

“Our LORD & Moral Purity”

Leviticus 18-20

March 25, 2018

INTRO: Let me ask you a few questions as we begin...

- What is the **biggest problem** in church today?
 - Insider’s understands: A = **“deception”**
 - Outsider’s perception: A = **“hypocrisy”**
- What’s the **most controversial** biblical truth?
 - Insider’s understand: A = **Jesus is LORD!**
 - Outsider’s perception: A = **Bible authority**
- What’s the **most quoted O.T. verse** in the N.T.?
- What O.T. chapter best **paraphrases Jesus**?
- What if I told you we’re taking all that on today?

*Today’s Bible passage is BOTH a cultural lightning rod
AND a spiritual flood light... simultaneously!*

Welcome to Leviticus ch.18-20!

“Our LORD & Moral Purity”

BIG IDEA: *GOD’s values, as revealed in the **vault** of His Word, should both shape & evaluate OUR values & behaviors on our journey with Jesus to **victory!***

T/S: Remember 2 Timothy 3:16-17!

VIDEO: *Why Does Leviticus Show Up Here...*

Dr. Jay Sklar – Covenant Seminary

PREVIEW: Our VAULTS... VALUES... & VICTORIES

T/S: My goal = *Context... Content... Construction in Christ!*

I. Our VAULTS *(our trusted truths & treasures)*

- a. Culture's "worldly ways"
- b. Creator Christ's Word & walk

*Everyone loves Jesus – until they read what he really taught....
(Moreover, in the contemporary church, today), faith has
become a matter of taste, over a matter of truth...*

*"The modern-day (false) gospel says, 'God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. Therefore, follow these steps, and you can be saved.' - Meanwhile, the (true) biblical gospel says, 'You are an enemy of God, dead in your sin, & in your present state of rebellion, you are not even able to see that you need life, much less cause yourself to come to life. Therefore, you are radically dependent on God to do something (miraculous) in your life that you could never do.'" – David Platt, **Radical***

II. Our VALUES *(our principles & priorities)*

(Texts, Types of law, Timeless Truth, Troubling People & Practices)

a. Texts

i. *Leviticus 18 summary* (per ESV Study Bible)

The rules from [ch. 18](#) onward aim to lead the people to holiness. ...avoiding such conduct as practiced in Egypt and particularly in Canaan is the minimal requirement for the people to become holy. ...it is important to see both the laws original context and their underlying and abiding principles. ...the laws in this chapter can be seen as commanding the people to avoid any action that ignores the order that God revealed in his creation...

ii. *Leviticus 19 summary* (per ESV Study Bible)

In [ch. 19](#) the Lord strongly commands the people (including the priests) to become holy in their practice, as he is holy ([v. 2](#)).... by observing *all* the commandments. ...the topics in this chapter show that holiness must be practiced in every sphere of one's life... Many of these rules (e.g., [Lev. 19:9-18](#)) are oriented toward the Israelites' functioning as a loving community, serving one another's well-being.

iii. *Leviticus 20 summary* (per ESV Study Bible)

The rules in [ch. 20](#) have much in common with those in [ch. 18](#). This chapter, however, sets forth and stresses the punishments for violating the rules. Special emphasis is laid on Molech worship and mediums/fortune-tellers. Almost all the crimes listed are punishable by the death penalty.

VIDEO: *Leviticus... Why so UNPOPULAR*

Dr. Jay Sklar – Covenant Seminary

[One commentary summarized things this way:](#)

- I. **Our Holiness Arises from a Relationship with God**
- II. **We Demonstrate Holiness in Our Relationships via:**
 - A. Faithful-Obedience
 - B. Generosity
 - C. Honesty
 - D. Sympathy
 - E. Fairness
 - F. Mercy
 - G. Purity
 - H. LOVE
- III. **Our Holiness Requires Living by Distinct Contrasts.**

b. **Types of Law (3):** (like VT vs. MD vs. federal)

- i. Civil – set apart in our walk & our work
- ii. Ceremonial – set apart in reverent rituals
- iii. Eternal/Christian – set apart in all... worship!

You & I can choose to continue with business as usual in the typical Christian life & church... exalting success based on the standards defined by the culture around us... OR... we can take an honest look at the Jesus of the Bible, and dare to ask what the consequences might be if we really believed him... and if we really obeyed him. – David Platt, Radical

1. Law of Christ

- a. Galatians 6:2
- b. 1 Corinthians 9:20-21
- c. James 2:8 = the “*royal law*”
- d. Matthew 5’s “beatitudes”
- e. John 14:15 & 20:21

c. Timeless Truths:

- i. **19:2** *“Be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy”*
- ii. **19:18** *“Love your neighbor as yourself”*

d. Troubles: (“Palm Sunday” example!)

i. Troubling-People:

1. Universalism

- a. Theological universalism...
- b. Practical universalism...

2. Liberalism

- a. Anything goes – “Libertines”
- b. Cheap-grace... holy-hypocrites...

“We live in a church culture that has a dangerous tendency to disconnect the grace of God from the glory of God. Our hearts resonate with the idea of enjoying God’s grace. We bask in sermons, conferences, and books that exalt a grace centering on us. And while the wonder of grace is worthy of our attention, if that grace is disconnected from its purpose (brining glory to God), then the sad result is a (FALSE) self-centered Christianity that bypasses the heart of God (and the truth of the Gospel).” – David Platt, Radical

3. Legalism

4. Traditionalism (much of Protestantism)

- a. *Catholicism*
- b. *Adventism*

5. Hyper-Calvinism

ii. Troubling-Practices:

VIDEO: *Christian Inconsistencies with the Law*

Dr. Jay Sklar – Covenant Seminary

1. ***Future-telling vs. faith-teaching***
2. ***Giving our mere “leftovers & crumbs”***

Before the judgment seat of Christ, my service will be judged, not by how much I have done, but by how much I could have done... Not by its size is my gift judged, but by how much of me there is in it... No man gives anything acceptable to God until he has first given himself in love and sacrifice.... In the work of the church the amount one man must do to accomplish a given task is determined by how much or how little the rest of the community is willing to do. It is a rare church whose members all put their shoulder to the wheel. The typical church is composed of the few whose shoulders are bruised by their faithful labors and the many who are unwilling to raise a blister in the service of God and their fellow men... "Help me to give of myself completely today, Lord. I hold nothing back, even if at the end of the day I'm the only one with a bruised shoulder. Amen." – A.W. Tozer

3. Mandatory Sabbath-keeping

- a. **Romans 14:5ff** – *NOT about a day*
- b. **Colossians 2:16**

*“Therefore, let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food & drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon, **or a Sabbath.**” (NOTE: annual, monthly, weekly ref.)*

- c. **Mark 2:27** (*Sabbath for man, NOT...*)
- d. *“The LORD’s Day” = 8th day / Sunday*
- e. 1 of 10 commandments **NOT in N.T.**

4. **Active Homosexuality** (ALL promiscuity)

Embracing any “abomination” is evil – period! -JDP

This week Lesbian ministers making out in the pulpit

5. **Child sacrificing/murder:**

“When you kill the MOST innocent & vulnerable amongst you & call it ‘choice’ or ‘mercy,’ you’ve merely modernized the altar of Molech and turned into the altar of ME.” - JDP

III. Our VICTORIES *(our holy, hope-filled/helpful life)*

A. **Love wins!**

- B. Remember the meaning & message of Leviticus...
Leviticus is NOT a list of laws & rules... but rather a loving blueprint for lasting restoration!

We learn from the temporal laws & live out the love-centered eternal laws... that’s Christianity! - JDP

VIDEO: *“Must Christians Obey O.T. Laws?”*

Dr. Thomas Schreiner – Southern Seminary

T/S: Let me leave you with a timeless tool that will help you (and others) to tackle this challenge in the future...

C. 5 Telescoping Truths: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5!

1 Creator Jesus is LORD! Christ is KING!

“Jesus was not, and never is, interested in being seen as a respectable teacher. He is the sovereign Lord. He doesn't give options for people to consider; he gives commands for people to obey.” — David Platt, Radical

2 Covenants (old & new)

3 Categories (of biblical Law) *Civil, Ceremonial, Eternal*

4 Consistencies

- a. Commanded (again) in the N.T. *(a prescription)*
- b. Carried-over into the N.T. *(a description)*
- c. Christ-modeled in the N.T. *(a reflection)*
- d. Church-championed in the N.T. *(an ambition)*

5 Consequences *(5 great consequences)*

- a. Great **Commandments** *(love in truth & truth in love)*
- b. Great **Commission** *(Go make disciples!)*
- c. Great **Combat** *(Spiritual warfare)*
- d. Great **Christian** *(You will BE My witness!s)*
- e. Great **Church** *(ekklessia in koinonia & homothoomadon)*

You will be My called-out, set-apart, sent-ones. You'll BE My Ambassadors... My aroma... My supernaturally-unified, Spirit empowered, mission-driven, riotously passionate people... living & loving by God's grace and FOR God's glory!

CLOSE:

I pray that today you saw our LORD & His love
in Leviticus!

In many ways...

I think of Leviticus 18-20 like Jesus' Sermon on the Mount

[Come & See Christianity!](#)

19:2 *"Be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy"*

19:18 *"Love your neighbor as yourself"*

With the task of taking the gospel to the world, Jesus wandered through the streets and byways... All He wanted was a few men who would think as He did, love as He did, see as He did, teach as He did and serve as He did. All He needed was to revolutionize the hearts of a few, and they would impact the world."

"Disciple making is not a call for others to come to us to hear the gospel but a command for us to go to others to share the gospel." — David Platt, Radical

Let's PRAY

VIDEO: *"O Come To The Altar"*

STUDY Notes/Research

18:1-30 Prohibitions against Pagan Practices. The rules from ch. 18 onward aim to lead the people to holiness. Though the term “holy” or “holiness” is not mentioned in ch. 18, avoiding such conduct as practiced in Egypt and particularly in Canaan is the minimal requirement for the people to become holy. In reading the laws, it is important to see both their original context and their underlying and abiding principles. From the latter viewpoint, the laws in this chapter can be seen as commanding the people to avoid any action that ignores the order that God revealed in his creation. In this sense, the prohibited acts in this chapter are representative (i.e., nonexhaustive) examples.

ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version.

19:1-37 Call to Holiness. In ch. 19 the Lord strongly commands the people (including the priests) to become holy in their practice, as he is holy (v. 2). One becomes practically holy by observing all the following negative and positive commandments. Some of the commandments in vv. 3-18 are similar to the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:2-17), and the topics in this chapter show that holiness must be practiced in every sphere of one’s life. Some of the rules are grounded in the fact that the Lord is the One who saved the Israelites from the bondage in Egypt. Many of these rules (e.g., Lev. 19:9-18) are oriented toward the Israelites’ functioning as a loving community, serving one another’s well-being.

19:1-4 Holiness here refers first and foremost to the essential nature of God. The term **holy** means “set apart, unique, and distinct,” and holiness in humans ordinarily refers to their being set apart for service to God (see note on [Isa. 6:3](#)). Human holiness is the imitation of God, i.e., becoming and acting like him.

19:5-8 Sacrifices are to be made in a specific way, namely, according to God’s commands. If they are not carried out in the prescribed manner, then the offerer has **profaned** that which is **holy**.

