

OUT OF EGYPT
Loving God and Neighbor
Exodus 20:22-23:19

We've been taking a **jog** through Exodus.... Ryken preached 120 sermons on this book - that would be a **walk** through Exodus! But we are only doing about 17 weeks. Hopefully, we are covering the material, and making Christ-centered application as we move through this *long book in a relatively brief amount of time*. Today, we'll consider some interesting passages. We get to talk about a variety of topics, some strange and unusual (like "**road kill**" and not "**cooking a goat in its mothers milk**" "ox goring"), as well other interesting topics: **the death penalty, slavery, premarital sex, orphan care, lawsuits, fistfights, property, the poor, loving enemies, & more!**

God is forming a people to display his glory. So, he teaches them how to **live** in community with one another. Before we pass this section off as irrelevant, think about how important this section was for Israel. They needed some guidelines. We understand this. How many of you have **ever had a roommate? How many of you have one now? How many of you would like to trade him or her?** If you have or have had a roommate, you know it is often hard to get along. I've had a number of difficult roommates, and with each problem, I insisted on some guidelines. **For the snoring friend, Philip, I made him go to sleep after I went to sleep! For my friend Calvin, I asked him not to play rap music at 2:00am! For Jamie, I asked him to stop locking me out of the room when I'm down the hall in the shower!**

You can imagine 600,000 men plus women and children living together in a desert! They need some guidelines. But not just to get along. But to learn how to **glorify God** on a **daily basis**.

You see these laws are the **application** of the Ten Commandments. The first four commands pertain to "loving God" and the next six pertain to "loving our neighbor."

Is there anything more relevant than glorifying God by keeping the
Great Commandment, loving God and neighbor?

This is a relevant text. This section shows us that God is concerned with how we relate to one another in **day-to-day life**.

God calls us to holiness, integrity, mercy, justice, and fairness in **the ordinariness** of life. That's where we spend most of our days, in the ordinary: going to work, seeing neighbors, raising kids. *Life is not about going to conferences or vacation.* Most of life is ordinary.

"Loving our neighbor" is often **abstract**, but here we see some real life examples and principles.

- The difference of course is that we are **not a nation**; we are a **church**. We are not a theocracy. So, there are some differences. We must seek to make appropriate, Christ-centered, new covenant application of these verses. We will seek to draw out the principles and view them in light of the NT's teaching, just like we did with the Ten Commandments.
- Just like the nation of Israel was seeking to apply the Ten Commandments, we too must learn to apply God's Word to our situation today.

This section of Scripture also reveals the **character of God** to us. One of the most important things we ask when we read the Bible is "What does this teach me about God?" Here we see a **just and compassionate God** that is worthy of obedience and worship.

Perhaps a verse that could hang over this section is

[8] He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?
(Micah 6:8 ESV)

There are **some differences in the Ten Commandments and the laws** we are about to read, which are often called "case laws" or the "covenant code" or "The Book of the Covenant"

1. God spoke the TC directly to the people, but Moses communicated the case laws to the people (20:19; 21:1; 24:3).
2. The TC were written by the finger of God in stone (later); but the case laws were written by Moses on parchment (24:4a). Thus, they do not carry the same eternally binding force.
 - a. This is why we don't have to follow it down to the very letter. The principles we glean here are relevant for us today, but we are not the nation of Israel.
 - b. We must avoid two mistakes: (1) throwing them out completely; (2) thinking that the city of Raleigh should adopt them as they are.
 - c. These are civil pronouncements for a nation, and are not binding on church and state today – even though we have principles that we should follow.
3. The TC were universal absolutes; but the case laws were written to deal with specific situations.
 - a. However, even in their specificity, they were never intended to address every possible situation. They were guides. Judges would take these case laws and apply them with care.
 - b. The selected laws are probably stated because of how they relate to Israel's prior situation in Egypt. Israel was exploited in various ways in Egypt, and God did not free them to abuse others, either on a major life/death scale or in an ordinary day-to-day matter.

So, God desires that we love him and our neighbor. He gives a series of laws concerning a variety of issues. I've grouped them in seven parts....

#1: CONCERNING WORSHIP (20:22-26)

22-23: God's instructions about building altars reflect the first four of the TC. They are to worship God alone. Idols are meaningless and an offense to God. Israel was actually fail to obey this word in chapter 32, when they bow down to a golden calf.

24-26: God then tells them how to worship. The reference to altars and sacrifices reminds us of the patriarchs who built altars, and points us forward where more information about worship will be given.

