

# Draw Near: The Gospel Shaped Life

## Leviticus 19:1-4

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Scripture → Leviticus 19:1-4

Prayer

**Big Idea:** When I am made righteous I will live right.

**When I say the word holy, what do you think?** For me I go to a room in my Mamaw's house. This was the room that no one dare enter except for holy days: Christmas, Thanksgiving, and possible birthday get together. **This sacred concept gets to the core of holiness: set a part for a specific purpose.**

If we are not careful, the idea of set apartness/holiness can conjure up ideas of holy rollers, Bible thumpers, and monasteries:

I heard once of an Italian peasant woman who happened to bump into a monk who lived in a monastery high on a hill above her village. She said "Father, I've always wanted to ask somebody what you men of God do up there on the top of the mountain that looks to me to be so close to heaven. I've always wondered about the life of holiness that you lead up there."

And this old man, a wise and honest interpreter, said, "What do we men of God do up there on the holy mountain? I'll tell you, my dear. We fall down; we get up. We fall down; we get up. We fall down; we get up."

What a beautiful picture of righteousness and holiness. It is not a man who is now living in his legalistic castle on his holy hill. Rather, holiness is a man convinced of his desperate need of daily grace who is walking steps of faithful humble obedience. **Holiness: God's people living God's way for God's glory and the good of others.**

**Leviticus shouts to us: God's people live differently.** **God's people live God's way.** Sixteen different times in Leviticus nineteen, God reminds that "He/I am the Lord." (19:2) Because He is the Lord we must Be Holy because He is. **Whatever God is- I want to be.**

**Some things are easier said than done.** Thankfully the Lord guides us. What we see in Leviticus 17-26 what scholars termed the "**Holiness Code**" or simply **practical ways to live out the truth of God in your life**. In fact, *"the religious life of faith must have ethical outcomes if it makes a claim to authenticity."* I cannot claim to be in God's community if I refuse to live God's way.

The people of God today, like the nation of Israel, are not completely defined by land borders or common language, WWJD bracelets, or homeboy t-shirts. **It is the living out of your faith that displays our trust in Yahweh.**

So important is the lifestyle of God's community, the NT emphasizes the love God and love your neighbor theme. The NT book of James is practically an extended commentary on Leviticus 19-20. The love your neighbor mandate is repeated in the New Testament in Matt 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14; and Jas 2:8, illustrating the central role of this command for the people of God in any era. **Be Holy as He is Holy. God wants His people to live His way for His glory and for the good of others.**

**How does this happen? The community of Christ is called to be Holy not make themselves Holy.** Moreover, the statement "be holy as I am holy" (Lev 19:2) corresponds to [Matt 5:48](#), "**Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**" Jesus seemingly exasperates the problem even more! **Be Holy + perfect = no chance!!**

**Here is our hope:** [Romans 3:26](#) God presented him (Jesus) to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so that he would be righteous and **declare righteous the one** who has faith in Jesus.

**You are not only challenged to be holy; through faith in Jesus Christ you are Holy because Jesus declared you holy.** God never asks you to live your strength. **He has prepared you, equipped you, and empowered you to live through the Holy Spirit.**

**How does the Gospel change our lives? God's people live God's way**

**The Gospel changes your family (19:3). Are you living God's way at home?**

The first command in the first section is a command to "respect," literally "fear" (*yr'*), one's parents. The verb *yr'* ("to fear") normally has God as its object, which underlines the devotion and reverence to be demonstrated to one's parents. Simply, **if you fear/honor God, you will honor your parents.**

The fact that the first admonition regarding holiness entails how to treat one's parents indicates that **holiness begins in the home.** Are you living God's way at home? **If a stranger spent the weekend in your home, would they know that Jesus changed your life?**

**This is not a task for little kids.** The reverencing of parents should include the taking care of one's parents **when they are old** as it probably does in the Ten Commandments.

Does your life proclaim: He/she honors dad because He loves his heavenly father? *Will you take time to honor your mother and father today? Note, Call, Text.*

## The Gospel changes your Community (19:9-19) Are you living God's way in the community?

**When you reap** (19:9). God commanded and thus built within his community a mandate to take care of the least, the poor, and the broken. We need to create margins in our financial lives so we can respond to needs as they arise. *There is no limit or minimum as to the pace or quantity to be left unharvested in the corners of the field. Tradition set the minimum at 1/60<sup>th</sup>.* **So next time you go to the ATM make sure you drop \$20 bills.**

This act of generosity was not a handout, but it was a means for those who were without property or who had fallen on bad times to be maintained (Ruth 2). By gleaning the corners and the leftovers of the field, the poor were spared the embarrassment of asking for charity. We give in a way to uphold the dignity of every person. **The Gospel changes the way you give to others.** Love = Holiness lived out for the good of others.