19:9-10 Thorough harvesting may reflect coveting and greed. Caring for one’s neighbor and helping provide for the **poor** and the **sojourner** displays holiness. (For a literal observance of these rules, and for kindness that goes well beyond the simple legal requirement, see [Ruth 2](#).)

19:11-18 This section refers often to the Ten Commandments. Holiness requires that a person keep the Word of God and, in particular, the fundamental moral law enumerated in the Ten Commandments.

19:11-12 Dishonesty in human relationships is prohibited. When someone swore an oath, he would do so by invoking the name of the Lord. **To swear... falsely, therefore, was to disregard the holiness of God’s name and thus profane it.**

19:13-14 The prohibition against oppression is exemplified by two cases: delay in paying the wages of the **hired servant** and insulting the physically disadvantaged.

19:15-16 Justice and righteousness must prevail in the Israelite legal system. **No favoritism is permitted**; the **poor** and the **great** are to be treated the same in a court of law.

19:17 To hate in one's heart is prohibited; one should rather reason frankly with his neighbor (cf. Prov. 27:5-6). The instruction is followed by a warning: **lest you incur sin because of him**. Scholars debate the relationship between reproof and incurring sin, but this probably has to do with a situation in which one who refuses to "reason frankly with his neighbor," helping him to see his sin, would share in the guilt of the neighbor's sin when it is committed; it might also suggest that to fail to "reason frankly" will result in bitter feelings that will overflow into sinful action.

19:18 The instruction and warning of v. 17 is developed in a heightened way. you shall love your neighbor as yourself. To love one's neighbor as oneself is a fundamental principle of the Torah, God's law. Both Jesus and Paul teach that it is a foundational tenet for how believers are to treat one another (Matt. 22:39-40; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14), while James calls this the "royal law" (James 2:8). In Matt. 5:43, Jesus cites a distortion of this rule in order to restore the rule to its rightful place.

19:19-37 Holiness means more than mere separation, but it always signifies that something is set apart in its proper sphere. In this section, this principle is applied in a variety of areas of life, such as in agricultural practice in which two different types of seeds are not to be planted together.

19:19 Two different kinds of domesticated animals are not to be crossbred, and two types of cloth are not to be woven together. Ceremonial holiness requires that things stay in their proper sphere, just as Israel must observe its separation from the nations (20:22-26).

19:20-22 The concept of holiness governs sexual relations in Israel. It requires that a fair judgment be conveyed in legal matters pertaining to adultery and promiscuity.

[19:23-25](#) In the land of promise the fruit of the tree must not be eaten for the first three years (v. 23). In the fourth year it is holy and an offering of praise to the LORD (v. 24). Only in the fifth year can it be eaten (v. 25). **Forbidden literally means “uncircumcised,”** and so the law of the land is being compared to circumcision. As a child is not to be circumcised before the eighth day, so the fruit on a tree is not to be plucked or eaten until after the third year.

[19:26-31](#) These are all practices of the Canaanites. Holiness requires Israel not to act like the pagans in any areas of life.

[19:33-34](#) Since the Israelites had been **strangers** in **Egypt** and knew what it was like, they ought to treat the strangers living among them just like themselves. In this regard the commandment in [v. 18b](#) is broadened beyond one’s own countrymen to foreigners (cf. [Luke 10:29-37](#)).

[19:35-36](#) In a summary way the rule in [v. 15](#)—avoid injustice and partiality; judge in righteousness—is taken up again and applied to commercial transactions.

[19:37](#) observe all my statutes. This sums up the entire chapter. Cf. [18:5](#).

ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version.

[20:1-27](#) ***Punishment for Disobedience.*** The rules in [ch. 20](#) have much in common with those in [ch. 18](#). This chapter, however, sets forth and stresses the punishments for violating the rules. Special emphasis is laid on Molech worship and mediums/necromancers. Almost all the crimes listed are punishable by the death penalty. Only a few are to receive a lesser sentence, such as in [20:17-18](#), in which the perpetrator is excommunicated.

[20:1-6](#) Worshipers of **Molech** ought to be stoned **to death** ([v. 2](#)). If that is not implemented, the Lord himself punishes them and their followers directly by cutting them off ([vv. 4-5](#); i.e., by bringing them to a premature death himself; see note on [7:11-36](#)). The Lord carries out the same punishment upon those who consult **mediums and necromancers** ([20:6](#))—cf. [1 Sam. 28:9](#), where Saul consults the medium of En-dor.

[20:7-8](#) This is the first time in Leviticus that the Lord is said to be the agent of sanctifying the people. The Lord **sanctifies the Israelites by making them his holy people, set apart to be his own, giving them a holy status; now he calls on them to consecrate themselves and be holy** (i.e., dedicate themselves to holiness in practice); see note on [11:44-45](#).

[20:9](#) **anyone who curses his father or his mother**. Cursing one’s parents is not merely using condescending or abusive language toward them but refers to a serious breach of a child’s duty to honor his or her parents. It means “to make light of something,” and is the exact opposite of “honoring” one’s parents ([Ex. 20:12](#)); cf. [Ex. 21:17](#). For the moral revulsion of such disrespect, cf. [Prov. 20:20](#); [30:11](#), [17](#).

[20:10-20](#) Each of these sexual activities has already been prohibited in [ch. 18](#). They are repeated here because this section includes the punishment for each of the crimes: capital punishment ([20:10-16](#)), exile ([vv. 17-18](#)), or barrenness ([vv. 19-21](#)).

[20:17](#) **sees her nakedness**. See note on [18:6-18](#).

[20:22-26](#) This section of exhortations toward holiness concludes [chs. 18-20](#) (cf. [20:22-24](#) with [18:3-5](#), [24-28](#)). Moreover, in light of its reference to clean and unclean creatures in [20:25](#) (cf. [ch. 11](#)), this section may conclude not only [chs. 18-20](#) but [chs. 11-20](#) as well. **A land flowing with milk and honey** is a common scriptural description of Canaan ([Ex. 13:5](#); [33:3](#); [Num. 13:27](#); etc.). Egyptian texts such as the [Story of Sinuhe](#) also characterize Canaan as a productive, fertile land.

[20:27](#) In [v. 6](#), the one who consults a **necromancer** or a **medium** was to be put to death. In this verse, the necromancer or the medium is to be **put to death**. Why this verse appears in this place in the text is puzzling; it may be because the act receives capital punishment, as do most of the other activities of the section.

Chapter 18

18:3 The Israelites moved from one idol-infested country (Egypt) to another (Canaan). They also had contact with other cultures (Moab). As God helped them form a new culture, he warned them to leave all aspects of their pagan background and surroundings behind. He also warned them how easy it would be to slip into the pagan culture of Canaan, where they were going. Canaan's society and religions appealed to worldly desires, especially sexual immorality and drunkenness. The Israelites were to keep themselves pure and set apart for God. God did not want his people absorbed into the surrounding culture and environment. Society may pressure us to conform to its way of life and thought, but yielding to that pressure will (1) create confusion as to which side we should be on and (2) eliminate our effectiveness in serving God. Follow God by obeying his Word, and don't let the culture around you mold your thoughts and actions.

18:6-18 Marrying relatives was prohibited by God for physical, social, and moral reasons. Children born to near relatives may experience serious health problems. Without these specific laws, sexual promiscuity would have been more likely, first in families, then outside. Improper sexual relations destroy family life.

18:6-27 Several detestable activities are listed here: (1) having sexual relations with close relatives, (2) committing adultery, (3) offering children as sacrifices, (4) having homosexual relations, and (5) having sexual relations with animals. These practices were common in pagan religions and cultures, and it is easy to see why God dealt harshly with those who began to follow them. Such practices lead to disease, deformity, and death. They disrupt family life and society and reveal a low regard for the value of oneself and of others. Society today takes some of these practices lightly, even trying to make them acceptable. But they are still sins in God's eyes. If you consider them acceptable, you are not judging by God's standards.

Life Application Study Bible.

Chapter 19

19:9, 10 This law was a protection for the poor and the foreigner and a reminder that God owned the land; the people were only caretakers. Laws such as this showed God's generosity and liberality. As people of God, the Israelites were to reflect his nature and characteristics in their attitudes and actions.

Ruth and Naomi were two people who benefited from this merciful law ([Ruth 2:2](#)).

19:9, 10 God instructed the Hebrews to provide for those in need. He required that the people leave the edges of their fields unharvested, providing food for travelers and the poor. It is easy to ignore the poor or forget about those who have less than we do.

But God desires generosity. In what ways can you leave the "edges of your fields" for those in need?

19:10-35 "Do not..." Some people think the Bible is nothing but a book of don'ts. But Jesus neatly summarized all these rules when he said to love God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself. He called these the greatest commandments (or rules) of all (Matthew 22:34-40). By carrying out Jesus' simple commands, we find ourselves following all of God's other laws as well.

19:32 People often find it easy to dismiss the opinions of the elderly and avoid taking time to visit with them. But the fact that God commanded the Israelites to show respect for the elderly shows how seriously we should take the responsibility of respecting those older than we are. Their wisdom gained from experience can save us from many pitfalls. How do you show respect and honor to your elders?

19:33, 34 How do you feel when you encounter foreigners, especially those who don't speak your language? Are you impatient? Do you think or act as if they should go back where they came from? Are you tempted to take advantage of them? God says to treat foreigners as you'd treat fellow countrymen, to love them as you love yourself. In reality, we are all foreigners in this world because it is only our temporary home. View strangers, newcomers, and foreigners as opportunities to demonstrate God's love.

Life Application Study Bible.

20:1-3 Sacrificing children to the gods was a common practice in ancient religions. The Ammonites, Israel's neighbors, made child sacrifice to Molech (their national god) a vital part of their religion. They saw this as the greatest gift they could offer to ward off evil or appease angry gods. God made it clear that this practice was detestable and strictly forbidden. In Old Testament times as well as New, his character made human sacrifice unthinkable. (1) Unlike the pagan

gods, he is a God of love, who does not need to be appeased ([Exodus 34:6](#)). (2) He is a God of life, who prohibits murder and encourages practices that lead to health and happiness ([Deuteronomy 30:15, 16](#)). (3) He is God of the helpless, who shows special concern for children ([Psalm 72:4](#)). (4) He is a God of unselfishness who, instead of demanding human sacrifices, sacrificed himself for us ([Isaiah 53:4, 5](#)).

20:6 Everyone is interested in what the future holds, and we often look to others for guidance. But God warned about looking to the occult for advice. Mediums and psychics were outlawed because God was not the source of their information. At best, occult practitioners are fakes whose predictions cannot be trusted. At worst, they are in contact with evil spirits and are thus extremely dangerous. We don't need to look to the occult for information about the future. God has given us the Bible so that we may obtain all the information we need—and the Bible's teaching is trustworthy.

20:10-21 This list of commands against sexual sins includes extremely harsh punishments. Why? God had no tolerance for such acts for the following reasons: (1) they shatter the mutual commitment of married partners; (2) they destroy the sanctity of the family; (3) they twist people's mental well-being; and (4) they spread disease. Sexual sin has always been widely available, but the glorification of sex between people who are not married to each other often hides deep tragedy and hurt behind the scenes. When society portrays sexual sins as attractive, it is easy to forget the dark side. God had good reasons for prohibiting sexual sins: He loves us and wants the very best for us.