Application

God not only wanted Israel to avoid worshiping pagan gods, he also wanted them to avoid worshiping *like* them.

So, he tells them about four particular differences in their worship, all of which apply to us today.

A. **Principle of Simplicity (24a, 25b).** God tells them to make their altar out of the earth and stone that he created. The Canaanites worshiped idols, and they did so on alters of finished stone. John Mackay says, “An alter made from such costly and aesthetically pleasing stone would be a tribute to human craftsmanship, but it would be defiled from the Lord’s point of view because it distracted attention from him and his goodness.” (Ryken, 692).

Pagan altars were built with costly items, and built high to show off. But God tells them to build it out of earth. He didn’t want them to be distracted from the heart of worship. If an ornate, costly altar was built, then one may be tempted to **worship it!**

The altar was simple, just stones fitted together into a waist high rectangle, upon which wood would be laid for cooking meat for the sacrifice.

This applies to today. It is still about the heart of worship, not the fanciness of a building. **God is just as pleased (if not more!) by the praise of those in a mud hut in Africa as with a church that has spent 140 million dollars on a place for corporate worship.** Nothing in worship is to be done for show. At IDC, we will avoid being gimmicky and ornate. So we sing, read, pray, fellowship, take the table, baptize, give offerings – in a simple, heart felt way. At IDC, we are intentionally simple and non-flashy. **Jesus is the focus in worship, not a building, or a person or a cool tricks on a stage.**

B. **Principle of Purity.** Canaanite worship was also obscene. So God tells his people to avoid the steps (since men wore robes) to preserve their modesty. Later, God made the priests wear linen under-garments to avoid being exposed.

God still expects purity from his people, especially among leaders.

C. Principle of Locality. These verses also teach something important about the location of worship. God says, “In every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you” (24b). This meant that Israel did not have to go to Sinai to experience God’s presence. There would be other places to meet God (later in the Tabernacle in particular).

We now understand that through the Holy Spirit God can be worshiped all over the world. Jesus told the woman at the well that it wasn’t about a mountain or Jerusalem, but rather it was about worshiping in Spirit and in truth (**John 4:24**).

We also know that when Jesus spoke about issue of church discipline that he said “for where two or three are gathered in his name, there I am among them” (**18:20**).

It is awesome to know that we don’t have to make a **pilgrimage** to one place to experience God’s power. Now we come through Christ (our new temple!) by the Spirit to meet with God. Whether we are offering corporate worship, or dealing with a case of discipline, God is with us.

D. Principle of Sacrifice. The most important thing about the altar was what happened on the altar. The altar was the place for making sacrifice for sin.

The burnt offering was an offering of atonement for sin (Leviticus 1). A perfect animal was placed on an altar and it was consumed with fire, with the smoke rising to heaven.

The second time of offering was a fellowship or peace offering (Leviticus 3). It also dealt with sin but had a different emphasis. These offerings were given on special occasions to give thanks to God, and they symbolized the fellowship one had with God. In recognition of God’s reconciliation with people, the offering was not consumed with fire. So they ate the animal in the presence of God. (The burnt offering was burnt to a crisp).

Even after the giving of the law, God knew that his people would need forgiveness.

Of course, these sacrifices were pointing to the once and for all sacrifice of **Jesus**, who paid the penalty for our sin by being slaughtered. His sacrifice pleased God, and now we can be reconciled to God (**Rom. 3:25a**). In fact, the author of Hebrews refers to Jesus as “our altar” (**Heb. 13:10**). He is the burnt offering that made sacrifice for our sin, and the fellowship offering that reconciles us to God.

Therefore, when it comes to worship, the most important thing we do is **remember Jesus**. Apart from him, we cannot worship and know God. Jesus has given us an ordinance to do this, which is the Lord's Supper.

The only sacrifice that now remains is the **sacrifice of our very lives** (Rom. 12:1-2).

#2: CONCERNING SERVANTS (21:1-11)

Laws on Servants (1-6)

We should note first that this is not “slavery” like we think about in American history. Most people ran **small family business**, and their “servants” were more like simple workers/employees in the business who lived at the master's place. They were basically “**contract workers**.”

Further, there are some other things that make this situation way different than American slavery.

- It was **voluntary** (people hired themselves into service of others, often because of debt). They worked hard in exchange for room, board, and an honest wage. Involuntary slavery is forbidden in this very section of Scripture! (**21:16**).
- It was also **temporary**. The servant worked for six years, and then was set free. Hebrew servants were given a Sabbatical.

