



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

What We Need in Order to Worship

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Exodus 19:7-15

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⁷ So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. ⁸ All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD. ⁹ And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever."

When Moses told the words of the people to the LORD, ¹⁰ the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments ¹¹ and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. ¹² And you shall set limits for the people all around, saying, "Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death. ¹³ No hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot; whether beast or man, he shall not live." When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain." ¹⁴ So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people; and they washed their garments. ¹⁵ And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman."

(Pastor Prays)

There was a time on Sunday mornings before COVID came through and sort of changed the way we do things. There was a time on Sunday mornings when we might stand and greet one another, and shake hands, much to the horror of every introvert in here. There was a time also on Sunday mornings when the time came for the offering, and we passed the offering plate around. We did so not just to take up an offering, because a lot of people do that during the

week online, but it's what we do. It helps me not to forget that on Sunday mornings, we actually give to the Lord, and the offering plate coming by gave an opportunity for many people to give. When I was a kid coming up in church, 11 or 12 years old, I didn't have a job, the offering plate would come around and my dad would reach into his pocket, get his big old giant billfold out, pull a dollar bill out of it, and put it in my hand so I would have a dollar when the offering plate came around, and I could put the dollar in that didn't belong to me. I couldn't generate it. I didn't have a job. But he gave me a dollar so that I could participate in worship, even though I myself didn't actually have anything to contribute.

Now, in a higher, holier, more profound way, that is sort of what we get in this passage in front of you today. We are reminded of a principle that whatever God demands, God will provide. God provides what he requires. Let's set the scene. Here we are in chapter 19. The Lord now has brought his people out of Egypt into the wilderness. Now they are at Mount Sinai. Mount Sinai is a pivotal point in the history of Israel and the people of God. Here is where the Ten Commandments will come. And the Lord, right now in chapter 19, is preparing his people for worship and for the giving of the law. They are about to meet with God to worship God and to know God. So it made me, as a preacher, this is kind of the way you think, it made me ask the question, what do we actually need to be able to worship and to know this God of the Bible, this holy God. What do we need? And that's the message today. Here it is in a sentence.

God Gives Us What We Need to Worship

Let's go back and look at it a little bit and get a running start, and then I'll make some application. If there's a storyline in the Bible, what I've been trying to do for the last couple of years is just go through, point out a couple of things, a little bit like a Bible study. That'll take about 10 minutes. Then we'll come back and make some life application to say, what do I do with this passage? So you just follow along in your copy of the Bible. Join me there in verse 7. Verse 7 takes us right to the point where God is speaking with Moses. Moses comes down, in verse 7, from the mountain, and he called the elders of the people together, and you'll notice that he set before them all the words that the Lord commanded him. What you have here is Moses simply conveying verbatim what God has said. Let me pause there and say, this is why we actually do what is known as expositional preaching. It is exposing the text to people. We believe that God has revealed himself not only in creation, we believe that God has revealed

himself specifically in his word. That's why any preacher worth his salt is going to read the Bible and talk about the Bible. A sermon should not be filled up with story after story after story. We call those skyscraper sermons because you've got story on story on story. That's not what a sermon is. A sermon should be out of the Bible. Why? Because God has revealed himself. Moses is simply doing that here in verse 7. It's what every preacher worth of salt does, give the people what God has said. That's what he's doing in verse 7. In verse 8, all the people answered and said, 'All that the Lord has spoken, we will do.' And Moses reported the words of the people to the Lord.

Do you see Moses' position now? Moses is coming down from God to speak to the people, and then he goes from the people to speak to God. He comes from God to speak to the people, and from the people to speak to God. I'm going to make a point out of that, him being the mediator. And what we find here is a picture of one greater than Moses, who is Jesus. Here's the gospel in the Old Testament: that God in his goodness has given us Jesus, the ultimate mediator. As the God-man, he comes and lives a perfect life, dies on the cross to take the wrath of God away from sinners, and God raises him from the dead. He has ascended into heaven. And if you will trust God did that for you, you will be saved. There's the gospel in verses 7 and 8 when we see Moses as a mediator.