The Gospel changes the way I **speak**. *It's the orbit gum commercial: Dirty mouth? Clean it up* **The community of faith was not to "curse" the deaf.** The root of the word "**curse**" (*qll*) means **"to make light of, slight."**

**Why does God not want His people to curse the deaf?** The deaf cannot hear the curse and thus be unaffected. Rather, **God calls His community to live differently even if no one is looking or hearing.** *The cursing of the deaf then applies to FB, twitter, sub-tweets, gossip, slander, tangential prayer requests and any behavior that would "hurt the ears" of God. Even though the deaf cannot hear, the Lord can.* **The Gospel changes the way I speak to and speak of others.** Love = holiness lived out for the good of others.

## Are you living God's way in your romantic relationships? Particularly your physical relationships (19:20; 20:9; 20:13)

Leviticus 19:20 and 20:9+ clearly articulate a different sexual ethic for the people of God. Leviticus 20:13 further develops the necessity that **God's people must live according to God's design for intimacy.** Righteous sexual ethics are not only a OT concept.

In the NT Jesus goes right to the heart of the matter **in. Matt. 5:27** "You have heard that it was said, **Do not commit adultery.** <sup>28</sup> But I tell you, everyone who *looks* at a woman lustfully has **already committed adultery with her in his heart.** God desires **purity** in every aspect of your relationship. Sex is God's design. He designed them male and female. He designed sexual relationships with purpose, intentionality, and usefulness. And **he designed physical intimacy with God given boundaries.** When God said to Adam and Eve be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:27); He did not tell them to go have a Bible study.

If we do not let the Bible and the truth of God inform our view of sexuality and intimate relationships, something else will inform us. **Do not listen to the lie if it "feels right" it must be right. We must ask: What is God's way?**

Any man or woman who wants you to move in with them or violate the purity that God has given you and violate the sexual boundaries that the Lord has established within the construct of a marriage does not love you like the Lord. **Love = Holiness lived out for the good of others.**

Compared to married couples, cohabiting couples argue more, have more trouble resolving conflicts, are more insecure about their partners' feelings, and have more problems related to their future goals (Hsueh, Rhabar, Morrison, & Doss, 2009).

**So what are these boundaries?** God's design for sexual expression is always found within the context of a covenant marriage relationship between one man and one woman. This is God's way.

**Rom. 1:26** For this reason God delivered them over to disgraceful passions. Their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones.<sup>27</sup> The men in the same way also left natural relations with women and were inflamed in their lust for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the appropriate penalty of their error. (See also 1 Cor. 6:9)

Because of the Gospel we are called to Be Holy and pursue purity. We must reject a new "forward thinking" sexual ethic, we must reject the devastating lies of lust, pornography, intimate relationships with others who are not your spouse, sexting or sending inappropriate pics, and making light (joking) of anything that attacks the plan of God for marriage. **Church we must pursue purity: God's people live God's way.**

### **The Gospel changes the way you live Culturally (19:26-31)**

**Over and over again**, the truth of the Holy Scriptures reminds us that **culture does not define** the community of God, rather, the community of faith should transform culture. **Are you letting culture influence you or are you influencing those around you?**

Leviticus reminds you that you should reject any culture that tries to make you wear polyester (Lev. 19:19) **First, 19:27–28** These two verses prohibit cutting the hair on the side of the head or the beard<sup>163</sup> and cutting the body either for the dead or with tattoo marks.<sup>165</sup> These activities were practiced by pagans especially during times of mourning for the dead. The Israelites were **not to emulate pagan** practices in this regard since they maintained a sacredness for life and for the human body. **Do not let the culture define you. Let Christ define you.**

Its not about tattoos, or polyester, or hair cuts. It is about Holiness. **Do you believe in the Gospel in a way that transforms your culture?** Will God's people live God's way?

## Call

In 2010 a group of eight people from two churches felt called to the Detroit Boulevard neighborhood of Sacramento. It was known as one of the most notorious crime-ridden neighborhoods in all of **Sacramento**. Each house in that neighborhood was a place of danger.