20:10-21 The detestable acts listed here were very common in the pagan nations of Canaan; their religions were rampant with sex goddesses, temple prostitution, and other gross sins. The Canaanites' immoral religious practices reflected a decadent culture that tended to corrupt whoever came in contact with it. By contrast, God was building a nation to make a positive influence on the world. He did not want the Israelites to adopt the Canaanites' practices and slide into debauchery. So he prepared the people for what they would face in the Promised Land by commanding them to steer clear of sexual sins. God still expects those who worship him to maintain sexual purity in their lives.

[20:22, 23](#) God gave many rules to his people—but not without reason. He did not withhold good from them; he only prohibited those acts that would bring them to ruin. All of us understand God's physical laws of nature. For example, jumping off a 10-story building means death because of the law of gravity. But some of us don't understand how God's spiritual laws work. God forbids us to do certain things because he wants to keep us from self-destruction. Next time you are drawn to a forbidden physical or emotional pleasure, remind yourself that its consequences might be suffering and separation from God, who is trying to help you.

Life Application Study Bible.

“Mandates For Practical Holiness” per MacArthur’s Bible Commentary

B. Proper Sexual Behavior ([18:1-30](#))

[18:1-30](#) Laws are given, relating to sexual practices, which would eliminate the abominations being practiced by the heathen in the land ([18:27](#); cf. [Lev. 20:10-21](#); [Deut. 22:13-30](#)). These specific laws assume the general prohibition of adultery ([Ex. 20:14](#)) and a father incestuously engaging his daughter. They do not necessarily invalidate the special case of a levirate marriage (cf. [Deut. 25:5](#)). The penalties for such outlawed behavior are detailed in [20:10-21](#).

[18:3](#) *doings*. Repeating the sexual practices or customs of the Egyptians and Canaanites was forbidden by God.

[18:4](#) *I am the LORD your God.* This phrase, used over fifty times, asserts the uniqueness of the one true and living God, who calls His people to holiness as He is holy, and calls them to reject all other gods.

18:5 *if a man does, he shall live by them.* Special blessing was promised to the Israelites on the condition of their obedience to God's Law. This promise was remarkably verified in particular eras of their history, in the national prosperity they enjoyed when pure and undefiled religion prevailed among them. Obedience to God's Law always insures temporal blessings, as this verse indicates. But these words have a higher reference to spiritual life as indicated by the Lord (cf. [Luke 10:28](#)) and Paul (cf. [Rom. 10:5](#)). Obedience does not save from sin and hell, but it does mark those who are saved (cf. [Eph. 2:8, 9](#); *see notes on Rom. 2:6-10*).

18:6-18 This section deals with consanguinity, i.e., the sins of incest.

18:6 *uncover nakedness.* This is a euphemism for sexual relations

18:8 *your father's wife.* Actually, a stepmother is in mind here (cf. [v. 7](#)).

18:11 *your sister.* Here, he is forbidden to marry a stepsister.

18:18 *while the other is alive.* The principle on which the prohibitions are made changes slightly. Instead of avoiding sexual involvement because it would violate a relational connection, this situation defaults to the principle of one person at a time, or while the other is still alive, i.e., it forbids polygamy. Commonly in Egyptian, Chaldean, and Canaanite culture, sisters were taken as wives in polygamous unions. God forbids such, as all polygamy is forbidden by the original law of marriage (see [Gen. 2:24, 25](#)). Moses, because of hard hearts, tolerated it, as did others in Israel in the early stages of that nation. But it always led to tragedy.

18:19 *customary impurity.* This refers to a woman's menstrual period (cf. [15:24](#)).

18:21 *Molech*. This Semitic false deity (god of the Ammonites) was worshiped with child sacrifice (cf. [Lev. 20:2-5](#); [1 Kin. 11:7](#); [2 Kin. 23:10](#); [Jer. 32:35](#)). Since this chapter deals otherwise with sexual deviation, there is likely an unmentioned sexual perversion connected with this pagan ritual. Jews giving false gods homage gave foreigners occasion to blaspheme the true God.

18:22 *not lie with a male*. This outlaws all homosexuality (cf. [20:13](#); [Rom. 1:27](#); [1 Cor. 6:9](#); [1 Tim. 1:10](#)). See notes on [Genesis 19:1-29](#).

18:23 *mate with any animal*. This outlaws the sexual perversion of bestiality.

18:29 *cut off*. All the sexual perversions discussed in this chapter were worthy of death, indicating their loathsomeness before God.

18:30 *were committed before you*. Not in their presence, but by the people who inhabited the land before them in time (cf. [v. 27](#)), were such sins committed.

C. Neighborliness ([19:1-37](#))

19:1-37 Here are practical applications of holy conduct in society.

19:2 *I the LORD your God am holy*. This basic statement, which gives the reason for holy living among God's people, is the central theme in Leviticus (cf. [20:26](#)). See note on [11:44, 45](#). Cf. [1 Peter 1:16](#). Israel had been called to be a holy nation, and the perfectly holy character of God (cf. [Isa. 6:3](#)) was the model after which the Israelites were to live (cf. [10:3](#); [20:26](#); [21:6-8](#)).

Christ Fulfills Israel's Feasts

The Feasts (Lev. 23)	Christ's Fulfillment
Passover (March/April)	Death of Christ (1 Cor. 5:7)
Unleavened Bread (March/April)	Sinlessness of Christ (1 Cor. 5:8)
Firstfruits (March/April)	Resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:23)
Pentecost (May/June)	Outpouring of Spirit of Christ (Acts 1:5 ; 2:4)
Trumpets (Sept./Oct.)	Israel's Regathering by Christ (Matt. 24:31)
Atonement (Sept./Oct.)	Substitutionary Sacrifice by Christ (Rom. 11:26)
Tabernacles (Sept./Oct.)	Rest and Reunion with Christ (Zech. 14:16-19)

The MacArthur Study Bible, by John MacArthur (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997) 186. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

19:3 *revere his mother and his father.* The fifth commandment (cf. [Ex. 20:12](#)) to honor one's father and mother is amplified by the use of a different word, *revere*. Because they revered (an attitude), they could then honor (an action).

19:3, 4 In addition to the fifth commandment, the fourth ([19:3b](#)), the first ([19:4a](#)), and the second ([19:4b](#)) were commanded as illustrations of holy behavior (cf. [Ex. 20:3-6, 8-11](#)).

(SEE 1st, 2nd, 4th, & 5th commanded!)

19:5-8 *peace offering*. See notes on [3:1-17](#); [7:11-34](#).

19:9, 10 This was the law of gleaning (cf. [23:22](#); [Deut. 24:19-22](#)), a practice seen in [Ruth 2:8-23](#).

19:11 Commandments from [Exodus 20](#) are again repeated.

19:12 Cf. [Matthew 5:33](#).

19:13 *wages... shall not remain with you all night*. Hired workers were to be paid at the end of a work day. Unsalaries day workers depended on pay each day for their sustenance. See notes on [Matthew 20:1, 2](#).

19:14 *the deaf... the blind*. Israel's God of compassion always demonstrated a concern for the disabled.

19:16 *take a stand against the life*. This refers to doing anything that would wrongfully jeopardize the life of a neighbor.

19:18 This, called the second great commandment, is the most often quoted OT text in the NT ([Matt. 5:43](#); [19:19](#); [22:39](#); [Mark 12:31, 33](#); [Luke 10:27](#); [Rom. 13:9](#); [Gal. 5:14](#); [James 2:8](#)).

19:19 These mixtures may have been characteristic of some idolatrous practices.

19:20-22 In the case of immorality with a betrothed slave, the couple was to be punished (possibly by scourging), but not killed. Afterward, a trespass offering (see notes on [5:14-6:7](#)) was to be rendered with appropriate reparation. This is an exception to the norm (cf. [Deut. 22:23, 24](#)).

19:23-25 *uncircumcised*. They could not eat from the fruit trees of Canaan for four years after entering the land because the fruit of the first three years was to be considered unclean, and the fourth year the fruit was to be offered to the Lord. Some gardeners say preventing a tree from bearing fruit in the first years, by cutting off the blossoms, makes it more productive.

19:26 *divination... soothsaying*. Attempting to tell the future with the help of snakes and clouds was a common ancient way of foretelling good or bad future. These were forbidden forms of witchcraft which involved demonic activity. *See note on Deuteronomy 18:9-12*.

19:27, 28 These pagan practices were most likely associated with Egyptian idolatry and were, therefore, to be avoided. The practice of making deep gashes on the face and arms or legs, in times of grief, was universal among pagans. It was seen as a mark of respect for the dead, as well as a sort of propitiatory offering to the gods who presided over death. The Jews learned this custom in Egypt and, though weaned from it, relapsed into the old superstition (cf. Isa. 22:12; Jer. 16:6; 47:5). Tattoos also were connected to names of idols, and were permanent signs of apostasy.

19:29 *prostitute your daughter*. Even the pagans of ancient Assyria at this time forbade such horrendous means of monetary gain.

19:30 *Sabbaths*. *See note on 19:3, 4*.

19:31 *mediums... familiar spirits*. Mediums are humans who act as “go-betweens” to supposedly contact/communicate with the spirits of the dead, who are actually impersonated by demons. Cf. 20:6, 27.

19:32 *rise... honor*. Showing respect for the older man acknowledged God’s blessing of long life and the wisdom that comes with it (cf. Isa. 3:5).

19:33, 34 *stranger*. Cf. Exodus 22:21.

19:36 *ephah... hin*. These dry and liquid measures, respectively, were equal approximately to four to six gallons and six to eight pints.

[D. Capital/Grave Crimes \(20:1-27\)](#)

[20:1-27](#) Here, capital and other grave crimes are discussed. Many of the same issues from chapters 18 and 19 are elaborated, with the emphasis on the penalty paid for the violation.

[20:2](#) *gives any of his descendants to Molech*. Molech (Moloch), the Ammonite god of the people surrounding Israel, required human (especially child) sacrifice. See note on [18:21](#).

[20:5, 6](#) *cut him off*. This means to kill. It is synonymous with “put to death” in [verse 9](#).

[20:5](#) *prostitute themselves* speaks figuratively of spiritual harlotry

[20:6](#) *medium... familiar spirits*. See note on [19:31](#). “Familiar spirits” refers to demons (cf. [20:27](#)).

[20:9](#) *curses his father or his mother*. Doing the very opposite of the command to honor or to revere (cf. [19:3](#)) had fatal consequences. See [Mark 7:10](#), where Jesus referred to this text.

[20:10-21](#) Here are the punishments for violating the prohibitions of sexual sins detailed in [18:1-30](#); see [Deuteronomy 22:13-30](#).

[20:22](#) *may not vomit you out*. God repeatedly told Israel that remaining in the land required obedience to the Mosaic covenant (cf. [18:25, 28](#)).

[20:27](#) *medium... familiar spirits*. See note on [19:31](#).

What are the main divisions of the Old Testament Law?

by [Matt Slick](#)

2/18/15

There are three main divisions within the Old Testament law. Following is a categorization. Please note that occasionally the civil and moral laws overlap.