Let's keep going. 9 And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud. Okay, so in the Old Testament, that's what you find. When God shows himself, here's what he does. God reveals and conceals. It was a thick cloud that reveals and conceals. The psalmist says in Psalm 72 that he comes to us in clouds and thick darkness. We know he's there, but we can't see completely. You remember Isaiah chapter 6, when in the year the King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord. And when he looks into the temple, it's filling with smoke. He's revealed and concealed. You might remember in the New Testament when Jesus is transfigured and three of the apostles are there with him. What we have is a cloud or smoke covering; he is revealed and concealed. Here is God in his goodness showing himself. He's going to reveal himself in verse 9, and he is also going to conceal. Why? Because he's too much. Now notice why he does this. In verse 9, there's a personal note there for Moses. So, this is a lot of talk between God and his people, but verse 9 is a personal note to Moses. Look at it with me. ⁹ *And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak*

with you, and may also believe you forever." I'm doing this so that they might believe you. God is giving help. I'm going to make a point out of that too. Why do the people believe Moses? Because God has helped him. That's verse 9.

In verse 10, ¹⁰ *the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments.* So, consecration and a need for cleansing, it's a reminder right there that our lives are marked by sin. The outward display of dirt and filth would be a display of an inward need for cleansing. We now know that it's not the outward that needs cleansing as much as it is the inward. And we know that Jesus Christ, his perfect life, his atoning death, his resurrection, that is what provides cleansing for us. There in verse 10 is the gospel again, as a reminder that we need cleansing.

What about this third day in verse 11? Be ready for the third day. There's a third day in the Old Testament that reminds us of a third day coming in the New Testament. That when Jesus Christ would be crucified on a Friday, the Saturday was a Sabbath, he kept the Sabbath completely still, and the third day was Sunday. That's why we worship on a Sunday. This third day here points us to the glorious third day of the resurrection of Jesus that gives us our hope. ¹¹ *and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.* See that phraseology in verse 11? God comes down. Old preachers used to say that God condescends. We use the word condescending as somebody that puts us down or thinks they're better than us, but in its purest form, it is to come down. You might remember when God saw the Tower of Babel. He said, I can't really tell what it is. I need to go down and see. It's so small. I'm going to go down and see what it is. Here's a picture of God coming down. God must always condescend, come down to us. And the greatest way he has come down to us is in the God-man, Jesus. Here you have a reminder of our need for the gospel in verse 11. So he comes down. 11 The LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.

Verse 12 says, you will set limits for the people all around. Look at the limits. Take care not to go up on the mountain. Don't touch the edge of it. If you touch the edge of this mountain, you're going to be put to death. No hand shall touch it, or he will be stoned or shot through with an arrow. That's not just men and women, but animals. What you find there in verses 12 and 13 is this call for holiness. Here's a reminder that God sets boundaries. And when God sets boundaries, they are there not to limit our freedom, but to protect us from harm. That is there

for our good. You'll see, God tells Moses, you tell the people, don't come close, because if you come close, you will die. This is what happened to Nadab and Abihu.

You know what? We forget sometimes. I was thinking of that this morning when we were praying, and we were singing that song, The Great I Am. We love that song. But we forget who it is that we are dealing with. And far too often, our approach to worship is so casual. Now, when I say casual, I don't mean style or attire. I mean our attitudes. Notice who we're dealing with here. This is a dangerous God. If you come close and touch, you're going to die. You think about when you see electricity and an exposed wire, and you know you don't get close to that. Here's a picture of the boundary God has drawn around Himself. Don't come close.

And then it goes a little further in verses 14 and 15. ¹⁴ *So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people; and they washed their garments.* ¹⁵ *And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman."* Look, newlyweds, stay away from each other for a little while. This is self-denial. This is focus. This is what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7: that even for married couples, there's a time when you put your attention on God.

Okay, so what does this do for us as New Testament believers? How can we apply this to our lives? Let me offer up a couple of suggestions. What does it mean that God gives us what we need to worship? What do we need? What do we actually need? Let me point out a couple of things. Here's the first one, number one.

