

*CALLED
TO*

ACT

FOLLOWING JESUS IN TODAY'S CULTURE

*CULTURE FOLLOWING
JESUS IN
TODAY'S*

Crises facing America today

Virus pandemic

Economic fears

Protests

Riots

Racial conflicts

Spiritual apathy

Debate about police

National debt

Religious liberty restrictions

Political disagreements

Contentious elections

Dishonest politicians

Failing schools

Businesses shut down

Travel restrictions

Moral decay

What America needs to hear before election day

Daniel said, “Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him. It is He who changes the times and the epochs; **He removes kings and establishes kings**; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding. It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; **He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him.**”

Daniel 2:20-22

In today's hurting and fallen culture, what should Christ-followers know and do?

- We have willingly surrendered to follow Jesus.
- We have chosen to be people of God's Word.
- What have we committed to be and do?
- What are our responsibilities?

Subjects of the King

Leviticus 19:1-18

What are we reading?

- This passage is in middle of a Bible book about purity, sacrifice, the behavior of priests and Levites.
- For even the average ancient Israelite, this was esoteric stuff because it was only done by priests and Levites in the Temple.
- Most of Leviticus 19 is about relationships between people.
- ALL of this chapter is about **action** (not just “you shall believe”).
- Holiness comes from action.
- Holiness does not come from sitting and saying, “I believe.”
 - Faith is necessary but not sufficient for a life of holiness.

As Subjects of King Jesus...

- And on His robe and on His thigh He (Jesus) has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” Revelation 19:16
- Kings can't operate without subjects and subjects have to do stuff.
- A King with apathetic subjects can't do much.
- God our Eternal King set it up so that He does not rule directly, He uses human kings and presidents to rule and human subjects (His followers) to act.
- If the people of God are detached, they have no impact on society.
 - “You are so heavenly minded that you are no earthly good.”

Who needs these spiritual lessons?

- The nature of people has never changed... these instructions were written 3,000 years ago.
- Western society today was built on these principles.
- Familiarity breeds contempt and today's society has a contempt for history and tradition.
- If a culture rejects God, it will reject God's commands and instructions.
- Secular culture is so ignorant of the origins of their culture that they don't know that the values they think are universal (i.e. human lives matter) are actually Torah values written by the Lord Himself.
- These instructions are EXACTLY what our culture needs today.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: “Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them...”

Leviticus 19:1-2a

- God told Moses to gather all the people for a divine message, which does not happen often outside the experiences of Mount Sinai.
- God often said to Moses, “tell the people” or “command the people.”
- Why tell everyone these messages? Because societal health and peace depend on corporate understanding of and obedience to God’s commands.
- There is a parallel with this passage and the 10 Commandments.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: “Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘You (2nd person plural) shall be **holy**, for I the Lord your (2nd person plural) God am **holy**.’” Leviticus 19:1-2

- All followers of Messiah are called to be holy [קָדוֹשׁ qadosh].
- Why are the people of God to be holy? Because our King is.
- How are the people of God to be holy? By living a certain life.
- If only God would give us **specific** and **relevant** instructions.

How can the people of God be holy?

The rest of the chapter dispels any idea that holiness in the Tanakh (Old Testament) was merely a matter of ritual purity. It was to be displayed in every corner of practical life—from the corners of your beard to the corners of your fields. Holiness, therefore, was not something that you pursued by retreating from everyday life into some religious sanctum. Holiness meant transforming everyday life by the quality of behavior that was utterly different from the surrounding ways of the world.

– New Bible Commentary

Who is giving the instructions?

- 8 times in these 18 verses God says, “I am the Lord” or “I am the Lord your God”
 - “I am the Lord” Ani Yahweh אֲנִי יְהוָה
 - “I am the Lord your God” Ani Yahweh Elohekem אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
 - If you didn't get it yet, I will tell you again. “I am the Lord.” God never repeats Himself for no reason.
- The repetition is because there are many cases (especially when dealing with other people) when we have the opportunity to find a loophole or justify our actions.
- Man sees actions but God sees hearts AND actions. When seeking to be holy, both intentions and actions count.