The main differences between the civil, ceremonial, and moral aspects of the Law of Moses as revealed in the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) are in their purposes. The civil law deals mainly with relationships between individuals, the settling of disputes, and the description of proper behavior. The ceremonial law deals with the priesthood initiation and the priestly procedures as they related to the various sacrifices through which the people of the Old Testament were cleansed of their sins. The moral law is based on the character of [God](#) and extends from the Old into the New Testament. Therefore, as it was wrong to lie in the Old Testament, it is still wrong to lie in the New Testament.

1. **Civil** - Deals with disputes between individuals. Expired with the demise of the Jewish civil government
 1. Be just with the poor, ([Lev. 19:15](#))
 2. Cattle, of neighbor ([Deut. 22:1-4](#))
 3. Children, rebellious ([Deut. 21:18-21](#))
 4. Debt ([Lev. 23:34-43](#); [Deut. 31:10](#))
 5. Divorce ([Deut. 22:19](#))
 6. Dress, attire ([Deut. 22:5](#))
 7. Do not hate in your heart ([Lev. 19:17](#))
 8. Inheritance ([Num. 18:26](#); [26:53-56](#); [36:8-12](#))
 9. Justice practices ([Lev. 24:17-23](#))
 10. Kidnapping ([Exodus 21:16](#))
 11. Landmarks ([Deuteronomy 19:14](#))
 12. Property redemption ([Lev. 25](#))
 13. Murder and killing ([Deut. 21:1-4](#))
 14. Retain just scales in commerce ([Lev. 19:35f](#))
 15. Robbery, extortion, false witness, and restitution ([Lev. 6:1-7](#))
 16. Sabbath breaking punishment ([Num. 15:32-36](#))
 17. Theft ([Deut. 5:19](#); [Lev. 19:11](#))
 18. Warfare ([Deut. 20:1-20](#))

2. **Ceremonial** - Expired with the fulfillment of priestly work of Christ ([Matt. 3:15](#))
 1. Cleaning house of leper ([Lev. 14:33-57](#); [Num. 5:2](#))
 2. Festivals ([Lev. 23:1-25](#); [Nu. 29:39](#))

3. Laws on animals for food ([Lev. 11:1-47](#))
4. Law of Atonement ([Lev. 16:1-28;17:1-16](#))
5. Offerings ([Num. 29:39](#))
6. Priest, consecration of ([Ex. 29:1-46](#))
7. Priestly duties ([Lev. 7:1-37](#))
8. Regulations for Priests ([Lev. 21,22](#))
9. Various sacrificial offerings for sin ([Lev. 1,2,3,4,5,6](#))

3. **Moral** - No Expiration because it is based on God's character. "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy," ([Lev. 19:2](#))
 1. Idolatry ([Lev. 26:1-13](#))
 2. Love God ([Deut. 6:4](#))
 3. Love your neighbor as yourself ([Lev. 19:18](#))
 4. Oppress your neighbor ([Lev. 19:13](#))
 5. Stealing or lying ([Lev. 19:11](#))
 6. Sacrifice children to Molech forbidden ([Lev. 20:1-5](#))
 7. Sexual sins: adultery, incest, bestiality, homosexuality, etc. ([Lev. 18:20; 20:9-21; Num. 5:12-15](#))

RADICAL: Teachings on Obedience:

(INTRO)

To *everyone wanting a safe, untroubled, comfortable life free from danger, stay away from Jesus. The danger in our lives will always increase in proportion to the depth of our relationship with Christ.*

– David Platt, Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream

"[...]not even dying a martyr's death is classified as extraordinary obedience when you are following a Savior who died on a cross."

– David Platt, Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream

"Jesus was not, and never is, interested in being seen as a respectable teacher. He is the sovereign Lord. He doesn't give options for people to consider; he gives commands for people to obey."

– David Platt, Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream

“We live in a church culture that has a dangerous tendency to disconnect the grace of God from the glory of God. Our hearts resonate with the idea of enjoying God’s grace. We bask in sermons, conferences, and books that exalt a grace centering on us. And while the wonder of grace is worthy of our attention, if that grace is disconnected from its purpose (brining glory to God), then the sad result is a (FALSE) self-centered Christianity that bypasses the heart of God (and the truth of the Gospel).”

– David Platt, Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream

...we have drawn an unbiblical line of distinction, assigning the obligations of Christianity to a few while keeping the privileges of Christianity for us all.”

– David Platt, Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream

Everyone loves Jesus – until they read what he really taught.

Jesus—he comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable.

“Sacrifice is giving away what it hurts to give. Sacrifice is not giving according to your ability; it’s giving beyond your ability.”

– David Platt, Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream

“The modern-day gospel says, 'God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. Therefore, follow these steps, and you can be saved.' Meanwhile, the biblical gospel says, 'You are an enemy of God, dead in your sin, & in your present state of rebellion, you are not even able to see that you need life, much less to cause yourself to come to life. Therefore, you are radically dependent on God to do something in your life that

you could never do.”

– David Platt, Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream

(In the contemporary church), faith is a matter of taste, not of truth..

“We can so easily deceive ourselves, mistaking the presence of physical bodies in a crowd for the existence of spiritual life in a community.”

– David Platt, Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream

(CLOSE)

“If we were left to ourselves with the task of taking the gospel to the world, we would immediately begin planning innovative strategies and plotting elaborate schemes. We would organize conventions, develop programs, and create foundations... But Jesus is so different from us. With the task of taking the gospel to the world, he wandered through the streets and byways...All He wanted was a few men who would think as He did, love as He did, see as He did, teach as He did and serve as He did. All He needed was to revolutionize the hearts of a few, and they would impact the world.”

– David Platt, Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream

(Pizza box illustration)

“Disciple making is not a call for others to come to us to hear the gospel but a command for us to go to others to share the gospel.”

– David Platt, Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream

“You and I can choose to continue with business as usual in the Christian life and in the church as a whole, enjoying, (accepting & exalting) success based on the standards defined by the culture around us... OR... we can take an honest look at the Jesus of the Bible and dare to ask what the consequences might be if we really believed him and really obeyed him.”

– David Platt, Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream

*Guidelines for Christian Living is excerpted from
“Peace with God” by Billy Graham, published in 1953,
revised and expanded in 1984.*

For one to grow properly certain rules must be observed for good spiritual health.

1. **Read your Bible daily.** Do not be content to skim through a chapter merely to satisfy your conscience. Hide the Word of God in your heart. It comforts, guides, corrects, encourages – all we need is there.
2. **Learn the secret of prayer.** Prayer is communicating. Every prayer that you pray will be answered. Sometimes that answer may be “Yes” and sometimes “No,” and sometimes it is “Wait,” but nevertheless it will be answered.
3. **Rely constantly on the Holy Spirit.** We know that the Holy Spirit prays for us (Romans 8), and what a comfort that should be to the weakest of us. Stand aside and let Him take over all the choices and decisions of your life.
4. **Attend church regularly.** The visible church is Christ’s organization upon earth. Christians need one another, we need to gather together to worship God and nothing can take the place of church attendance.
5. **Be a witnessing Christian.** We witness in two ways: by life and by word – and the two, where possible, should go hand in hand.
6. **Let love be the ruling principle of your life.** Jesus said to those who followed Him, *“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”* (John 13:35). The greatest demonstration of the fact that we are Christians is that we love one another.
7. **Be an obedient Christian.** Let Christ have first place in all the choices of your life.
8. **Learn how to meet temptation.** Temptation is not sin. It is *yielding* that is sin. Let Christ through the Holy Spirit do the fighting for you.
9. **Be a wholesome Christian.** Our lives and appearance should commend the Gospel and make it attractive to others.
10. **Live above your circumstances.** Don’t let your circumstances get you down. Learn to live graciously within them, realizing the Lord Himself is with you.

Guidelines for Christian Living is excerpted from "Peace with God" by Billy Graham, published in 1953, revised and expanded in 1984.

Law, Grace, and Sexuality.

Leviticus 18:1-30

Leviticus 18:1-5 (ESV)

¹ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

² "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, I am the LORD your God.

³ You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes.

⁴ You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the LORD your God.

⁵ You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.

- Incest (of any & all degrees, through multiple generations)
- Inter-family (non-blood-related) sexual relations
- Menstrual cycle relations
- Adultery
- Child sacrifice to Molech
- Homosexuality
- Bestiality

Descriptions given to the above within the passage:

- Depravity
- Perversion
- Abomination
- Iniquity (punished by God)

Leviticus 18:29-30 (ESV)

²⁹ For everyone who does any of these abominations, the persons who do them shall be cut off from among their people.

³⁰ So keep my charge never to practice any of these abominable customs that were practiced before you, and never to make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God."

Main Idea: **God's Word calls us to submit to what God says about sexual morality, to separate from the sinful ways of the world, and to remember in humility the danger of falling into the same sins we condemn in other people.**

- I. **God's People Submit to God's Authority.**
 - A. He created us, and He created sex.
 - B. He owns us.
 - C. God's Word is true, powerful, and effective.
- II. **God's People Separate from the World's Iniquity.**
 - A. Separation starts with salvation.
 - B. Separation progresses by God's Spirit.
 - C. Separation culminates in love.
- III. **God's People Serve God in Humility.**
 - A. We confess our weakness.
 - B. We conform our service to Scripture.

The Victorian Age in nineteenth-century Great Britain has a reputation for conservative views of sexuality. Fulton Sheen once said, "The Victorians pretended sex did not exist; the moderns pretend that nothing else exists" (cited in Warren Wiersbe, *Be Holy*, 80). Sheen was correct. We live in a sex-saturated, sex-obsessed society. Sex is an ever-present theme on television, the Internet, and in movies, music, and books. The advertising industry lives by the mantra "sex sells," and their belief in the market effects of sex multiplies the suggestive images we see every day. The church is churning out books and seminars on what God says about the subject. Bible teachers are teaching and writing about Song of Songs as a manual on marital intimacy. Such teaching is surely a positive development, but it seems worthy of pointing out that such an emphasis is unprecedented in the 3,000 years since Solomon wrote Song of Songs.

Unfortunately, Western culture has not only become obsessed with sex, it has also perverted it. In 1931 when Aldous Huxley wrote his novel *Brave New World*, he portrayed promiscuity as a societal virtue. Huxley's fiction is now non-fiction. Today the entertainment industry portrays promiscuity as the norm and monogamy as antiquarian. **Our culture has abandoned God's design. Verse 23 of Leviticus 18 uses the word "perversion." The Hebrew word translated "perversion" comes from a root that had the physical sense of mixing something, like mixing oil in flour. It had the figurative sense of being mixed up or confused. It appears in Genesis 11:7 to refer to the Tower of Babel incident when God confused the language of the people so they could not understand one another** (Kaiser, "tebel," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, I, 112). **So Leviticus 18:23 refers to being sexually confused, mixed up, perhaps with the idea of mixing two different things together that God did not intend to go together. In Western culture today, a lot of people are mixed up in that way. That makes Leviticus 18 a word for our times.** What does God teach us in this part of His Word?