We need the word

We need the Bible. We need God's Word. It's right there in verse 7. The text tells us that Moses set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him. The Word of God. What does the Bible do for us? Is it just an owner's manual? Is it just a guide? The Bible, what does it do? The Bible tells us who God is. The Bible tells us how holy God is. The Bible tells us what God demands in the Ten Commandments, the law of God. We can know how we are to live. The Bible tells us who we are, how we have dignity, and how that dignity comes from the image of God in us. It tells us how that image of God in us has been disfigured by our sin, and then how we are alienated from God. The Bible reveals that God as holy. The Bible reveals that man is a

sinner. The Bible tells us that Christ will save you. That's why it's necessary. That's why at Hickory Grove Baptist Church; we make such a big deal out of the Bible.

It's not because we worship the Bible. We do not. We worship the God of the Bible, but we know the God of the Bible through the Bible. That's why we insist on our worship beginning with the reading of the scripture that tells us where we're going. That's why when you hear the songs we sing, they are rooted in scripture. That's why our prayer time is predicated on a verse to help us confess our sins and to see our need for God. That's why whatever preacher gets up here to preach opens up the Bible and reads it first. Today, my hope is that you walk away with a better understanding of this passage and how it applies to you. Not by the creativity of the preacher, but by the power of God's word. What does the Bible do? The Bible informs our preaching. The Bible informs our worship. The Bible gives us a means of discipleship, and how you will grow in Christ when you know more and more of the Bible. The Bible informs our need for evangelism. We believe that people without Christ are dying and going to hell. That they will spend an eternity away from God in utter torture. We believe that Christ is the only way. Where do we get that? We didn't make that up. It's not because we're spiritual bigots. It's because the Bible has taught us that.

The Bible gives you your worldview. The Bible gives you a means for personal growth. What should you do? At the bare minimum, knowing that we have the Bible, every Christian ought to read the Bible through every year. Just read it through every year. Why? Because then you know the whole story, from creation to the fall to redemption to reconciliation to consummation. Not only that, you ought to memorize parts of the Bible. Memorize a couple of verses, some familiar verses, so you can have them ready for your heart. What is the Bible going to do? It's going to strengthen you. It's going to make it so you can fight temptation. Look, you get enough Bible in you, it's going to start convicting you of sin, and your need for Christ. The Bible is going to compel you to do things. We talk about missions. Kyle prayed for our Christmas on missions. When you get the Bible in you, it compels you to do things for Christ. The Bible strengthens you for the events that you have to face. The Bible encourages your soul.

The Bible, what does it do? It gives us the ability to endure. The Bible presses us to reconcile, to be reconciled with other believers. The Bible makes sure that we know we are forgiven in Christ, and then we forgive other people. Man, sometimes when you read the Bible, it just gives

you just enough to keep going. The Bible tells you how to love your enemies and glorify God. When you read verse 7, what you find is worship. We need the word. That's one thing I think you could do with the application here. Let me give you a second way to apply this, number two. This text reminds us that...

We need a mediator

We need to know God, and the only way we can know God is through a mediator. You saw that in verses 7 and 8. I tried to point that out. Moses was going from God to the people and from the people to God. You watch as Moses speaks to the people on behalf of God, and then he speaks to God on behalf of the people. He's the go-between. What does the word mediator mean? It's somebody that bridges the gap between two parties that can't get together. What does Moses do in this passage? Moses points us to the truer and better mediator, Jesus Christ, the God-man. If you were reading the book of Hebrews, you would get to Hebrews 8:6, and it tells us that Christ is the better mediator. He is the best and only mediator that we will ever need.

What is our problem? Here's our problem. This is where theology comes into play. I was on an airplane coming back from Istanbul, and beside me were two women that just met. So it was me and these two women, and they turned, and they felt as if they were long-lost sisters. Seven hours on an airplane, and they talked to one another. I didn't have any headphones, so they talked the whole time. Not only that, they started drinking wine and talking, so it got really carried away. So while they were drinking wine and whatever else they were drinking, they were talking about God and how God works and how close they are to God and how God has winked at them. I don't even know what that means. They went on and on to talk about God and never got to a mediator. You see, our problem is that there is an unbridgeable distance between us as sinful men and women and God as a holy, infinite, transcendental God. And our problem cannot be fixed by a conversation and good thoughts about God and a glass of wine. Our problem is unbridgeable. And God has seen us in our need and has not left us there. He gives us Jesus Christ. This is why Jesus is a must. It's not just that we follow Jesus. It's not just that we seek to be like Jesus. We need the God-man to live in our place, who earned righteousness as he lived a perfect life, kept all of the law. And then at the cross, the cross is where God will pour out his wrath and judgment against all sinners. But Christ has now fulfilled