Nonetheless this group of eight decided to walk through the neighborhood praying over each home and praying for the presence of Christ to reign over violence, addiction, and satanic oppression. They began walking through the neighborhood, **praying over each home**.

One of the eight, former Sacramento police officer and gang detective Michael Xiong, reported that "each time we prayed over the houses, we felt the weight of oppression becoming lighter." A woman from one of the houses confronted them.

The group soon physically moved into the neighborhood and started what they called Detroit Life Church. A couple years later a local newspaper, the *Sacramento Bee*, reported that there were no homicides, robberies, or sex crimes, and only one assault in Detroit Boulevard between 2013 and 2014.

**When God's people live God's way for God's glory and the good of others, lives change.**

Homes change  
Communities change  
Relationships change  
Cultures change

Do you believe in Jesus so that it makes a difference in your life? **You are not only challenged to be holy; through faith in Jesus Christ you are Holy because Jesus declared you holy.**

**This Memorial Day we declare: we will never forget the sacrifice of our Savior Jesus Christ who declared us righteous~**

**Here is our hope:** [Romans 3:26](#) God presented him (Jesus) to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so that he would be righteous and **declare righteous the one** who has faith in Jesus.

Sinful people – who have broken relationship with the Father- can be restored. Jesus lived a sinless life, died upon a cross, and rose again for you. Will you accept his sacrifice on your behalf today? Will you get right with the Lord?

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## Leviticus 19

**Kedoshim: Holy (adj) may be characterized as a brief Torah (JPS).**

Leviticus 19 is reflected both directly and indirectly in the teaching of the New Testament. Indirectly, the interdependence of holiness and love exhibited in this chapter is evident in the New Testament, particularly in 1 Peter. Moreover, James seems to have made conscious use of this chapter in his small epistle. L. K. Johnson has pointed out the **parallels between Leviticus 19 and the Book of James:**

Lev 19:2

Jas 5:12

Lev 19:13

Jas 5:4

Lev 19:15

Jas 2:1, 9

Lev 19:16

Jas 4:11

Lev 19:17b

Jas 5:20

Lev 19:18a

Jas 5:9

Lev 19:18b

Jas 2:8

James considered the Ten Commandments and the law of love expressed in Lev 19:12–18 as the “Royal Law” (Jas 2:8) and the “Law of Liberty” (Jas 1:25; 2:12) by which Christians are to live.

Also what might be considered the theme of this chapter (if not all of the Torah), “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” is repeated in the New Testament in Matt 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14; and Jas 2:8, illustrating the central role of this command for the people of God in any era. Moreover, the statement “be holy as I am holy” (Lev 19:2) corresponds to Matt 5:48, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Other laws in this chapter, on the other hand, **are time-bound and not directly applicable to believers in the church today**. For example, the law of mixtures (19:18) was a law that had a role in differentiating Israel from other nations, while the law forbidding eating of the fruit of the land of Canaan until the fifth year (19:23–25) would be restricted to this unique event. But the context of the entire chapter connects faith and ethics, love and holiness; it thus illustrates truths still applicable to the Christian life today. **In fact, “the religious life of faith must have ethical outcomes if it makes a claim to authenticity.”** The people of God today, like the nation of Israel, are not completely defined by land borders or common language. **It is their demonstration of ethics and holiness that characterizes their corporate identity.**

**Lev. 19:1** The LORD spoke to Moses: <sup>2</sup> “Speak to the entire Israelite community and tell them: Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.

God repeatedly reaffirms the concept of calling His people to emulate holiness. And God actually teaches his people to live in righteousness. You do not fall into holiness you learn it: from the Lord and His holy word. Holiness is only found in the instruction of the Lord.

**Rather: You Must be Holy! To have a relationship to God, the people must emulate God. As one of the sages put it: “It is comparable to the court of a king. What is the court’s duty? To imitate the king.” (JPS 125).**

**19:1–2** In vv. 1 and 2 of Leviticus 19 the Lord tells Moses to address the entire assembly of

Israel and admonish them to be holy as God is holy. The root for “holy,” *qdš*, connotes the idea of separation, indicating that God is commanding the nation to be different from the nations around them. This call is no different from the command given to the Israelites upon their arrival at Mount Sinai when God commanded the Israelites to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (*[wəgōy qādôš]*Exod 19:6). The reason the Israelites are to be holy is because (*kî*) God himself is holy. Those who identify with the Lord are thus to represent him to the world by emulating this attribute. Thus every statement about the moral nature of God in the Bible carries the implied demand that the believer exhibit this same quality in daily living. It is thus not possible to divorce ethics and theology, since human morality is justified by the nature of God.<sup>118</sup>

Another feature of the holiness of God’s people is noted by Eichrodt:

The holy God wills not only to separate his elect out of the world for his service by sanctifying them—separation being the normal meaning of holiness, when predicated of Man—but also to see the immaculate purity of his own nature, that which separates him from the sinful impurity of human living, reflected in a holy people.