God's People Submit to God's Authority

In [verse 2](#) God told Moses, “*Speak to the Israelites and tell them: I am Yahweh your God.*” **God was reminding His people that He is the Lord; He is the authority who has the right to direct humanity with His laws. Again in [verse 4](#) God said, “*You are to practice My ordinances and you are to keep My statutes by following them; I am Yahweh your God.*” In fact, **six times in this chapter God reminded His people that He is God. He was making sure they would have no doubt about who was in charge—the God of the universe was giving these rules.** He is the authority.**

Authority is a fundamental issue in our culture today. Who determines right and wrong?

When we hear a command, its authority in our lives is determined by who gives the command. If I am walking down a sidewalk and somebody behind me shouts, “Freeze! Put your hands behind your head!” I check immediately to see who is shouting. If the person behind me is a policeman, he has the authority to give that command and demand compliance. So I hope he is shouting at someone else, not me. **A command has authority if the one who gives it has authority** (Wright, “Learning to Love Leviticus”).

With respect to commands regarding sex, there are only three possible sources of authority.

For many people, their authority is **personal opinion**. Every individual decides for herself or himself what is right and wrong. During the period of the judges, Israel adopted that approach to authority. Twice the book of Judges states, “Everyone did whatever he wanted” ([17:6](#); [21:25](#)). God’s people were ignoring God and His law; their morality was entirely self-referential. They did what *they* thought was right—personal opinion. The book of Judges also demonstrates the result of **that approach to life**. It **results in moral anarchy**—widespread murder, stealing, and rape—not unlike our current culture, which also determines right and wrong by consulting personal opinion.

Another source of authority concerning sexuality is the opinion of the majority, or law. We submit to the standards of the society in which we live. That seems better than consulting only personal opinion, **but societal standards change dramatically** through time, and they change from one society to another. If society is the authority for right and wrong, then all the Nazis did in Germany in the early 1940’s was not immoral because German society accepted it (Schlessinger and Vogel, *The Ten Commandments*, xxix). **Clearly it is not possible to apply this source of authority consistently.** Therefore, majority opinion is not an acceptable authority for morality.

We need a source of authority that transcends societal changes and personal opinions, an authority that protects the weak and the innocent. **We need God’s transcendent authority.** For the people of God, the issue of authority has been settled—our authority is God, and **He has expressed His will in His Word**, the Bible. **The reason our culture is confused and perverse is that God and His authority have been rejected.**

In Carl F. H. Henry’s magisterial work, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, he stated that the crucial issue for modern civilization is authority. How can we know what is right and wrong, or whether right and wrong exist, if we have no transcendent, absolute authority? Dr. Henry wrote,

For mankind today nothing is of greater importance than a right criterion whereby men may identify the truth and the good over against mere human assertion. (vol. 4: 16)

The Scriptures are the authoritative written record . . . of God's revelatory deeds, and the ongoing source of reliable objective knowledge concerning God's nature and ways.(vol. 2: 13)

Followers of Jesus cannot waver on our source of authority. Our authority is God's Word.

Since the issue of authority is so important in discussions about right and wrong in sexuality, let's ask why God is the authority over sexuality. Why does He get to make the rules, and why are His rules best?

He Created Us, and He Created Sex

It may come as a shock to some people in our pornographic, perverse culture, but the perfectly holy God of the universe is the One who first thought of sex and gave it to humanity. The second chapter of Genesis says that God brought the first woman to the first man and gave her to him. God Himself performed the first wedding, and Genesis 2:24 says, "This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh." The one flesh relationship is God's design. Note that God's design is one woman and one man forming one new family brought together by God with no provision for dissolution. Why should God be the authority over sex? He's the One who created it!

He Owns Us

[Psalm 24:1](#) says, "The earth and everything in it, the world and its inhabitants, belong to the Lord." God owns everything. Tertullian, one of the early fathers of the church, cited the Roman law *praescriptio proprietatis*— the prescription of ownership. The owner determines the rules for what He owns (Grant, *A Short History*, 75–76). We still say today, "Possession is 90 percent of the law." God owns the universe, so His laws are universal. With ownership comes the authority to make the rules. This is especially true for followers of Jesus. [First Corinthians 6:19-20](#) says to Christians,

Don't you know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body.

Why does God get to make the rules for our bodies? He owns our bodies. We are not our own; we have been bought with the price of the blood of Jesus. Therefore, we glorify God in our bodies. God owns us.

God's Word Is True, Powerful, and Effective

God's Word, the Bible, is our authority because it comes from God, and He created us and owns us. Additionally, it is important to know that through the millennia God's Word has proven to be true, powerful, and effective. [Hebrews 4:12](#) says,

For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit.

The words of humanity about sexuality may be convenient, easy, and popular; but the Word of God is true, powerful, and effective.

A good friend is a devoted follower of Jesus, a Bible teacher, and a wonderful husband and father. Years ago he was living a homosexual lifestyle. One day somebody told him that the Bible says homosexuality is wrong. He was not aware that the Bible said that. He looked in the Bible for himself, and he saw that God says homosexuality is an abomination. God used that to convict him of sin. He told his gay partner what the Bible says. It did not seem to bother his partner, but it bothered him so much that he moved out of the place he was staying with his partner. Some friends who were Christians took him in, they shared the gospel with him, he put his faith in Jesus, and it changed everything about him. God used His Word to change him. God's Word is true, powerful, and effective. God's people submit to God's authority; He said, "I am the Lord your God" ([Lev 18:2](#) ESV).

God's People Separate from the World's Iniquity

In [verses 6-23](#) God specifically prohibited every sort of incest ([vv. 6-18](#)), adultery ([v. 20](#)), child sacrifice ([v. 21](#)), homosexuality ([v. 22](#)), and bestiality ([v. 23](#)). Then God referred to the fact that the people of Canaan practiced those sins. God said,

Do not defile yourselves by any of these practices, for the nations I am driving out before you have defiled themselves by all these things. The land has become defiled, so I am punishing it for its sin, and the land will vomit out its inhabitants. But you are to keep My statutes and ordinances. You must not commit any of these detestable things—not the native or the foreigner who lives among you. For the men who were in the land prior to you have committed all these detestable things, and the land has become defiled. ([vv. 24-27](#))

God was telling His people not to do what the people who did not know Him were doing.

God said the inhabitants of Canaan practiced "**all these detestable things**"—**incest, adultery, child sacrifice, homosexuality, and bestiality**. Evidently such depraved behavior had become common in Canaanite culture, so God was sending His judgment. G. Campbell Morgan wrote of people who do not believe that God commanded the Israelite conquest of Canaan, and he responded,

For myself . . . if I did not believe God would make war against what is revealed concerning Canaan, I could not believe in God at all! . . . Israel was raised up and sent into that land to cleanse a plague spot, which was blasting the whole world by its influence. (Morgan, *Hosea*, 139)

The Canaanites broke God's laws and became unclean, and He punished them. God wanted His people to enjoy happy families and the blessings of walking with Him, so **He told them not to**

live like the people who were disobeying Him. Sin leads to suffering. God was calling His people to be holy, different from the people around them.

These days a common argument against the law forbidding homosexuality is to say that these laws should be categorized the same way we categorize Old Testament laws concerning clean and unclean foods, laws about sacrifices and ceremonies that are no longer observed, and civil laws governing Israelite society. Those laws are obsolete, so, the argument goes, the laws against homosexuality are also obsolete. However, God's rules against homosexuality did not apply only to the Israelites. God gave none of this Mosaic law to the Canaanites, but Leviticus 18 says explicitly that God was holding the Canaanites accountable for the sin of homosexuality. Laws concerning things like murder, adultery, stealing, and homosexuality were universal laws because they are laws from creation. Committing such acts is rebellion against God's creation design. In the beginning God established marriage between one man and one woman. Any deviation from God's creation pattern violates His law.

Furthermore, the law against homosexuality is about personal sexuality, and that can hardly be categorized as a ceremonial law or a civil law. It has never been categorized that way until recently. *A final reason we cannot discard the Old Testament laws against homosexuality, incest, and lesbianism is that they are repeated in the New Testament in the books of Romans (1:26-27), 1 Corinthians (5:1; 6:9), and 1 Timothy (1:10). Even if we excised Leviticus from the Bible, we would still have to face the fact that the New Testament calls such activity sinful.*

Let's note three biblical truths about the issue of separation.

Separation Starts with Salvation

We must never forget that before God gave all the laws recorded in Leviticus to His people, God had saved His people from slavery in Egypt. Old Testament religion was not just external compliance to legal standards. God did not call His people to legalism; He miraculously delivered His people from slavery, He graciously set them free, and He called them into a loving relationship with Himself. As a part of that relationship He gave them laws to guide them so they could enjoy life.

New Testament religion is not just external compliance to legal standards. God offers us eternal salvation in Jesus. He sets us free from sin, self, and the Devil. He transfers us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of His beloved Son. Once we are in that kingdom, He gives us His rules so we can enjoy a happy life. The apostle Paul stated this truth beautifully in 1 Corinthians 6:

Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be deceived: No sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or anyone practicing homosexuality, no thieves, greedy people, drunkards, verbally abusive people, or swindlers will inherit God's kingdom. And some of you used to be like this. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor 6:9-11)

Those verses do not mean that people who commit those sins will not go to heaven. It means that people who can be characterized by those lifestyles instead of being characterized by knowing Jesus will not go to heaven. The difference between the people who are not headed for heaven and the people who are is not that one group of people commits those particular sins and the other group of people does not. The difference in followers of Jesus who are headed for heaven is that they have sinned and they know they are in big trouble because of it! They have recognized their sin, confessed it, and reached out to Jesus to forgive them, cleanse them, make them new, and give them eternal life. People who are not headed for heaven commit sins and have not turned to Jesus for salvation.

Followers of Jesus still commit sins, but as one preacher said, people who know Jesus lapse into sin and loathe it, and people without Jesus leap into sin and love it.

Some of the Christians in Corinth were characterized by those lifestyles in their past. *“And some of you used to be like this.”* **Some of the Christians in Corinth had been idolaters, adulterers, thieves, alcoholics, and homosexuals.** “But,” verse 11 says, **“you were washed, you were sanctified [made holy], you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”** **When those idolaters, adulterers, thieves, alcoholics, and homosexuals put their faith in Jesus, God took them just like they were, forgave their sin, reconciled them to Himself, washed them, and made them holy.**

God has done the same for all of us who are disciples of Jesus. Christians are not better than those sinners because we don’t do what they did. Some Christians *did* do those things, and all of us are sinners by nature and by choice. Before we put our faith in Jesus we were without God and without hope. But we confessed our sin and put our faith in Jesus, and He did His work of salvation by forgiving our sin, giving us the gift of eternal life, and making us clean by His grace. **We must never forget that separation starts with salvation.**

Separation Progresses by God’s Spirit

The passage cited above states how we are washed and sanctified: “by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11).

We need the Spirit of God to change us. What Leviticus 18 says about deviant sexuality is not just the Word of God for “those sinners” out in the world; it is the Word of God for all of us.