Further, they were not sent away empty-handed (see **Deut. 15:12-15**).

- **It was civil.** The master could not abuse the servant (see **26-27**). Receiving servants could even be seen as **benevolent**, if the master intentionally sought to get the servant out of debt.
- It was not **oppressive or racially based**. Israel just came out of slavery and God did not free them in order for them to oppress others.
- A final difference is that it preserved **the sanctity of the family**. American slavery often separated families, but not in this system. “If he comes in single, he shall go out single; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him” (Ex. 21:3).

But if the Master gave a servant a wife, in an arranged marriage situation, then the husband may have to “go out alone” (21:4).

This seems unfair at first glance. But remember a few things. The female servant was under a contract for six years of labor. She couldn't just up and leave if she got married before her term was up. The husband could do one of the things: (1) wait; (2) get a good paying job and purchase the freedom of his wife and kids; or (3) work permanently for the Master (5-6).

In the latter case, the husband-servant was brought before God, and a sharp object went through his ear at the doorpost (symbolizing covenant and the permanent commitment). Why would he want to do such a thing? Because he loved his master.

Application: This is a beautiful picture of service. This idea might be what David had in mind in **Psalm 40:6** when he said, “In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open hear.” Worship without a lifelong of obedience was no worship at all. David says that God desires lifelong, loving obedience to Him.

We too have bound ourselves to Christ, our Master, a kind, generous, sacrificial, Master, who actually became a servant himself (Phil 2:5-11), and we say, “Out of love, I am yours forever.”

Maidservants (21:7-11)

This sounds harsh. Why did God allow men to sale their daughters to service of another? We don't know all the details here, but it seems that the father was not trying to get rid of her, but trying to improve her prospects for marriage (arranged marriages were common). A poor man would send his daughter to a rich home in hopes that she would be part of that family.

She could also be designated for the Master's son (9)

The lady was **protected** in three ways: (1) if it didn't work out, the family could ransom her; she couldn't be sold to foreigners; (2); if she became engaged to one of the sons, then she was treated as a daughter, she would have fully rights as a free citizen; (3) if the engagement was broken, then the man had the duty of providing food, clothing and marital rights.

- God loves his daughters and wanted them to be taken care of. God cares for ladies physically and emotionally and expects men to defend them and treat them justly.

#3: CONCERNING BEHAVIOR (12-36)

As we move through this section, we see laws on injuries to people and animals. The underlying principle is that the crime should fit the punishment.

Intentional and Unintentional Homicide Laws (21:12-14)

The first and third scenario deals with murder and the consequent of capital punishment, while the middle one is an accidental homicide and the response to it: protection of the guilty to a city of refuge.

The middle one could be a case in which you ran over someone with a **wagon**, hit someone with a **tool**, or killing an ally in battle. This was different from the cultures of the day, which was did not consider **intent**. There was no difference in purposeful and accidental homicide. The covenant law, however, anticipated the cities of refuge

that would be spread throughout Israel to protect the offender from an avenger (**Numbers 35:9-15**).

No such refuge existed for those who planned to murder (“**cunning**”). They couldn’t run to the altar, as in some societies, for protection. There was no place one could run to escape from the consequence of such sin.

The Sanctity of Life and the Imago Dei

Many modern readers of the biblical laws will have a hard time with capital punishment that are mentioned here in these chapters. The specific cases include: murder, kidnapping, physical or verbal assaults on one’s parents, sorcery, bestiality, and idolatry (**21:12-17; 22:18-20**).

It appears *extremely harsh*. But we must not forget what it was based on: the value of human life, the honor of family, and the purity of worship. Concerning the value of human life, Alexander says:

“The death penalty was invoked, not out of indifference for human life, but rather because each human life is of tremendous value (cf., Gen. 9:6). A life for life does not express vengefulness, but rather the idea that the only payment that can be made for taking human life is a human life itself.”

(T. Desmon Alexander, 183).

God established this principle before these laws in Exodus: “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image” (Gen. 6:9).

- Whatever you believe about the death penalty, at least grab this principle: people matter to God. They bear his image.

This law was **distinctive** to Israel because of this principle. **In some cultures** breaking an entering, stealing or looting at a fire brought the death penalty! So a crime related to **possessions** was a more serious offense than a crime against a **human being**.

God is placing a distinction here on creation. **Nothing is more valuable than life**. In the Code of Hammurabi, if one committed

murder, then he could pay it back with **money** alone (Alexander, 184).