“Every one of you shall reverence (fear) his mother and his father, and you shall keep My sabbaths; I am the Lord your God.” Leviticus 19:3

Why connect Shabbat and reverence of parents?

- Holiness begins in the home. Parents are to teach children about sabbath and worship.
- Contempt or neglect of the principle of a day of rest and cessation of economic activity was linked with greed and exploitation of the poor (Amos 8:4–6; Isaiah 58), which were particularly destructive of families (Micah 2:1–2, 9). – New Bible Commentary
- A child who learns to respect parents is also likely to respect God and flee from idolatry.
- Mother is respected so much in God’s plan that she is listed first here.

“Do not turn to idols or make for yourselves molten gods; I am the Lord your God.”

Leviticus 19:4

- Idols begin as physical objects or earthly ideas... they turn into gods when we begin to worship them and pursue them.
- We have been offered access to the One True God. Why settle for a manmade imitation which cannot satisfy one's soul?

“Now when you offer a sacrifice of peace offerings to the Lord, you shall offer it **so that you may be accepted**. It shall be eaten the same day you offer it, and the next day; but what remains until the third day shall be burned with fire. So if it is eaten at all on the third day, it is an offense; **it will not be accepted**. Everyone who eats it will bear his iniquity, for he has profaned the holy thing of the Lord; and that person shall be cut off from his people.” Leviticus 19:5-8

*When God gives specific instructions, we are called to follow them specifically

Do a proper thing with the correct intention

This looks like a piece of sacrificial law 'lost' from its proper context earlier in the book. The reason, however, for its repetition here in the midst of a chapter primarily devoted to social concerns is probably that the fellowship offering was the most social of all the sacrifices. The meat had to be eaten within two days, and so would have been shared with family, friends and neighbors. It thus inculcated **a spirit of generous sharing in the community** which matches the immediately following law. – New Bible Commentary

Why would a sacrifice to God not be accepted by Him? There is a right way to do things. Human nature is to cut corners.

“Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the Lord your God.” Leviticus 19:9-10

- Gleaning rights (Lev. 23:22; Deut. 24:19–22) were part of Israel’s system of welfare provision for the poor (i.e. those who lacked the normal security of a family, e.g. widows and orphans) and those who had no land and so had to live by selling their labor or skills (aliens, Levites, hired workmen).
- The relief of poverty in Israel, therefore, was built into economic and legal structures, not left as a matter of private charity. This law, typically of Old Testament law, addresses the issue not from the angle of rights but of responsibilities. That is, it assumes the right of gleaning, but commands the landowner to make sure there is something to be gleaned. - New Bible Commentary

Leviticus 19:9-10 describes charity given by the rich, but it also requires the poor to do something. It is not a simple handout.

- This passage does not say “leave your best fruit.”
- The Hebrew meaning is “leave your damaged (improperly shaped) clusters of grapes on the vine.” These grapes are good for eating but not for winemaking.
- In other words... don't go out of your way to take stuff you won't use knowing that you will throw it away later.
- This is a judgment call – how far do I go? What will I do with this when I get back to the wine press?
- “I am the Lord your God” ... reminder to check your motives because God sees your heart.

Those who possessed land (and other productive resources) may not have been responsible for the plight of the poor, but they were responsible to God to alleviate it. This law thus sets possession of resources in a framework of duty to God and others, and rejects the idea that private property is an absolute right, giving one freedom to extract every last drop of income or profit from one's assets. The point of this law is that, whatever the economic system, there must be adequate provision for the poor. Ownership confers responsibilities, not just privileges. And this is the practical meaning of holiness.

Earlier Biblical Instructions

“When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow, in order that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat your olive tree, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not go over it again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this thing.” Deuteronomy 24:19-22

And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." So she departed and went and **gleaned** in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, "May the Lord be with you." And they said to him, "May the Lord bless you." Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?" The servant in charge of the reapers replied, "She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab. And she said, '**Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.**' Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while." Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw." Ruth 2:2-9

“You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. You shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the Lord.”