Every one of us inherits twisted ideas about our sexuality as part of our fallenness, and every one of us is affected by the twisted ideas of our culture. *We need help. God gives us help by the presence and power of His Spirit. He uses His Word and He uses His people, but He is the One powerfully working in us by His Spirit.* It is possible that someone reading this section is struggling with homosexual attraction or with another temptation that violates God’s design. You may struggle with that attraction for years to come, but **attraction is not the same as sinful action.** God’s Spirit will help you with the temptation. Ask Him. Depend on His power. We are washed and sanctified “by the Spirit of our God.” **Sanctification progresses by God’s Spirit.**

Separation Culminates in Love

God told the Israelites to be separate, different from the Canaanites. He told them to stay away from the idolatry and immorality of the Canaanites. In the next chapter in Leviticus God told His people that they were also to love the Canaanites. Verse 18 in chapter 19 says, “Love your neighbor as yourself; I am Yahweh.”

Jesus quoted that statement and said it is the second greatest command (Matt 22:36-39). First, love God. Second, love people. I have seen a lot of separation from sin that does not involve love. We say, “Hate the sin and love the sinner,” but some-how we never get around to spending time with sinners to love them. **Our separation from sins like homosexuality and abortion often consists of carrying banners, spouting rhetoric, and pointing fingers, not expressing love.**

Maybe it would help us to love sinners if we remembered that we are sinners too. Christian men look at pornography, Christian marriages end in divorce, and the people in churches fight with one another and divide. How dare we feel self-righteous or condescending? *We are spiritual beggars just like every sinner; the only difference is that we have found bread in Christ.* We have found His forgiveness, the eternal life He gives, the truth and guidance of His Word, and the power of His Holy Spirit. Now that we have found that bread, what do we do with it? We offer it to the unsaved, and if they reject it we don't get angry, we love them. To whom in the gay community are you showing love? *“Love your neighbor as yourself; I am Yahweh.”*

God's People Serve God in Humility

God told Israel not to commit the sins that the Canaanites were committing. In verse 27 God said the Canaanites had become unclean through their sin, and the land of Canaan would spew them out because of their sin. Then God told His people again not to commit the sins of the Canaanites or the land would spew out the people of Israel too. God told His people they were capable of committing the same sins, and if they did commit the same sins they would experience the same punishment. The subsequent history of Israel shows that God's people did fall into the same sins, and they experienced the same punishment. About seven hundred years after God spoke these words, the land spewed Israel out when the Assyrians took the northern kingdom of Israel into exile, and 150 years after Israel's fall the Babylonians took the southern kingdom of Judah into exile.

God knew His people were just as vulnerable to temptation and sin as the Canaanites. God knows that *we* are vulnerable to temptation and sin too. So, what do we do?

1. We Confess Our Weakness

How do we relate to sinners around us? **We relate to them aware of our own propensity to sin.** [Galatians 6:1](#) says, *“If someone is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual should restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so you also won’t be tempted.”* We restore others with the awareness that we too are vulnerable to temptation and sin.

Falling into sin is easy.

The sin we condemn in someone else today may be the sin we have to confess tomorrow. **We restore sinners in the church the way we would want the church to restore us, because one day we may be the ones who need restoration.**

I pastored a church where two former pastors joined about the same time. Both of them were new to that city, both of them were relatively young men, and both of them were dying. One of them was single, the other was married, and both of them had contracted AIDS from other men. The wife of one of those former pastors told me, “I heard my husband stand in the pulpit and preach against homosexuality. How could he become involved in the very sin he so strongly condemned?” When calling sinners from sin and trying to restore them, may we always heed the warning of [Galatians 6:1](#), “watching out for yourselves so you also won’t be tempted.” The Israelites had no guarantee that they would not fall into the same sins and suffer the same consequences as the Canaanites. They did. So can we. We confess our weakness.

2. We Conform Our Service to Scripture

Followers of Jesus in the West live in a sex-saturated, sexually perverse culture. What do we do?

A. We share the gospel of Jesus Christ. **Separation from sin begins with salvation, salvation begins with hearing the gospel, and hearing the gospel begins with some follower of Jesus sharing the gospel (Rom 10:14-15). Rules do not change the hearts of people. Jesus changes the hearts of people so that they want to follow Jesus and obey God, and God’s Spirit empowers us to obey.**

B. We support laws that define morality biblically. We should be grateful for godly persons who serve in elected positions and influence state and federal laws. We should also be grateful that we have the right to vote our convictions. **The convictions of followers of Jesus should be shaped by God’s Word in the Bible. The civil laws in the Old Testament, such as the imposition of the death penalty for various offenses, are not applicable today since God intended those laws only for old covenant Israel. However, God’s moral laws in the old covenant are not obsolete. They reveal God’s character and God’s will for humanity.** Followers of Jesus who live in a democracy have the responsibility to work to enact laws based on the moral principles of God’s Word. What will be our authority in voting—our own opinion, the opinions of our

culture, or what God says in His Word? When we support laws that define morality biblically, we are working to promote justice and righteousness. We are contributing to the creation of a culture where the gospel is more likely to gain a hearing.

C. We make friends with people who are different from us. Jesus was known for such friend-making. [Matthew 11:19](#) says that *people called Jesus “a friend of . . . sinners.”* Since our Savior was and is a friend of sinners, His followers should be friends of sinners too. **How can we express love to sinners or share the gospel with them if we do not make friends with them?**

D. We help people struggling with sexual identity. People who are struggling in that way need people who will listen to them, love them, care for them, and help them find Jesus and the wholeness Jesus gives. These are days of great opportunity for the church; **we should rise to answer the call to minister to people struggling with same-sex attractions, love them, teach them what God says, and tell them about Jesus.**

E. We become a haven for those hurt by sexual sin. A lot of people have been hurt by sexual sin. The media promotes sexual sin as if it brings only pleasure and never pain. I wish more people could see the other side of sexual sin—people who carry long-term scars from what they have done or what others have done to them. As a pastor, no one has ever come to me to extol the joy and pleasure they have experienced in sexual sin. However, numerous people have come to me for help in recovering from the enduring pain of it.

Minnie Warburton was abused as a child by her father. In adulthood she confronted her father about it, but he would not confess his wrong to his dying day. Then one day she read Leviticus. Anybody who questions the value of Leviticus should read the article she wrote.

I remember very clearly the moment . . . and the words leaping out at me . . . incest taboos. One after another. I slammed the book shut. I was shocked. I had no idea that was in the Bible. . . . My father . . . was six years dead. . . . I never knew he was breaking God’s law. But there it was, clear as anything. . . . I will never be able to explain what that moment was like, that discovery of [Leviticus 18](#). I wanted to call up everyone I knew and say, “It was wrong. What he did was wrong. It says so right here, in the Bible.” Therapists had told me, my own instincts told me, everything had told me—yet *nothing* told me the way Leviticus told me. . . . It was wrong, truly, truly wrong. And for the first time I felt utterly and absolutely vindicated. For the first time, I felt clean. . . . I felt released. (Warburton, “Letting the Voice of Leviticus Speak,” 166–67)

Many people in our culture are claiming it is too restrictive or judgmental to tell anyone, “That behavior is wrong.” **God’s laws are not too restrictive, and they are certainly not judgmental. On the contrary, they are protective.** If Minnie Warburton’s father had obeyed them, they would have protected her. God’s laws protect our happiness, and they protect the innocent and vulnerable. We praise Him for that.

Praise Him that His law shows us our sin. We praise Him for His grace in Christ that forgives our sin and sets us free. We praise Him that one day we will be in His presence forever where no sin exists!

Reflect and Discuss

1. How is [Leviticus 18](#) an applicable word for our times?
2. How do people in our culture have a similar approach to authority as Israel did during the time of the judges? What were the results of this approach in the book of Judges?
3. What authority governs your sexuality?
4. Why does God get to make the rules, and why are His rules best?
5. Why should we uphold Old Testament laws forbidding homosexuality?
6. According to [1 Corinthians 6:9-11](#), what separates followers of Jesus from the unrighteous?
7. How does God help us with our fallen, twisted ideas about sexuality?
8. To whom in the gay community are you showing love?
9. What advice does Paul offer in [Galatians 6:1](#) concerning our attempts to restore a sinning brother or sister?
10. How should Christians in the West confront their sex-saturated, sexually perverse culture?

Holiness and Love.

Leviticus 19–20

Main Idea: God commands us to be holy, as He is holy, and to demonstrate holiness in the way we relate to other people.

- IV. An Exhortation from God
- V. A Definition from God’s Word
- VI. Our Holiness Arises from a Relationship with God.
 - A. We submit to the commands of God.
 - B. We celebrate communion with God.

- VII. **We Demonstrate Holiness in Our Relationships with People.**
- A. Generosity
 - B. Honesty
 - C. Sympathy
 - D. Equity
 - E. Mercy
 - F. Purity
- VIII. **Our Holiness Requires Living by Distinctions.**
- A. The distinction between **sacred vs. secular**
 - B. The distinction between **marriage vs. singleness**
 - C. The distinction between **falsehood vs. truth**

Several years ago, I was in my office with the Bible open before me. I don't remember whether I was spending time alone with God or preparing a sermon, but I was thinking and praying about something in God's Word. I was interrupted by that familiar ping from my computer telling me that an email had arrived. Opening the email at that moment was probably not a good idea, but I did. It was from one of those people who seem to be placed in our lives by God for the purpose of testing our patience and grace. When he wrote that email, this man was in top form—condescending, vitriolic, insulting, yet unstintingly dogmatic. My thoughts about God and His Word vaporized. Those holy thoughts were replaced by anger and resentment. It wasn't long before those emotions subsided, but then I felt discouraged. **How could my mind be filled with God's holy thoughts one moment and then suddenly, seemingly involuntarily I was flooded with feelings that were far from holy? I'm a child of God; I'm supposed to walk with Him and experience His peace, joy, and love in every situation. How could all of that vanish in a few seconds? How could I sin so easily?**

Maybe that incident has a familiar ring to you. The circumstances may differ, but the results are the same. You were tempted and you sinned. Maybe it was anger with a family member, pride, stretching the truth, lust, coveting the things of this world instead of the things of God. Whatever the sin, the question is the same—**God has called us to be holy, how can we sin so easily? God's Word offers help and hope. You and I can live holy lives. The apostle Paul boldly wrote in Romans 6:14, "Sin will not rule over you."**

Many students of the Bible regard [chapter 19 of Leviticus](#) as the thematic center of the book. **The largest themes of the book of Leviticus are the holiness of God and the holiness of God's people; those are the themes of [chapters 19 and 20](#).**

I. An Exhortation from God

[Chapter 19, verse 2](#) says, **"Be holy because I, Yahweh your God, am holy."** God said that to His people four times in Leviticus ([11:44,45](#); [19:2](#); [20:26](#)). Similarly, God said, "Be holy, for I am Yahweh your God" ([20:7](#)). **God also repeated that command in the New Testament in [1 Peter 1:16](#)—"Be holy, because I am holy."** God is holy, and He calls us to be holy like Him.

God is holy in every moment of time and in all circumstances; He calls us to be holy in every moment of time and in all circumstances, like Him. God's holiness means that He is different, other than, and He is unique in that He is perfectly righteous. God calls us to be different, other than, in that we live righteously.

Holiness is an intrinsic attribute of God's nature, and God expresses His holiness through what He does. He calls us to a holiness that is internal and that we express through what we do.

What does holiness mean?