Further, God's law gave safeguards to protect **the innocent** (cf., **23:7**). In Deuteronomy (**17:6-7**), we read where one couldn't be executed on **the basis of a single witness**. So for this serious penalty, it had to be administered justly.

It is hard to find a perfectly just process in a fallen world; so I think there are times to oppose the death penalty, even if you agree with the principle. What we shouldn't oppose is a severe punishment for those who do not honor the image of God.

Assault on Parents, Kidnapping, and Cursing Parents (15-17)

15, 17: Notice the gravity of honoring one's parents. The verses describe ways of "attacking" one's parents. They help to explain the meaning of "honor your father and mother." **The assault envisioned in verse 15 is not a minor slap, but a serious attack - with the intent to kill, perhaps. It's a "beat down"** (Stuart, 487).

Probably what's envisioned in verse 17 is not a one-time fit of rage that leads a child to disrespect their parents, but a total repudiation of their authority, and failure to care for them. Jesus understood this law, and challenged the Pharisees (**Matt. 15:3-6**), who were trying to side step caring for their parents hiding behind religious tradition.

- The bottom line is if you speak against your parents – or worse, strike them, you are guilty of a great sin against God. Honor and care for them – even if the situation is not ideal to the best of your ability.

16: The verb "**steal**" is the same as the eighth commandment. If a person steals a person and sales him, or if a person is in possession of him, then the death penalty was required. "Enslavers" (1 Tim. 1:10) were to be put to death immediately.

Again, in **Hammurabi's Code** (around 1772 BC) the prohibition against kidnapping applied only to the **upper class**. Common people could be kidnapped without it being viewed as a crime (Ryken, 712).

But Israel was different. Because people are made in the image of God, they can't be treated in such a way.

IJM - is this a problem today? Yes. Modern day slavey is the second largest, fastest growing international crime today. 27 million slaves in the world today. "Nearly 2 million children are exploited in commercial sex industry." (www.ijm.org). We need people to rise up and defend the enslaved and defenseless.

- A team of us spent an entire day praying for justice at the IJM Global Prayer Gathering. We went to a Uganda room, Cambodia, Thailand, Philippines, and more. After hearing from field officers about the abuse of widows, land grabbing, corrupt police, the cries of orphans, taking of bribes, girls sold in brothels, and more... we prayed... It was powerful. You will be hearing more about ways we can do justice at IDC in weeks to come.

Life Threatening Injuries (18-21)

18-19. Here is an example of a situation in which the judges would make their decisions on regarding a fight. If a man gets in a brawl with another man, but the loser doesn't die, then the winner of the fight should pay for the loss of time and see that he is healed. Again, we see the crime is to fit the punishment. God doesn't say, "put the man to death."

20-21. We see here that the master did have the right to physically punish his servant, but he did not have to seriously injure or kill the servant. If he did, then the master could be tried as a murderer.

Permanent Injuries (22-27)

22: Stuart says, "This verse contains some wording that is without parallel elsewhere in the Old Testament and thus challenging to translate" (491). Assuming the ESV translation, then what this means is that there is a penalty for hitting a pregnant woman, even if she is not injured. The situation seems to be a case in which the lady

is an innocent bystander of a fight, and gets struck in the process. The law considers both the mother and the child.

Notice that the fetus is treated as a person (“life for life”).

23-25: If someone was severely injured or killed, then the punishment should fit the crime. Here we are introduced to the Bible’s “talion” laws: “life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, etc.”

At first, this sounds **barbaric**. But it was actually **an advance** in justice compared to other Near Eastern codes. Alexander writes,

“In the earliest known collection of laws, monetary fines were imposed in cases of assault and bodily injury. The weakness of such fines was that they failed to take into account an individual’s ability to pay. (For an unemployed laborer a fine of a thousand pounds imposes great hardship; to a millionaire it is a mere trifle.) The law of talion removes all such discrepancies by ensuring that the punishment should be no less, or no more than the crime demands.

- These laws did not allow the rich to buy their way out of criminal penalties. That is a problem around the world. The powerful can buy escape from justice.

It’s also important to note that, other than the case of the death penalty, the law of the talion was **not necessarily applied literally**. In verses **18-19**, a wounded person received the cost of medical expenses and lost wages, the guilty is not “wounded.” In the next scenario (**26-27**), a servant who loses his eye is to be released. Nothing is said of the master losing his **eye**! Stuart says,

“Instead, expressions like ‘eye for eye’ were understood idiomatically to mean ‘**a penalty that hurts the person who ruined someone else’s eye as much as he would be hurt if his own eye were actually ruined also.**’ The precise penalty was left up to the judges by talion law; it might involve anything from banishment to loss of property (and/or property rights) to punitive confinement to special financial penalties to corporal punishment to public humiliation, or to any combination of these” (493-494).

