most of the laws are saying in effect, "Don't do what the pagan nations around you are doing. Stick close to God and He will give you the power to avoid the temptation to go back to one's old lifestyle.

28. Verse 32: " `Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD.
- a) The basic idea here is to respect the elderly. The danger of a society today is that it "worships" youth and beauty. That is always a temptation to give youth priority because younger people are better looking, stronger and more productive.
  - b) Notice the command to respect the elderly is combined with "revere your God".
    - i) To paraphrase this law, God is saying, "Excuse me there, young fella! ☺ That old man over there is one of my creatures and I love him. Further, he's been around this place a lot longer than you have and knows more about life than you do. Now go check your ego at the door and listen to what he has to say!"
  - c) This verse does not mean we have to do everything an elderly person tells us to do, but to "respect" what he has to say and take it seriously.
29. Verse 33: " `When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. <sup>34</sup> The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.
- a) Remember the key verse of this chapter is "Love your neighbor as yourself". The next question would be, "Well, exactly who is my neighbor? How far away does a person have to be to still be considered a "neighbor"? Jesus answered that question directly with the "Good Samaritan" parable. (Luke 10:30-37). The basic answer is "anyone within your influence" is to be treated as a neighbor.
  - b) With that said, this verse is God saying in effect, "If there is a stranger living among you, treat them no better nor any worse than you would treat your own family." Remember that you Israelites were slaves yourself. Have compassion upon others.
  - c) But didn't God tell the Israelites to go "wipe out" the inhabitants of the Promised Land? That isn't exactly "loving one's neighbors". ☺ What's the deal?
    - i) God told the Israelites to perform a specific judgment on specific people. It is as if God personally pronounced the Canaanites guilty of a crime and the Israelites were the executioners. They were to carry out God's sentence. God never called the Israelites to kill everyone in their sight. It was a specific punishment given to a specific group of people. As for all other "strangers" living among them, God's orders are to treat them as they would treat themselves.
30. Verse 35: " `Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity. <sup>36</sup> Use honest scales and honest weights, an honest ephah and an honest hin. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt.
- a) The idea of this verse is to be honest in one's dealings. For example, if you are a butcher, and selling meat by the pound, don't lean your thumb on the scale when weighing the meat. The words "ephah" and "hin" are types of measurements.
  - b) Again, we're back to commentary on the 10 Commandments. One of the commandments is to not bear "false witness", that is to lie. (Exodus 20:16). An expanded commentary on not being a false witness is to be honest in one's business dealings.
31. Verse 37: " `Keep all my decrees and all my laws and follow them. I am the LORD.' "
- a) This is the summary verse. This is God saying, "Keep all of the laws I have just stated. Don't pick and choose. You want a reason? I'm God. Any more dumb questions? ☺
32. Let me wrap this up and recap the main points:
- a) It's easy to get bogged down in the details of this chapter. One can spend a good length of time studying the details of each one of these laws and the implications of them.
  - b) The main idea gets back to "obeying God in every day living". In other words, these instructions don't cover what do in church, but how to live "Monday to Saturday".
  - c) If we are to obey God, it is not just lip service or our actions at church. God demands full time obedience and full time observance of His commands.

- d) Many of these laws don't apply today as originally prescribed. A lot of them are cultural to that time. That is why it is important to understand the principal behind the laws. What God finds sinful then, He finds sinful now. The same is for what is good. The "cross" does not change God's attitudes toward these sins.
  - e) One can read this chapter as one big set of examples. It is as if the believer is asking, "OK, I understand you want me to be obedient to You all the time. What does that really mean? How does it apply at work? How does it apply when I'm home with the family or at the grocery store?" In other words, Chapter 19 is a long set of examples of how our behavior is to be pleasing to God.
  - f) Yes, the chapter can be summarized well with "love your neighbor as yourself". Notice that verse is in the middle of the chapter and not Verse 1. It is not repeated over and over again. What is repeated over and over again, is "I am the Lord your God". In other words, we are obedient 1) because God tells us too and 2) We rely upon His strength in order to live a life pleasing to God. We can't love-others-as-we-love-our-self unless we rely upon God's strength in order to do so in the first place.
33. Let's pray: Father, Help us to live a life pleasing to You. We understand that our salvation is only based in our trust in You, and not our actions. At the same time, You want us to change our behavior in a way that is in conformity to Your will. Guide us today that we may live in a manner that is pleasing to You. Help us to rely upon You and not our own strength. Guide us and direct us, both through Your divine power and through Your biblical instructions as how we should live. May everything we do in our lives from the "big" to the trivial glorify You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.