II. A Definition from God's Word

The word *holiness* is archaic to a lot of people today. When they hear the word they think of women who wear only long dresses, black stockings, and their hair in a bun. They think of religiously smug people who act "holier than thou." Those are not positive conceptions of holiness. Jonathan Edwards was a great intellectual and a pastor in New England in the eighteenth century. He **wrote the following about holiness:**

Holiness is a most beautiful and lovely thing. We drink in strange notions of holiness... as if it were a melancholy, morose, sour and unpleasant thing; but there is nothing in it but what is sweet and . . . lovely. (Edwards, *Works*, vol. 13, 163)

Holiness is not melancholy and unpleasant. Holiness is sweet and lovely. So what is it?

Holiness is a condition of our hearts created by God, and a way of behaving lived by us.

- A. **First, holiness is a condition of our hearts created by God.** In our natural state we are sinners, separated from God, and without hope in this life or the next. Ephesians 2:3 says we are **"by nature children under wrath."** Through the saving work of Jesus, God creates a new condition in our hearts. **We were spiritually dead, but He makes us spiritually alive.** We were separated from Him by sin, but He reconciles us to Himself through Jesus' substitutionary sacrifice on the cross. The new condition in our hearts is *His* work. We repent of our sin and put our faith in Him, **but Acts 5:31 says God grants repentance and Ephesians 2:8 calls our faith "God's gift."** We are justified, made right in His presence, but how does that happen? Romans 3:24 says that we are "justified freely by His grace." First Peter 5:10 says that every part of our reconciliation to Him and our growth in holiness is His work—"the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will personally restore, establish, strengthen, and support you." He calls us to Himself, and He restores us, strengthens us, and establishes us. Furthermore, how do we grow in holiness or sanctification? God does that. It happens through His power in us. In John 17:17 Jesus did not pray that we would be better people in our own strength; He prayed to God the Father, **"Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth."** God sanctifies us. Becoming holy is something God does in us; He changes our hearts.

- B. On the other hand, **holiness is a way of behaving lived by us.** When we refer to salvation and sanctification as solely God's work, it is like looking out at a beautiful corn field and saying, "Look what God has done!" Did God do that? Yes, He did! He caused the seeds to germinate in the soil, He caused the rain to fall and the plants to grow. God did it. On the other hand, didn't the farmer do that? Yes, he did! He bought and planted the seeds, he cultivated the field and sprayed the plants, and he has to work to pick the corn and sell it.

Our sanctification, the process of becoming holy, is like that. *God changes our hearts and makes holiness possible, and we work out holiness in our lives. Holiness is a condition of our hearts created by God, and a way of behaving lived by us.* Philippians 2:12-13 says, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," but then it says, "For it is God who is working in you, enabling you both to desire and to work out His good purpose." God works in us, and we work out what He does in our hearts. God does what only He can do. He regenerates us, He replaces our spiritual death with spiritual life. Then we do what only we can do. We resist sin and do works of righteousness in His power. The apostle Paul lived a holy life, and in 1 Corinthians 15:10 Paul wrote, "By God's grace I am what I am." Then in the same verse he wrote, "I worked more than any of them." Then Paul flipped the coin again and wrote, "yet not I, but God's grace that was with me." **Holiness is being separate from the world and consecrated to God. Holiness is a condition of our hearts created by God and a way of behaving** lived by us. To return to Leviticus 19, what does God say about holiness in this chapter?

III. Our Holiness Arises from a Relationship with God

God's people Israel had the opportunity to be holy because they were in a special relationship with God. He had chosen them, redeemed them, and invited them into His presence. In that relationship He told them to be holy, because the God to whom they were relating is holy.

Holiness arises from a relationship with God, and the closer we get to God the more holy we become. The tabernacle in which the Israelites worshiped in the wilderness was a physical illustration of that spiritual reality. The tabernacle was divided into three sections, each one of which represented different degrees of holiness. The outer court was the farthest from the place of God's presence, so it was regarded as the least holy. Every Israelite was allowed in that space. The bronze altar of sacrifice was located in the outer court, as was the basin of water the priests used to cleanse themselves before they entered the holy place. The holy place was inside the tent. The people saw that space as closer to God. Only the priests were allowed in that room. The lampstand, the table for the bread of the Presence, and the incense altar were located in the holy place, and all the furniture was made of gold. Third, the inner sanctum of the tabernacle was called *qodesh haqodeshim*—the "holy of holies" or "most holy place" (e.g., Exod 26:33-34). The only furniture in the most holy place was the ark of the covenant, which was also gold. That space represented the presence of God, and it was the most holy. Only the high priest could enter that room. God said that from that place He would meet with His people, so that space was ineffably holy. In the tabernacle, to move closer to the space that represented the presence of

God was to become more and more holy. That physical reality illustrates **a spiritual reality—the closer we get to God, the more holy we will become, the more separated from the ways of the world and the more consecrated to God we will grow.** Our holiness arises from a relationship with God. **The key to holiness is staying close to God.**

Leviticus 19 and 20 emphasize that we express our holiness when we submit to the commands of God. **Chapter 19, verses 3 and 4 include four of the Ten Commandments—** honoring parents, keeping the Sabbath, not worshiping other gods, and not making idols. In **verse 37** God says, ***“You must keep all My statutes and all My ordinances and do them.”*** In **chapter 20, verse 8** God says, ***“Keep My statutes and do them.”*** Again, in **verse 22** God says, ***“You are to keep all My statutes and all My ordinances, and do them.”***

To be holy means to be different, but different in what way? The difference of the people of God is shaped by our obedience to God’s commands.

Jesus said in **John 14:15**, ***“If you love Me, you will keep My commands.”*** If we have a love relationship with God, we will obey His commands.

Also, **Leviticus 19** says we express our holiness when **we celebrate communion with God.** **Verses 5-8** describe **the fellowship offering, and the purpose of the fellowship offering was to celebrate communion with God.** **Sharing in the fellowship offering meant the worshiper was at peace with God.**

Our fellowship with God is exclusive. No other god is invited to the fellowship. In **chapter 20, verses 2-6** **God refers to pagan religious practices and He denounces them.** “Molech” was the god of the Ammonites, and God singled out the worship of Molech for condemnation. Sometimes spelled “Milcom” (**1 Kings 11:33**), this god was also worshiped by people in neighboring nations. **Child sacrifice was a prominent feature of Molech worship,** which is the reason **Leviticus 20:2** refers to the one “who gives any of his children to Molech” (see also **vv. 3-4**). **God calls His people to honor and protect human life, especially the lives of family members.** Hence, **killing a child to placate a god that did not even exist was an especially egregious sin.** In addition to murder, such pagan worship was also unfaithfulness to Israel’s exclusive relationship with the one true God. In **chapter 20, verse 6** **God referred to consulting the cult functionaries of pagan religions—“mediums or spiritists.”** **God called such activity prostitution, a graphic way of stating that consulting such people was unfaithfulness to God’s sacred covenant with His people.**

We should remember that holiness arises from a relationship with God. God produces holiness in us, and when we sin we ruin our holiness and break our fellowship with God. **Fellowship with God and holiness go together. If we are not in fellowship with God we will not be holy, and when we sin we break our fellowship with God.** Jesus said, “The pure in heart are blessed, for they will see God” (**Matt 5:8**). **We should not think we can commit sin and say, “Everything in my relationship with God is great!” Everything is not great. God is perfectly holy and sin cannot be in His presence, so our sin breaks fellowship with Him.**

Isaiah 59:2 says, ***“Your iniquities have built barriers between you and your God.”***

What is the solution for sin that separates us from God? God's solution is Jesus.

Who needs Jesus? [Romans 3:23](#) says, "All have sinned." Everyone needs Jesus, because everyone has sinned and is therefore separated from God. [Romans 6:23](#) says, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." **Sin leads to death, but Jesus died our death on the cross as the once-for-all sacrifice for sin, and then He rose from the dead. When we put our faith in Him, His sacrifice on the cross atones for our sin, He reconciles us to God, and He gives us eternal life and power for living—the same power that caused Him to rise from the grave.**

Christians are people who know we are sinners who were separated from God, and we turned to Jesus for forgiveness and reconciliation to God.

We do not turn to Jesus for help only when we first put our faith in Him. We need His forgiveness and cleansing all the time. We also need His power over sin so our fellowship with God can continue.

In the Lord's Prayer Jesus taught us to ask God for pardon for our sin in the past—"Forgive us our debts." Jesus also taught us to ask God for power over sin in the present—"Do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" ([Matt 6:12-13](#)). God does that. **God gives us pardon for sin in our past and power over sin in our present**; and praise His name one day He will deliver us from the very presence of sin!

IV. We Demonstrate Holiness in Our Relationships with People

Leviticus 19:9-18 describes virtues that should characterize our relationships. When God works in us so that we are holy and we live out that holiness in the way we behave, inevitably we will relate to people differently. We will exhibit **certain virtues.**

- A. **The first virtue is generosity.** In [verses 9](#) and [10](#) **God commands His people to allow gleaning.** Incomplete harvesting was an act of generosity by farmers. They left some produce in their fields so poor people could pick it. **God commanded partial harvesting as a way to provide for the poor.** God also expects His people today to be generous to the poor. The apostle Paul quoted Jesus as saying, *"It is more blessed to give than to receive"* ([Acts 20:35](#)). **Generosity is one way we demonstrate holiness.** How are you being generous to the poor?

- B. **God also commanded honesty.** In [verses 11](#) and [12](#) **God tells us not to steal, not to act deceptively, not to lie, and not to swear falsely. In other words, be honest.** We **speak the truth and do not take anything that belongs to someone else.** In [verses 35](#) and [36](#)

God tells His people to be honest in business. Those verses refer to weights and measures in the marketplace. God's point is that His people are not to tell someone they are selling them a certain amount of their product, when actually they are selling less. In today's measurements we would say that we are not to sell a pound of something and give the customer only fourteen ounces. Such practices are dishonest.

A lady learned late one afternoon that some friends were coming to her house for dinner. She drove to the grocery store, went to the meat department, and asked for a large roast. The butcher only had one roast left, so he took it out of the freezer, weighed it, and gave it to her. She told him that she wanted a larger roast. Instead of telling her that was the only roast he had, the butcher went to the freezer, put the roast back in, took it out, and weighed it again, and this time he pushed down a little on the scales to make the roast seem bigger. The lady was satisfied, and she said, "I'll take both of them." It doesn't always pay to be dishonest in business.

God says that when we are holy we will be generous and honest.

- C. **Third, we demonstrate holiness by showing sympathy.** In [verse 13](#) **God says not to oppress people.** In fact, if a poor person is working for us and he or she needs the wages, we don't wait until the next day to pay. We pay today so the worker can buy food for tonight. In other words, we **show compassion to people.** In [verse 14](#) **God mentions the deaf and blind.** We don't treat them unsympathetically. Instead, we treat them with compassion. Holiness results in sympathy.

- D. **Fourth, God required equity.** In [verse 15](#) **God forbids injustice and partiality in court** to the rich or the poor. In other words, **we don't play favorites; we do what is right.** We are tempted to show partiality to the rich because they might grant us favors. We are tempted to show partiality to the poor because we feel sorry for them or because we want to "stick it to" the rich. God tells us to tell the truth, whether we are speaking about a rich person or a poor person. In [verse 16](#) **God says not to slander anybody.** Slander is saying something untrue about someone behind his or her back. God requires holiness in His people, and holiness includes refraining from saying things about people that are not true, in the courtroom or out of it.