In other words, the goal was for justice to be served. No favoritism was to be allowed, and everyone was to be treated justly.

Jesus refers to the talion in **Matt. 5:38-42, “turn the other cheek.” We see that this principle was **never intended as the rule for ordinary relationships**. It was meant to ***guide judges in assessing damages***.**

Christians should seek to imitate God’s own generosity and mercy in *personal relationships*.

Jesus cried out, “Father, forgive them,” as they crucified him. The Bible says, “when he was reviled, he did not revile in return” (1 Pet. 2:23). The heart of the Christian **must be a heart of mercy, not retaliation. “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, as God in Christ forgave you” (Eph. 4:32).**

Yes, there are times for appealing to the authorities for just consequences, and we need the civil authorities to carry out justice, but we, who have experienced mercy through the cross, *should be willing to suffer to show mercy in our relationships*.

26-27: As mentioned, this verse does not allow masters to abuse a servant. If he did, then he lost his ownership immediately.

Laws Caused by or to Animals (28-32)

Because virtually everyone farmed in the ancient world, laws had to be put in place regarding animals. If it was written in our day, it might include laws related to automobiles.

28: If an ox kills a man, then the ox was to be killed. Once again we see the value of human life.

29-31: If the animal had a history of violence, and the owner did not properly monitor it, and it killed a person then the own was guilty of negligent homicide. If called for, a ransom could be paid. The same applied if the victim was a child.

32: If the victim was a servant, then it was different because of the social structure. Perhaps the servant was working closer to the animal by command of the master. If he was struck, then the owner was to pay the master thirty shekels.

Interestingly, this is the exact price **Judas** received for betraying Jesus. They paid thirty pieces of silver to gore Jesus on the cross. But his blood was of ultimate value. There at the cross, Jesus gave his life that we may have life.

#4 CONCERNING RESTITUTION (21:33-22:15)

These laws are about the loss of animals and property. They show us what would happen if someone “**got ripped off.**” So, they are **basic property** laws. The offender must make things right. He must make restitution. The required amount was related to the nature of the crime. The amount was normally multiples of the value of the loss.

Notice there was **no “jail sentence.”** Offenders had to deal face to face, they had to generously compensate the offended, and no one was paying for their time in prison. That’s just something to think about!

- Verses **33-36** deal with irresponsible action, like not covering a pit, or not watching one’s wild ox.
- Verses **1-4** deal with theft. (READ). Notice, like modern laws, there is a distinction in breaking an entering at night time verses the day time.
- Verses **5-6** involve cases of negligence that leads to the loss of someone’s property. (READ)
- Verses **7-13** deal with giving someone property for safekeeping, but having that trust breached (no banks in those days). (READ)
- Verses **14-15** deal with borrowed property. (READ)

Application:

- Now, in each of these cases, the laws are sensible. You must respect one another’s property.
- These laws were wonderful gifts because they showed people how to live in community, loving their neighbor as themselves. They also helped to solve disputes.
- By demanding more than the value of the item, it deterred possible criminals.

- It also protected life – the life of the thief. As mentioned, in other cultures, the thieves were killed. But God's law placed primacy on life, not possessions. And the punishment was to fit the crime. If the thief couldn't pay off his debt, then he was forced to work it off until the victim got what he deserved.

How do these property laws relate to us?

Let me ask you, is there anyone in the Bible who was a former thief, that experienced salvation in Christ, who went out immediately to make things right? Yes.

He was a little man who a big history of being a thief: **Zacchaeus**. The little man's repentance and transformation was evidenced by his words, "Behold, Lord, half my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." (**Luke 19:8**). He wanted to give to those in need, and return four-fold what he owed others.

Why? Because the gospel changes us – it creates in us a new heart of love for God and neighbor. The Gospel creates not just a heart to make things right with others that we have offended, but to go beyond love and serve and give generously.

#5: CONCERNING HOLINESS (16-20)

16-17: These verses relate to premarital sex, and relate to the seventh commandment. This is probably **mutual consent, not rape**. If it had been, the penalty would have been punishable by death (Deut. 22:25-27). The man here seduces the lady to have sex. The text shows us that anyone who commits this sin violates the purity of ladies, showing **blatant disregard for their worth**.

Here the man has the responsibility to provide for the lady, both through marrying the woman (unless the father utterly refuses) and by paying her father (see Deut. 22:28-29). So the consequent of premarital sex was huge.