**Lev. 19:3** “Each of you is to respect his mother and father. You are to keep my Sabbaths; I am the LORD your God. **4** Do not turn to idols or make cast images of gods for yourselves; **I am the LORD your God.**

I am the Lord your God is the theme and impetus for right living.

FEAR OF PARENTS (19:3a)

**19:3a** The first command in the first section is a command to “respect,” literally “fear” (*yr’*), one’s parents. The verb *yr’* (“to fear”) normally has God as its object, which underlines the devotion and reverence to be demonstrated to one’s parents. The fact that the first admonition regarding holiness entails how to treat one’s parents indicates that holiness begins in the home. The reverencing of parents should include the taking care of one’s parents when they are old as it probably does in the Ten Commandments. Respect for one’s parents is a subject that receives a great amount of attention in the Book of Proverbs (1:8; 6:20; 10:1; 17:25; 23:22; 29:3).

KEEP THE SABBATH (19:3b)

**19:3b** As honoring parents is the first response of holiness among human duties, so the keeping of the Sabbath is the first spiritual priority. The Sabbath law is the longest of the commands in the Ten Commandments, and the observance of the Sabbath was a special sign of the nation of Israel (Exod 31:13). Since the command to obey the Sabbath is based on creation (Gen 2:1–3), the rationale to refrain from work one day of the week may reflect on man’s inherent

need for rest.

There have been only two occasions in history, during the French and Russian revolutions, when cultures attempted to organize themselves around a ten-day cycle instead of a seven-day cycle. Both of these attempts were abandoned because workers were not able to function properly working nine consecutive days. The Sabbath law not only recognizes man's need to have a day of rest after a six-day work week but also to have a day set aside to draw near to God and discover the reason we work in the first place.

No rest leads to social disintegration and chaos. The importance of the Sabbath is also evident in Leviticus 23, where the Sabbath legislation occupies the first position in the discussion of Israel's worship calendar. The violation of this law also was singled out as the cause for Israel's exile from the land. The observance of the Sabbath has always been a defining law for the Jewish people. During the intertestamental period the Jews chose death rather than resisting the enemy on the Sabbath (*1 Macc* 2:31–38). This was because the observance of the Sabbath was viewed as “equal to all other precepts of the Torah” (*Exod Rabb* 25:12). Among some Jews the Sabbath day was considered a foretaste of the world to come.

#### TURN FROM IDOLATRY (19:4)

**19:4** The last of the commands in this short section is the prohibition of idolatry. The English word for idolatry comes via Greek *eidololatria*, which is based on a root that relates to that which strikes the eye, that is, the external appearance. The word thus focuses on the external image of an idol. The Hebrew word for idol is *'ēlîl*. The meaning of the root *'ll* is “to be weak, insufficient,” while the adjectival form of the root means to be “worthless.” The meaning of the term would be intended to be a commentary on those who would find themselves engaging in the worship of idols. False gods promise far more than they can deliver. Moreover, the attempt to represent the Creator with an object of his creation limits him. Idolatry was prohibited in Exod 20:21; 34:17; Lev 26:1; Deut 4:15–19, 25; 5:8. The manufacture of molten images was also prohibited. The “molten image” (*massēkâ*) was made by casting molten gold or silver into a mold and then shaping it with a tool (Deut 27:15; Isa 40:18–20). The term often occurs in the same context and is often parallel to *pesel*, “idol, image” (Deut 27:15; Judg 17–18; Isa 30:22; Hab 2:18; Ps 106:19; Nah 1:14). The molten image is frequently used for a carved image. The golden calf was a “molten image” (Exod 32:4, 24) as were the idolatrous calves made by Jeroboam at Bethel and Dan (1 Kgs 14:9). The creation of a “molten image” was prohibited by the law (here; Exod 34:17; Deut 27:15) and was condemned by the prophets and later writers (Isa 30:22; 41:29; 42:17; 44:10; Jer 10:14; 51:17; Hos 13:2; Hab 2:18; Ps 106:19). Small bronze images of Baal and Resheph and other deities have been uncovered at different archaeological sites.