- E. **God also commanded mercy.** In [verses 33](#) and [34](#) **God says to treat foreigners, or sojourners, as if they are our neighbors...** in [verse 18](#) God tells us, "Love your neighbor as yourself," and in [verse 34](#) God says concerning the foreigners among us, "Love him as yourself."

We sometimes hear that Old Testament religion was a religion of rules that addressed external behavior but not the condition of the heart. Some groups made Old Testament religion into a legalistic system, but that is a perversion of God's intent.

Leviticus 19 shows us that God intended His people to love—not merely to perform religious rites and follow moralistic rules, but to love people. Jesus prioritized the command to love over every other command.

Somebody asked Jesus,

“Which command is the most important of all?”

“This is the most important,” Jesus answered: “Listen, Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is One. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other command greater than these.” (Mark 12:28-31)

Jesus said the two greatest commandments are to love God and love people. How do we demonstrate holiness? **We love God and we love people.** Sure, we don't participate in the sins of the world, but we also love the people in the world.

The Bible does not describe love as a feeling, and God does not command us to fall in love or to fall out of love. **Our culture speaks of love as a feeling, but God refers to love as obedience to a command.** Feelings come and go, but our love for God and people remains constant as a matter of obedience, and God holds us accountable as to whether we behave lovingly. What if our love runs dry? Where do we get the power to obey God's command to love? **Romans 5:5** says, *“God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”* That's another way God makes us holy. He pours His holy love into our hearts; we get the strength to love all people at all times from God Himself.

- F. **Sixth, God called His people to relate to other people in purity.** In **chapter 20 God gave His people numerous commands concerning staying away from impurity. He told them to refrain from sins like cursing parents (v. 9), adultery (v. 10), incest (vv. 11-12,14,17-21), homosexuality (v. 13), and bestiality (vv. 15-16).** God's commands against all those sins are also mentioned elsewhere in Scripture. Considering the debauchery represented by such a list, it seems amazing that God then referred to the people of Canaan and said of them, “They did all these things.” (v. 23) Truly the people of Canaan were far from God and corrupt. They were committing adultery, incest, homosexuality, and bestiality. God stated that their shameless sin was the reason He was driving them out of the land and giving it to His people (vv. 23-24). **God was calling His people to be different from the other peoples, holy.** He was calling them to be faithful to their covenant with Him. **Our holiness arises from a relationship with God, and we demonstrate holiness in our relationships with people.**

V. Our Holiness Requires Living by Distinctions

In the book of Leviticus God regularly addresses distinctions—the distinction between clean and unclean food, the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable sacrifices, and so on.

A. Leviticus 19:19 refers to the **distinction between sacred and secular**.

The mixing of things mentioned in verse 19 was allowed in the tabernacle—the mixing of fabrics in priestly garments and the mixing of spices in tabernacle incense. Because that mixing was practiced in the tabernacle, God said it was special, so it was not to be practiced in secular life (see [Deut 22:9-11](#)). **Of course, we don't observe the distinctions about mixing things today. However, the principle is that some things are holy and some things are profane, and that difference ought to be observed. Some things are special and holy.** The Bible, for example, is God's Word, not man's word, so we treat it with special respect. Worship is especially sacred too, since Jesus made a point to say that He is present where we are gathered in His name ([Matt 18:20](#)). **Holiness involves making a distinction between the sacred and secular.**

B. Second, **we live by the distinction between marriage and singleness**. The seventh commandment says, "Do not commit adultery" ([Exod 20:14](#)). **The penalty for adultery in old covenant Israel was death. Both the command and the penalty were different from those of the cultures around Israel.** Those cultures practiced every form of deviation from God's design, prostitution was one of their religious rituals, and they worshiped pagan gods who were also sexually immoral. In that environment, God said to His people, "Be holy"; you will be different.

Verses 20-22 underscore the sanctity of marriage. When a man was intimate with "a woman who is a slave" ([v. 20](#)), that woman was not married, so it was not an act of adultery. Therefore, the death penalty was not applied. However, such sexual sin is immoral activity that is offensive to God, so [Leviticus 19](#) says they are guilty of sin and the man must offer a restitution offering to make atonement ([vv. 21-22](#)).

Today distinctions based on the sanctity of marriage continue to mark God's people as different. **God's Word says that physical intimacy is reserved for marriage, and marriage is between one man and one woman.** In the United States, 50 years ago no one would have anticipated that the commitment of God's people to that distinction would make us out of step with society, but **today we find ourselves in circumstances similar to those of ancient Canaan. Like the Israelites, we are surrounded by deviancy from God's design, and God says to us, "Be holy." God calls us to love our neighbors fervently and publically, but He also calls us to refrain from the sinful ways of our culture.** We honor God's distinctions between marriage and singleness.

C. **Third, our holiness is defined by the distinction between falsehood and truth.**

In [verses 23-31](#) God called His people to be different from the false religions around them.

When fruit trees bore fruit, the people were to give praise to the one true God, not to other gods, because the one true God gave the harvest—not the harvest gods of false religions. **In [verses 26-31](#) God prohibited a list of sins that were commonly practiced by those who believed the falsehood of pagan religions—divination, cutting the body as a sign of devotion to a false god, making one’s daughter a prostitute, and consulting the guidance of mediums.** God commanded His people to be holy, different.

When we consider all the areas of life God addressed in this one chapter, the clear message is...

**God’s call to be holy encompasses every part of our lives—
spiritual, ritual, moral, and social.**

Holiness is being separated from the sinful ways of the world and consecrated to God in every part of our lives.

Years ago I was first introduced to Robert Munger’s booklet [My Heart Christ’s Home](#). Ever since, it has affected the way I think about God’s influence in every part of my life. Munger wrote,

One evening I invited Jesus Christ into my heart. What an entrance He made! It was not a spectacular, emotional thing, but very real. Something happened at the very center of my life. He came into the darkness of my heart and turned on the light. . . . He started music where there had been stillness. . . . I said to Jesus Christ, “Lord . . . I want to have You settle down here and be perfectly at home.”

Munger then described his life as a house. The different rooms in the house represented different parts of his life, and he showed Jesus around the house of his life. He started with the study. Jesus saw what he had been reading and thinking about, and Jesus replaced that reading material with different books and different pictures on the wall. Then Munger showed Jesus his living room, and Jesus said, “This is a delightful room. Let’s meet here every morning.” So he started spending time with Jesus in his living room. Then he showed Jesus the workroom, and Jesus helped him to do better work. When Jesus saw the recreation room, Jesus gave him better ways to spend his free time. There was one room left to show Jesus, but Munger did not want Jesus to see it. The hidden room was a small closet where he kept a few things locked away. He didn’t want anybody to know about those things, especially Jesus. But he wrote,

With trembling fingers I passed the key to Him. He took it, walked over to the door, opened it, entered, took out all the putrefying stuff that was rotting there, and threw it away. Then He cleaned the closet and painted it. It was done in a moment’s time. . . . [W]hat victory and release to have that dead thing out of my life!

An idea occurred to Munger. He asked Jesus if maybe He could do in every room of the house what He had done in that dirty closet. Jesus reminded him that He was only a guest in the house; He was not in control of every room. At that point Munger ran to his safe, got the title deed to the house, and he signed his house over to Jesus. *“‘Here,’ I said. ‘Here it is, all that I am and have, forever. Now You run the house. I’ll just remain with You as a servant and friend.’* Things are different since Jesus Christ has . . . made His home in my heart.”

Yes, things are different when Jesus takes up residence in our lives. Everything is different because He becomes the Owner of the house. He becomes the Master of every corner of every room; every part of our lives becomes holy. **When God spoke to His people Israel in the Sinai wilderness, He called them to be holy because He is holy. He says the same thing to us.** So we give Him the keys to every room, and as He takes charge our whole lives become holy.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What are the themes of [Leviticus 19 and 20](#)?
2. How does Jonathan Edwards describe holiness? Do you typically think of holiness in this way? Why or why not?
3. Whose responsibility is the work of holiness?
4. What does the tabernacle illustrate about holiness?
5. According to [Leviticus 19 and 20](#), how do we express holiness in our relationship with God?
6. How should we demonstrate holiness in our relationships with other people?
7. Explain God’s command to practice partial harvesting. How are you being generous to the poor?
8. In [Leviticus 19:33-34](#) God says to treat foreigners, or sojourners, as if they are our neighbors. According to this, how should Christians treat legal and illegal immigrants?
9. How would you respond to a person who says that Old Testament religion was just a religion of rules that addressed external behavior but not the condition of the heart?
10. Is Jesus the Owner of your house? What areas are you unwilling to submit to His lordship? - **Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary** – Exalting Jesus in Leviticus.

Preliminary thoughts:

Ch.18 = Sexual Purity
Ch.19 = Societal Purity
Ch.20 = Consequential Impurity

- 1 Creator
- 2 Covenants (old vs new)
- 3 Categories (of biblical Law) - 2 “Old” & 1 New
 - Civil (old)
 - Ceremonial (old)
 - Christian (eternal/spiritual Law of Christ)
- 4 Consistencies
- 5 Cultural-Consequences (we learn, live, love...)
 - Great Commandments
 - Great Commission
 - Great Combat
 - Great Christian

- Great Church

Laws:

A. CEREMONIAL Law

How to LOOK like My set apart people

- Establishes Vertical relational dynamics
- Establishes Horizontal relational norms

B. CIVIL Law

How to LIVE like My set apart people

- Faithfully obedient in pursuit of holiness
- Reverent, set-apart submission

C. CHRISTIAN Law

How to LOVE like My set apart people

- Great Commandments
- Great Commission
- Great Combat/Conflict
- Great Christian
- Great Church

PERVERSIONS:

- Liberalism (North Church to Universalism)
- Legalism
- Universalism
- Catholicism
- Adventism
- Hyper-Calvinism

"When you kill (the MOST innocent & vulnerable - LITERALLY) and call it 'choice,' you've merely modernized The Alter of Molech and turned into The Alter to/for Me." - JDP

See gleaming as addressing greed with the principle of responsible generosity. - JDP

TOZER on Christian Leadership:

Pastoral Ministry: How Much I Could Have Done

And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.—[2 Corinthians 8:5](#)

Before the judgment seat of Christ my service will be judged not by how much I have done but by how much I could have done. In God's sight my giving is measured not by how much I have given but by how much I could have given and how much I had left after I made my gift. The needs of the world and my total ability to minister to those needs decide the worth of my service.

Not by its size is my gift judged, but by how much of me there is in it. No man gives at all until he has given all. No man gives anything acceptable to God until he has first given himself in love and sacrifice....

In the work of the church the amount one man must do to accomplish a given task is determined by how much or how little the rest of the company is willing to do. It is a rare church whose members all put their shoulder to the wheel. The typical church is composed of the few whose shoulders are bruised by their faithful labors and the many who are unwilling to raise a blister in the service of God and their fellow men. There may be a bit of wry humor in all this, but it is quite certain that there will be no laughter when each of us gives account to God of the deeds done in the body. *That Incredible Christian*, 105.

"Help me to give of myself completely today, Lord. I hold nothing back, even if at the end of the day I'm the only one with a bruised shoulder. Amen."