This may seem like the lady was just property, but it actually shows two things: (1) the value of the lady. You can't run around and have sex. (2) family involvement in marriage.

Do you see how much God values purity? This is not the case in our **over sexualized culture today. More is spent on pornography than on pro baseball, football, and basketball; more are exposed to it than ever before. People think little about modesty.... **Facebook has become soft porn for some. Girls continue to show pictures of themselves at the beach in bathing suits. Can I just say, "Put a shirt on if you are going to put a picture on the worldwide web!"****

When people do see holiness, honor, and self-control. They are amazed by it. The girls all loved Edward in Twilight because he did not have sex with his girl. If a vampire is our model for purity, we are in a mess!

A lifestyle of holiness is still the calling of believers. Now we have great power with the Holy Spirit to live out this calling. Paul says:

[18] Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. [19] Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, [20] for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

(1 Corinthians 6:18-20 ESV)

You are doubly owned as a Christian! You are God's by creation and redemption. Your body is a temple. You have power through the Spirit to honor God with holiness.

[3] For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; [4] that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, [5] not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God

(1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 ESV)

I love how he says we should control our body in "honor." Oh, for a revival of honor in our day!

18-20: These next three offenses were broad overviews of capital crimes. Israel is called to be holy and worship God alone; therefore, these rules carry the ultimate consequent.

Each of the three cases mentioned in these verses made Israel unclean, and was also reasons God was about to judge the nations in Canaan (Lev. 20:22-26).

This seems to severe, but in one sense, **it is gracious**. Anyone engaged in these activities are turning from the real God hence God graciously warns them; and anyone engaged in them are also leading others astray.

#6: CONCERNING SOCIAL JUSTICE (22:21-23:9)

As most commentators suggest (see Alexendar, 184), this is a new section with a different emphasis, and can be seen as such based on three reasons: **(1)** The section is framed by verses related to the treatment of sojourners (22:21; 23:9); **(2)** Alexander also notes that the material is presented in a form more like the Ten Commandments than those in the previous section; **(3)** There are no penalties from a human court enforced (the only statement of a penalty is from God who says he will “kill you with the sword,” [v. 24], which may refer to Israel’s enemies being used as means of judgment); **(4)** The subject matter is different. It encourages a caring attitude toward the vulnerable and disadvantaged. God’s people are called not just to obey the laws, but they are called to care for those in need.

A. Compassion to the Sojourner, Widow, Fatherless (21-24, 22:9)

Sojourners. The call to care for sojourners is rooted in the fact that “they were once sojourners” in Egypt (21, 9). They are called to show the same type of care that they have received from God.

- This principle of caring for strangers also applies to **internationals** that flood our city, either for **school, work or as refugees**. Let’s be quick to welcome them, as Christ has welcomed us. Hospitality is rooted in the gospel.

Widow and Fatherless. "You shall not mistreat a widow or fatherless child."(22:22). Again, the taking advantage of these weaker groups is still a problem. I have a copy of a **Ugandan property title** that is a demo dee to pray for the struggle of widows and orphans who are often victims of injustice. When the husband dies, often corrupt individuals take over the land. Broken systems, and corrupt leadership often do not intervene. It says "Please use this replica title to pray for widows and orphans in Uganda awaiting the safety and security it provides."

The text adds that if anyone mistreats the widow and fatherless, then God will "kill them with the sword" and make their wives "widows," and children "fatherless." God expects his people to care for those in need. Widows were in great need in this society. They were alone and had a hard time surviving; so were orphans.

Now some may misinterpret this in thinking that if they're a widow, then they're cursed. Or if they're fatherless, then God has left them. That's not the case. Jesus already received your curse in your place (**Gal. 3:13**)!

- What you need to take from this verse is that God expects you to care for those in need **because he cared for you when you were in desperate need.** When you were **fatherless**, he adopted you; when you were a **widow**, he became your groom. When you were a **stranger** to his grace, he welcomed you. Those who know such love should be the very ones showing it.
- Notice also that it says that God will "**hear their cry.**" God hears the cry of the desperate. That's already been said in our study of Exodus.
- God hears their cry. Do you? Listen to one account of an orphan's experience of love:

I have written on this subject elsewhere, and I don't have time or space to say everything that should be said here. The OT and NT consistently give attention to these groups (Deut. 10:18, 14:28-29,

Deut. 24:17-22; 27:19; Zech. 7:10; Ex. 22:21-22; Ps. 10:14, 16-18, 68:5-6a, Ps. 82:3-4; 146:9; Isaiah 1:17-18; 1 Tim. 5:3-16; James 1:27).