**Lev. 19:5** “When you offer a fellowship sacrifice to the LORD, sacrifice it so that you may be accepted.

<sup>6</sup> It is to be eaten on the day you sacrifice it or on the next day, but what remains on the third day must be burned. <sup>7</sup> If any is eaten on the third day, it is a repulsive thing; it will not be accepted. <sup>8</sup> Anyone who eats it will bear his iniquity, for he has profaned what is holy to the LORD. That person is to be cut off from his people.

**Lev. 19:9** “When you reap the harvest of your land, you are not to reap to the very edge of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. <sup>10</sup> Do not strip your vineyard bare or gather its fallen grapes. Leave them for the poor and the resident alien; I am the LORD your God.

Here God prepares for the poor, and allows them the dignity of work.

There is no limit or minimum as to the pace or quantity to be left unharvested in the corners of the field. Tradition set the minimum at 1/60<sup>th</sup> (JPS, 127).

**19:9–10** The next section of laws deal with aiding the poor. The Israelites were not to glean the corners of the field nor gather the gleanings of the harvest. The “gleanings” (*leqet*) designate those ears of corn or grain that were inadvertently dropped by the harvester; the worker was not to work his way back over the field but rather leave the food for the needy. The poor were thus provided for, but they had to come and glean the portions of the field themselves.

This act of generosity was not a handout, but it was a means for those who were without property or who had fallen on bad times to be maintained (Ruth 2). By gleaning the corners and the leftovers of the field, the poor were spared the embarrassment of asking for charity.

What constituted a corner is not specified in the Law, but Jewish tradition set the minimum as one-sixtieth of a field. Regard for providing food for the poor is also mentioned in Exod 23:11; Lev 23:22; Deut 24:19 and is the underlying concern for the restoration of the land during the Year of Jubilee (Lev 25). The poor were also to receive a special tithe every third year (Deut 14:28–29; 26:12–15). God himself is characterized as one who cares for the poor and needy (Pss 132:15; 146:7). Hence a person characterized by greed, covetousness, or stinginess cannot be a holy person.

**Lev. 19:11** “Do not steal. Do not act deceptively or lie to one another. <sup>12</sup> Do not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God; I am the LORD.

STEALING, FALSE SWEARING PROHIBITED (19:11–12)

**19:11–12** The next subsection of laws begins with a call not to pervert justice whether for the

advantaged or the disadvantaged. Though the Old Testament has much to say about aid to the poor (e.g., 19:9–10), it is wrong for this attitude to carry over in the realm of the legal system.

The Israelite was also not to swear falsely and thereby profane God's name (19:12). Budd believes that this law was not directed toward a legal context but spoke to the issue of keeping promises or oaths. If his interpretation is accurate, the law addresses what is at issue in the Third Commandment, taking the name of the Lord in vain (Exod 20:7; Deut 5:11).

**Lev. 19:13** “Do not oppress<sup>a</sup> your neighbor or rob<sup>b</sup> him. The wages due a hired worker<sup>c</sup> must not remain with you until morning. <sup>14</sup> Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind,<sup>a</sup> but you are to fear your God;<sup>b</sup> I am the LORD.<sup>c</sup>

#### BE RESPECTFUL OF OTHERS (19:13–14)

**19:13–14** The Israelite was also not to oppress his neighbor (19:13). Oppression may take on one of various forms, including the withholding of daily wages (see Deut 24:15). This subsection of laws also addresses the proper treatment of the handicapped (19:14).

**The Israelite was not to “curse” the deaf.** The root of the word “curse” (*qll*) means “to make light of, slight.” The word occurs 128 times in the Old Testament and is semantically opposite the root *kbd*, which means “to make heavy” and by extension “to honor.” Those who “make light of” Abraham (*qll*) God will curse (*'rr*, Gen 12:3). These laws should be taken as general principles. They are not limited to the specific situations listed here. As Fee and Stuart have noted:

It is fairly obvious that such laws are not exhaustive, however. Look closely, for example, at the harvesting welfare laws in verses 9 and 10. Note that only field crops (wheat, barley, etc.) and grapes are actually mentioned. Does that mean that if you raised sheep or harvested figs or olives, you were under no obligation to share your produce with the poor and resident alien?... The statements in the law were intended as a reliable guide with general applicability—not a technical description of all possible conditions one could imagine. Likewise, if you harmed a dumb person, or one crippled or retarded, would you still have kept the command of verse 14? Certainly not. The “deaf” and the “blind” are merely selected examples of all persons whose physical weaknesses demand that they be respected rather than despised.