Leviticus 19:11-12

לֹא תִגְזֹבוּ וְלֹא תִכְתְּשׁוּ וְלֹא תִשָּׁקְרוּ אִישׁ בְּעַמִּיתוֹ:

וְלֹא תִשָּׁבְעוּ בִשְׁמִי לִשְׁקֹר וְחִלַּלְתָּ אֶת־שֵׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה

All the “do nots” after “do not steal” have the Hebrew letter **wav** attached which means “AND.” This grammatical construct teaches that these commands are all connected (related).

What makes this a connected series? A logical progression...

1. לֹא תִגְנוֹבוּ Do not steal

2. וְלֹא-תִכְחַשׁוּ “don’t deal falsely” is literally the Hebrew phrase “don’t deny it”

3. Do not lie to one another – After denying it, the person will then lie about the stealing when challenged

4. “Don’t lie and swear by God’s name” – a person commits one transgression and soon has committed many, a major escalation of sin

Human nature says, “I am in this deep so what have I got to lose?”

5. Profane the name of the Lord – even if the person is not caught, God knows it

“You shall not oppress your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning.” Leviticus 19:13

- All of these commandments are a commentary on our human nature and these commands are very easy to ignore.
- These commands take diligence and consciousness to obey – that is why we disobey them so easily and so often... we forget.
- It is easy to remember and obey in church, not so easy out in the world. God is always watching us, we sometimes fail to watch Him.
- In this case... employers, you should pay your laborers promptly.
- In many parts of the world, day-laborers are still the most vulnerable and exploited part of the economy. The application of even minimal legislation like this verse, which at least allows the worker to buy his evening meal and so not go to bed hungry, would transform the lives of millions. – New Bible Commentary

Economic Class Warfare in America Today

“You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your countrymen or one of your aliens who is in your land in your towns. You shall give him his wages on his day before the sun sets, for he is poor and sets his heart on it; so that he will not cry against you to the Lord and it become sin in you.” Deuteronomy 24:14-15

The law should apply to immigrant, ‘guest-workers’, a most exploited group in the ancient as in the modern world. Jesus used the plight of such people to illustrate an even higher standard of generosity that went beyond the legal requirement (Matthew 20:1–16). The Tanakh (Old Testament) typically enshrines rights (in this case workers’ rights) in the form of responsibilities. Similarly, the human rights of the disabled are expressed in the command not to mock or take advantage of them (cf. Deut. 27:18; Prov. 17:5). This too is holiness.

““You shall not curse a deaf man, nor place a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall revere (fear) your God; I am the Lord.”” Leviticus 19:14

- If you should not curse someone who can't hear you, you should more so not curse someone who can hear you. Don't do stuff that you think you can get away with.
- In all prohibitions about speech, we consider the damage done to the recipient but fail to recognize the damage done to the speaker (moral rot).
- Blind can be literal but also a commentary on people who can't see things.
- You are sinning when you don't warn someone about something you see but they don't. Don't give people bad advice – give them the best insight you have.
- “Fear God, I am the Lord”
- You don't fear the deaf or the blind but you better fear (revere) Me. The deaf and blind are not normally revered (feared).
- If you fear God, then you won't do these things. God is creating a 3-way social contract... you, others, Him. He is writing Himself into the contract.

““You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly.”” Leviticus 19:15

- Fair judgment is about the facts (the actions) not the person.
- Today in America we are focused on who people are (race, gender, ethnicity), not what they do. That is part of the unraveling of our society.
- There should be justice in the courts for the rich and poor. You should not steal from the poor to give to the rich and you should not steal from the rich to give to the poor.

“You shall not go about as a slanderer (gossiper, talebearer רָכִיל) among your people, and you are not to act against the life (“blood” דָּם) of your neighbor; I am the Lord.” Leviticus 19:16

- Literal Hebrew is “Do not stand and Gossip/Slander.” This is the most emphatic call for action in this passage.
- When your neighbor is in danger, do not stand by and do nothing. You become an accomplice when you stand and do nothing.
- Doing nothing (standing by) is a transgression on the same level as all the others.
- This is what America needs right now... people of God who refuse to stand by and watch others get hurt.
- The “Good Samaritan” story told by Jesus (Luke 10) is about stepping up and doing something.
- If we are here to do good, who are we doing good for? God? He wants it but does not need it. We are to do good for our neighbors.
- If the people of God refused to slander and gossip, social media companies might go out of business.