Just remember that we are called to be “**imitators of God.**” And one of the major characteristics of our God is his care for those in need, including the widow, the orphan and the sojourner. Let me summarize my view with this Keller quote in *Generous Justice*:

When people ask me, “How do you want to be introduced?” I usually propose they say, ‘This is Tim Keller, minister of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City.’ Of course, I am many other things, but that is the main thing I spend my time doing in public life. Realize, then, how significant it is that the Biblical writers introduce God as a ‘father to the fatherless, a defender of widows’ (Psalms 68:4-5). This is one of the main things he does in the world. He identifies with the powerless, he takes up their cause (pg. 6)

One way we imitate God is by caring for the powerless. Don’t be indifferent. Indifference is sin. Don’t just be sympathetic. Sympathy is no substitute for action.

B. Compassion for the Poor (25-27).

25: Borrowing and lending our not forbidden in this law. It was exploiting the poor with exorbitant interest. Other verses in the Pentateuch show that God’s people were not to charge excessive interest to any other Israelite, not just the poor (Deut. 23:19-20). Once again, this is a command to show mercy and compassion.

26-27: This law addresses the properties people may put up for collateral for loans. A distinction is made between a poor person and the non-poor. Some of the poor may have to give “the shirt off their back.” If they have to pledge an essential item for survival to obtain a loan, they must be exempt from the requirement of putting up a surety, or have it returned to them at night.

It is amazing at the attention to detail that God gives here, especially to the poor. **Why** does he do this? “And if he cries to me, I will hear,

for I am **compassionate.**" (22:27). Again, we are to imitate God by showing compassion to the poor.

Jesus, God in the flesh, referred to this, and other ideas found in these case laws in Luke 6.

[27] "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, **do good to those who hate you** [28] bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. [29] To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. [30] **Give to everyone who begs from you**, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. [31] And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

[32] "If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. [33] And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. [34] And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. [35] But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. [36] **Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.**

(Luke 6:27-36 ESV)

Jesus takes things a step further. The motive is mercy. He says even those who don't know God love those who love them. So, be different! Love your enemies. And, give without expecting a return. Granted, there may be times that it is more merciful not to give to someone in need if you are supporting a lifestyle that is not pleasing to God; but there are times to simply give a gift.

In all things, be merciful as your Father is merciful. In so doing, you glorify your the Most High, who is kind to the "ungrateful and evil."

C. Respect for God and Leaders (28)

Ancient people understood the power of the tongue, perhaps more than those who live in a country with "free speech." They took the

Proverb seriously, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (18:21a).

One daily way that you live out a just life, with compassion and integrity is by **watching what you say** about God and others, especially leaders.

Paul and Peter both echo the call to respect those in leadership in the New Testament (Acts 23:5; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:1-2; 1 Pet. 3:13-17).

Other New Testament reference also speaks of the calling of Christians to respect those in leadership in the church, as well (cf., 1 Thess. 5:12).

D. Giving Offerings (29-30)

A love for God means that we give him those things that belong to him, including our gifts and offerings. Israelites may have been tempted to withhold these things, like people today, but such an act does not please God. “For God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7b).

Every firstborn son was in Israel was consecrated with an animal sacrifice (see Ex. 13). This showed that the whole family belonged to God.

E. Consecration (31).

This prohibition was due to the fact that the animal was ritually unclean, and it was probably given for health purposes.

God still wants pervasive holiness from his people. Jesus said,

“What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these things come from within, and they defile a person.”
(Mark 7:20-23).

Are you given careful attention to spiritual cleanness? Are you pursuing pervasive holiness?

F. Do Not Pervert Justice (23:1-3, 6-8)

1: These laws expand on **the ninth commandment**. Peterson says, "Don't pass on malicious gossip." (Message)

2: Speaks of not just following the crowd, if that means you are perverting justice.

3, 6-8: Notice how verses 3 and 6 cover both temptations, to side with the rich **or** with the poor. Verse 3 says don't be partial to the poor in a lawsuit, and verse 6 says don't pervert justice to the poor in a lawsuit. Verses 7-8 tell us that God expects justice, not partiality, and forbids taking bribes (which are worldwide problems today).

G. Loving Enemies (4-5)

These verses show us that loving our neighbor includes "our enemies." Instructions are given here for *helping* your neighbor, not just being civil.

This makes us think back to Luke 6. "Do good to those who hate you."