God looks after those who are disadvantaged even though the deaf may not be aware of those who curse them nor the blind of those who put obstacles in their way. One who fears God (19:4b) will not mistreat the disadvantaged. The proper treatment of the poor is a subject of concern in legal (Exod 22:25; Lev 23:22; Deut 15:11; 24:12, 14, 15) and wisdom literature (Prov 14:21; 15:15; 31:20). In Deut 27:18 a man is cursed if he misleads a blind man.

**Why does God not want His people to curse the deaf? The deaf cannot hear the curse and thus be unaffected.**

Rather, God calls His community to live differently even if no one is looking or hearing. The cursing of the deaf then applies to FB, twitter, sub-tweets, gossip, slander, tangential prayer requests and any behavior that would “hurt the ears” of God. Even though the deaf cannot hear, the Lord can.

**Lev. 19:15** “Do not act unjustly<sup>a</sup> when deciding a case. Do not be partial<sup>b</sup> to the poor or give preference to the rich;<sup>c</sup> judge your neighbor fairly. **16** Do not go about spreading slander<sup>a</sup> among your people; do not jeopardize<sup>b</sup> your neighbor’s life; I am the LORD.

#### BE IMPARTIAL (19:15)

**19:15** Even though those who are disadvantaged are to be treated properly, no special favors are to be given to the poor in judicial settings (19:15; see Exod 23:3). All proceedings are to be characterized by justice, just as God is just (Job 36:3; Pss 85:10; 89:14; 97:2; 119:42; Isa 42:6; 45:18, 19; Jer 11:20; Hos 2:19).

**Lev. 19:17** “Do not harbor hatred against your brother.<sup>a,b</sup> Rebuke your neighbor directly, and you will not incur guilt because of him.<sup>c</sup> **18** Do not take revenge<sup>a</sup> or bear a grudge against members of your community, but love your neighbor as yourself;<sup>b</sup> I am the LORD.

**Lev. 19:19** “You are to keep my statutes. Do not crossbreed two different kinds of your livestock, sow your fields with two kinds of seed, or put on a garment made of two kinds of material.<sup>a</sup>

An individual should not allow ill feelings to fester; rather, he should confront his kinsman and admonish him directly, in this way avoiding grudges and vengeance and breed hatred (JPS, 129).

#### HARBOR NO ILL FEELINGS (19:16–18)

**19:16–18** The next laws deal with proper conduct in interpersonal relationships (19:16–18). The Israelite was not to spread slander about others or do anything that would put a neighbor’s life in jeopardy (19:16). One should not hate his brother but should rebuke him when he is in sin and thus not share in his guilt (19:17; Gen 21:25; Prov 9:8; 28:23; Job 40:2). This command may be the legal background behind God’s commission to Ezekiel to act as a watchman. If Ezekiel did not warn his brothers who were in sin, God held him accountable, and he was subject to punishment (Ezek 3:18, 33:6, 8). The word “rebuke” thus has an instructional connotation as seen in its use regarding children in Prov 3:12, 28:23. The corrective rebuke would not involve seeking revenge or bearing a grudge but rather loving your neighbor as yourself (19:18). Love for neighbor and coming to the aid of enemies is also included in other sections of Israel’s legal code (Exod 23:4–5, Deut 22:1–4). Kellogg captures the connection between rebuke and love: “Most instructive it is to find it suggested by this order, as the best evidence of the absence of hate, and the truest expression of

love to our neighbor, that when we see him doing wrong we rebuke him.” This statement, “love your neighbor as yourself,” forms a climax to this first major section, and it was regarded by some as the central principle of the Law.<sup>146</sup> The significance of the verse is also highlighted by the fact that Jesus and Paul both cited this verse as a summary of the duties one has to his fellow man (Matt 22:39–40, Rom 13:9)

**Lev. 19:23** “When you come into the land and plant any kind of tree for food, you are to consider the fruit forbidden.<sup>a</sup> It will be forbidden to you for three years; it is not to be eaten. <sup>24</sup> In the fourth year all its fruit is to be consecrated as a praise offering<sup>a</sup> to the LORD. <sup>25</sup> But in the fifth year you may eat its fruit. In this way its yield will increase for you;<sup>a</sup> I am the LORD your God.