““You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him.”” Leviticus 19:17

- Hate means some sort of reaction to something he has done.
- Approach a brother quietly so as not to embarrass him or bring shame.
- Don't be silent (in your heart)... say something. Rebuke him in the right way.
- For American citizens, the way you rebuke politicians is by voting.
- The last part of the verse reinforces the first part.
- “in your heart” – you feel wronged but you refuse to say so. That is not noble, it is sinful.
- Assume the brother does not know what he did. When you don't tell him, you are sinning and you are allowing him to sin and he does not know what he did is wrong.

““You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.”” Leviticus 19:18

- If I say no to you today because you said no to me yesterday, I am violating this verse.
- “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” ... this is how you maintain a healthy social environment. This is what America needs today. This will solve our racial problems.
- And you shall love אַהַבְתָּ ahavta (2nd person singular)
- Exact same wording as Deuteronomy 6:5 “**You shall love** the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”
- You can’t love the Lord your God with all your heart without loving your fellow man at the same time.
- Life as a follower of Jesus is bigger than a “to do” list.

Sound familiar?

- Leviticus 19:18 is Jesus' source document for Matthew 22:39.
- Leviticus 19:18 "love your neighbor as yourself" is quoted in the New Testament in Matthew 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31, 33; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8
- The ethical commands of this chapter are not arbitrary but are based on the just, humane, and sensitive treatment of the aged, the handicapped, the poor, the resident alien, the laborer, and others. These commands even reach behind mere outward behavior to inward motivation. - Bible Knowledge Commentary

How can a society be changed?

Holiness demands justice in the local community (Leviticus 19:15–18). In ancient Israel, the administration of justice was in the hands of the elders in each neighborhood. So it was vital that their integrity should not be marred either by inappropriate sympathy or undue deference (19:15), or by evil intent and false witness among the general public (19:16). The phrase actually refers to court action that threatened another party with a capital charge. So the harmony of a community depended not just on ‘the professionals’, but on the positive behavior of all in avoiding slander, hatred, vengeance and even grudges. It is typical of modern society that we blame all its ills on the failure of the courts, or the police, or social workers, while turning a blind eye to the real roots of any society’s malaise. The context of the second great commandment, therefore, shows us that to love your neighbor as yourself is not a matter of private feelings or interpersonal generosity only, but of practical social ethics in the public arena, including the legal process. This too is holiness.

- New Bible Commentary

“Be holy for I am holy”

- You might think holiness is going to church or singing praise songs. You might think holiness is keeping shabbat or eating kosher.
- But holiness is not just “spiritual” it is also social.
- These instructions to holiness are given after the 10 Commandments.
- They almost all end with “I am the Lord.”
- **This is more than a social contract, this is God saying that if you don’t take care of each other and take care of your society, you have violated “Be holy for I am holy.”**
- Leviticus 19 speaks to our roles and closes with “I am the Lord.”
- God says “I love you but you have to do stuff.”
- Remember who gave you the instructions. It not your job to sit idly by. It is your job to act.

Prescription for Revival in America

Leviticus 19:1-8

What should we do?

- Revere the family
- Prioritize sabbath worship
- Recognize the emptiness of idolatry
- Participate in joyful sacrifice to God alongside fellow believers
- Intentionally find ways to share resources with those in need
- Stop stealing and then denying it and lying about it
- Do not rob from your neighbor
- Be honest and timely in paying your bills
- Respect the labor of others
- Don't neglect or reject those with medical and physical struggles
- Make decisions with honest judgment and impartiality, treat people equally
- Stop slandering and gossiping
- Speak up (personally, directly and respectfully) when others hurt you
- Forgive others, do not bear grudges
- Love your neighbor as yourself

Prescription for Revival in America

Talk It AND Walk It

If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

1 John 4:20-21