Once again, we can make several New Testament connections here, the first that comes to my mind is the story of the Good Samaritan. In that story, "neighbor" is anyone in need, and the example of love is someone that was normally despised, the Samaritan.

Application: Social Justice

This section calls attention to the need for Christians to reflect the mercy and justice of God in a broken world, by caring for the defenseless and oppressed. Part of the vision of IDC is just that "Care for the Orphan and the Oppressed." may God use us around the world to display his mercy and justice.

#7: CONCERNING SABBATH AND FESTIVALS (23:10-19)

As the Book of the Covenant continues, we come to laws regarding the Sabbath and three specific festivals. Concerning the Sabbath, the law says that it should be a day in which they **rest – including the animals, the servants and the sojourners (12)**. Not only this, **on the seventh year, the people should rest from sowing and gathering so that the poor might benefit from the land (10-11)**.

God then reminds the people to “pay attention to all that I have said to you, and make no mention of the names of other gods, nor let it be heard on your lips.” (13) God is not interested in partial or half-hearted obedience.

In remembering what God has done, he establishes three feasts.

- **First, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was established to celebrate their liberation (14-17).**
- **Second, the Feast of Harvest would celebrate God’s provision for his people.**
- **Third, the Feast of Ingathering, which is also the Feast of Booths or the Feast of the Tabernacle, would celebrate God’s salvation.**

The blood of the sacrifices was not to be offered with leaven, as it represented sin (18). Thus, getting rid of the leaven represented getting rid of sin.

Also, the firstfruits were to be used during the feasts (19). **The first and best of one’s harvest was given to God. God still deserves our best, not our leftovers.**

The **end of verse 19** is odd (also occurring in Lev. 19:19, Deut. 22:9). It may be a word against the against the creative order: don't take that which is source of life and use it as a source of death. But i think it probably forbids this because such a practice was in magical arts and fertility religions. God's people were to trust their Creator and Redeemer to make a flock strong. Even though surrounding countries were practicing pagan rituals, Israel was to abstain. **They were to glorify God alone for the giving of life and strength and health.**

These feasts point us to God’s salvation in some capacity, they ultimately point us to Christ. As Ryken puts it:

“The three major Old Testament feasts were rich in their teaching about salvation. Jesus Christ is the Savior God always planned to send; so

already in the Old Testament he gave his people experiences that would help them (and us) understand the meaning of their salvation. Jesus is the source of our sanctification, the firstfruits of our resurrection, the Lord of the harvest, the water of life, and the sacrifice for our sin. This is the gospel according to Moses, as recorded in Exodus 23.”

We Need a Savior!

In the sermon on the Ten Commandments, we finished by saying that the law drives us to Jesus, and Jesus enables us to keep the law.

If these laws demonstrate ways in which Israel was to live out the Decalogue, then we are left with that great application again. We can't keep God's law. But there is one who lived the life we couldn't live and died the death we should have died. Jesus obeyed for us, and died in place of law-breakers.

Because Jesus saves sinners, and gives us his Spirit, we can now glorify him with our daily lives in each of these seven ways (in a new covenant way).

- **Concerning worship, because of Jesus, we can now worship him in spirit and truth anywhere around the world.**
- **Concerning the workplace, all of our work is to be done as an act of worship to the Lord. We should do our work well to the glory of God. If we are employers, we should treat our workers well.**
- **Concerning behavior, we are to demonstrate an ethic that is characterized by integrity and sacrificial love. By the Spirit, we are called to live out the “one anothers” of the New Testament: “love one another,” “serve one another,” “pray for one another,” “outdo one another in showing honor.” We are to do these things earnestly, daily, and joyfully.**
- **Concerning restitution, we should seek to make all things right, and be generous since Jesus has been generous to us in granting us salvation.**

- Concerning holiness, we know God has given us his Spirit that we may bear the fruit of the Spirit, and not walk in the desires of the flesh.
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- Concerning social justice, we should desire to care for those who are weak and vulnerable because God cared for us when we were the orphan, the widow, the sojourner and the poor.
- Concerning Sabbath and Festivals, we too seek to remember God's grace, by worshiping him, resting in his grace, and taking the Lord's Supper.

This supper points us back to the Passover, back to our Lord's death, and then forward to the new kingdom to come. There, in that kingdom, we will finally know what it is to live like in a perfectly loving and just society. *There, the lion will lay down with the lamb. There, peace and righteousness will dwell.*

May God grant his fresh strength through the Spirit to love Him more passionately and love neighbor justly and compassionately.