**Lev. 19:26** “You are not to eat anything with blood in it.<sup>a,b</sup> You are not to practice divination<sup>c</sup> or witchcraft.<sup>d</sup> <sup>27</sup> You are not to cut off the hair at the sides of your head or mar the edge of your beard.<sup>a</sup> <sup>28</sup> You are not to make gashes on your bodies for the dead<sup>a</sup> or put tattoo marks on yourselves; I am the LORD.

**19:26a** The next series of laws continues to address how the Israelites were to conduct themselves when they occupied the land of Canaan. These laws deal primarily with Canaanite pagan practices, which the Israelites were to avoid. First, they were commanded not to eat the flesh of a slaughtered animal with the blood still in it (*‘al haddām*).

**19:26b** Humans have always been naturally curious about the future, wondering whether blessings or dangers possibly await them. In the pagan world of the ancient Near East many believed that insight into the future was possible through divination and sorcery. Pagans often employed divination and sorcery to try to determine what events would soon transpire. Divination and sorcery were widespread in the ancient Near East, particularly in Mesopotamia and Egypt.<sup>159</sup> Techniques of divining include leconomancy (Gen 44:5), belomancy (Ezek 21:26; Hos 4:12), and oneironancy (1 Sam 28:6; Gen 37:5–11; 41:1–36).

Magic and divination were practiced in civilizations that had contact with Israel in biblical times (Num 23:23; 1 Sam 6:2; Isa 44:25). These practices were categorically condemned in the Old Testament (Deut 18:10; 2 Kgs 17:17; 21:6; 2 Chr 33:6; Isa 2:6; 57:3; Jer 27:9). The Israelites had access to information about future events only if God chose to reveal this information to them. Thus revelation is diametrically opposed to divination. Also while revelation necessitates divine self-disclosure, in divination the initiative is taken by the diviner. When the Israelites had no revelation from God, they were to walk by faith and seek to obey his revealed will in the law.

**19:27–28** These two verses prohibit cutting the hair on the side of the head or the beard<sup>163</sup> and cutting the body either for the dead or with tattoo marks.<sup>165</sup> These activities were practiced by pagans especially during times of mourning for the dead. The Israelites were not to emulate pagan practices in this regard since they maintained a sacredness for life and for the human body.

In Elijah's contest with the cult prophets of Baal, recounted in 1 Kings 18, we read that the pagan priests gashed themselves as they called upon Baal to answer their prayer.

**Lev. 19:29** “Do not debase<sup>a,b</sup> your daughter by making her a prostitute,<sup>c</sup> or the land will be prostituted and filled with depravity. **30** Keep my Sabbaths and revere my sanctuary;<sup>a</sup> I am the LORD.

**Lev. 19:31** “Do not turn to mediums<sup>a,b</sup> or consult spiritists,<sup>c,d</sup> or you will be defiled by them; I am the LORD your God.

**Lev. 19:32** “You are to rise in the presence of the elderly and honor the old.<sup>a</sup> Fear your God; I am the LORD.

**Lev. 19:33** “When an alien resides with you in your land, you must not oppress<sup>a</sup> him. **34** You will regard the alien who resides with you as the native-born among you. You are to love him as yourself,<sup>a</sup> for you were aliens in the land of Egypt;<sup>b</sup> I am the LORD your God.

**Lev. 19:35** “Do not be unfair<sup>a</sup> in measurements of length, weight, or volume. **36** You are to have honest balances,<sup>a</sup> honest weights, an honest dry measure,<sup>b</sup> and an honest liquid measure;<sup>c,d</sup> I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. **37** Keep all my statutes and all my ordinances and do them; I am the LORD.”

#### HARLOTRY AND SABBATHS (19:29–30)

**19:29–30** In vv. 29–30 the Israelites are given three commands: (1) not to degrade their daughters by making them prostitutes, (2) observance of the Sabbath Day, and (3) reverence for the sanctuary. Although these commands seem to defy a unified classification, in Ezek 23:36–39 the Israelites in the exile were guilty of violating these same three laws.

#### DIVINATION (19:31)

**19:31** The Israelites were not to turn to mediums or spiritists<sup>169</sup> who sought communication with the dead. This was a common Canaanite practice (19:31; see Lev 20:6, 27; Deut 18:11; 1 Sam 28:3, 9; 2 Kgs 21:6; 23:24; Isa 8:19; 19:3). The word “medium” (*'ōbōt*) is used of the pit from which the spirits are called up, the spirit of the dead, or as here the necromancer. The Septuagint nearly

always translates *’ôb* with the Greek word *eggastrimuthos*, “ventriloquist.” This translation may indicate a deception used on the part of the necromancer to deceive others into thinking he was actually calling up the dead.<sup>172</sup> This command was violated by King Saul in 1 Sam 28:3–25.

#### ELDERLY, STRANGER, JUST BALANCES (19:32–37)

**19:32–37** The final list of commands addresses respect for the elderly, and the alien, as well as fair business practices. Respect for the elderly is essential for maintaining a decent society, so failure to respect and care for the aged indicates that a given culture is about to collapse (Isa 3:5). Proper treatment of the alien<sup>175</sup> is a common theme in the Old Testament that often is juxtaposed, as in this context, to the reality that the Israelites themselves were once slaves in the land of Egypt (19:36; see Exod 22:21; 23:9; Deut 10:19; 24:17–18).

Honest business practices are also a common biblical theme (Deut 25:13–16; Prov 11:1; 16:11; 20:10, 23; Hos 12:7; Mic 6:11). The Israelite priests apparently had the role of monitoring just measurements (Exod 30:13, 24). Kaiser rightly asserts, “Holiness does not allow for dishonesty in the marketplace.”

The chapter closes with a call to obedience, which summarizes the essence of the entire chapter (19:37). Although obedience is not the means to God’s favor, it is the proper and necessary response to God’s benevolence.

#### Family and Sexual sins

**Lev. 19:20** “If a man has sexual intercourse with a woman who is a slave designated for another man, but she has not been redeemed<sup>a</sup> or given her freedom, there must be punishment.<sup>b</sup> They are not to be put to death, because she had not been freed.<sup>21</sup> However, he must bring a ram as his guilt<sup>a</sup> offering to the LORD at the entrance to the tent of meeting.<sup>b</sup> <sup>22</sup> The priest will make atonement on his behalf before the LORD with the ram of the guilt offering for the sin he has committed, and he will be forgiven for the sin he committed.

**19:20–22** Verses 20–22 deal with a man who has sexual intercourse with a slave girl who had been promised to another man (Exod 21:7–11; 22:16–17; Deut 22:23–27). Since she was still a slave, the guilty parties were not given the death penalty. Rather there was to be “due punishment” and the guilty man had to offer a guilt offering to the priest to atone for his sin. This punishment rendered the man guilty of adultery even though capital punishment was not prescribed.<sup>152</sup> It is worth noting that only the man was considered blameworthy, not the female slave. Being a slave, the woman may have felt she had little recourse in resisting a male who was a free man and thus more powerful both in the social and economic spheres. That the free man must bear responsibility is suggested by the fact the female slave was not required to bring the guilt offering sacrifice.

**20:13** If a man sleeps with a **man as with a woman**, they have both committed a detestable act. They must be put to death; their death is their own fault. **14** If a man marries a woman and her mother, it is depraved. Both he and they must be burned, so that there will be no depravity among you.

**Rom. 1:24** Therefore God delivered them over in the desires of their hearts to sexual **impurity**, so that their bodies were degraded among themselves.

**Rom. 1:26** For this reason God delivered them over to disgraceful passions. Their women exchanged **natural** sexual relations for **unnatural** ones. <sup>27</sup> The men in the same way also left natural relations with women and were inflamed in their lust for one another. Men committed **shameless** acts with men and received in their own persons the appropriate penalty of their error.

**1 Cor 6:9** Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be deceived: No sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or males who have sex with males,

**Righteous sexual ethics are not only a OT concept. Throughout the Scriptures the Lord desires His grace and Holiness shape the way His people live sexually.**

**There is a third option: sex is Godly**

- It is God's design that we are male and female.
- Sex has purpose, design, and usefulness
- Within its boundaries sex is righteous

**Matt. 5:27** "You have heard that it was said, **Do not commit adultery.** <sup>28</sup> But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. <sup>29</sup> If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Sexual expression is always an outflow of the heart not simply hormonal.

The righteousness of Jesus Christ radically shapes our relationships. Particularly our physical relationships.

If we do not let the Bible and the truth of God inform our view of sexuality and intimate relationships, something else will inform us.

## Illustrations

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The alert turned out to be false, an epic—almost unbelievable—mishap. A state employee had

## Application

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How does the Gospel change our lives?

Family (19:3)

Community (19:9-19)

Sexually (19:20-22)

Culturally (19:26-31)

Least of these (19:32-34)