the living part. He then pays for the sin that we commit. And God the Father kills God the Son to save us. That's the gospel. And the promise of the gospel is that if you will trust that Christ did that for you, not your working, not your good righteousness, not you going to church, not your being a great son or daughter, but that Christ and Christ alone has done that for you, you will be saved. You see, to worship, we need the Bible that tells us who God is, but we also need a mediator, Jesus, to go between us and this holy God. That's two things you might get from this passage. Let me give you a third, number 3. We need the Word. We need a mediator.

We need help

Maybe you've heard that before. You need some help. Let me put it another way. You need God to help you. Look what the Lord says to Moses in verse 9. *⁹And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever."* It's going to be thunder and lightning, and Hebrews tells us that they hear all of that. God does that so the people may hear when he speaks, and they may believe you. This is not so that they might believe me. I'm doing this to help you. God made it so that the people would listen. God did that. God calls people to hear. He showed us that he was with Moses.

Look, this is why we pray and ask God to help us, because he will. We need God's help in salvation. You don't save yourself. God does that. We need God's help in sanctification, to grow in grace, God working it out, working out our salvation. We need God to help us with temptation. What are you tempted with? What did you fall into this weekend? God will help you with that. We need God to help us with our attitude. You need God to help you with your attitude. Ask Him. You need God to warm your heart to show the appropriate affection and love to other brothers and sisters. You need God for that. You need God to give you patience. You need God to help you when you're hurt. You need God to walk you through grief. You need God to sustain you in recovery. You need God to guide you in parenting. You need God's help when you're facing the end of life. This is here to remind us that God will help you. We're reminded that we need the word, we need a mediator, we need God's help. Would you call on Him to help you today? He will. Let me give you a fourth way you might apply this, number four.

We need perspective

Perspective. You might put under this, we need to fear God. That's what I mean by perspective. Let me show you where I get that in verses 12 and 13. He set limits for the people who are all around, saying, take care not to go up on the mountain. Don't touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death. No hand shall touch him. He shall be stoned or shot. Whether beast or man, he will not live. This is terrible. This is a God who is to be feared. Here are some words I would just like to suggest that you work back into your vocabulary as a Christian. Holiness of God. Fear of God. Reverence to God. Apprehension about God. God is dangerous. That God comes down. Look, our danger in 2025 in the United States of America, our danger is not that we think God is too holy. Our danger is that we are too casual in our approach to God. Every one of us here presently in this building right now, every one of us underestimates the holiness of God. There needs to be some anticipation. We underestimate how much he hates our sin. We underestimate the depth of our need. We underestimate the power of forgiveness. We discount the miracle of salvation.

What does the writer of Ecclesiastes say? It's one of my favorite passages in Ecclesiastes. The writer of Ecclesiastes 5:1-2 says, *Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil.* ² *Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few.* One of the good things about the Bible is that it brings us back to remember. Think of what it took for God to save you. And when God saved you, he didn't save you just from hell. God saved you from God. God the Father, through God the Son, saved you from the wrath of God to come. It's good for us now and then just to get perspective and to dial back in who it is we are worshiping. Let me give you a fifth thing to consider, number five.

We need restraint

So we need perspective about who God is, and then we need restraint. Do you see that in verses 12 and 13? It's where God put boundaries up. Verse 12 says, ¹² *And you shall set limits for the people all around, saying, 'Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death.* Your Bible might say, set boundaries.

Those boundaries are there for our good. What are the boundaries? We have God's law. Why is it there? It's there for protection. God's law is there for a reminder. God's law shows us our need for Christ.

Here's what the Puritans used to say, and I think they're right about God's law. There are about three or four uses for the law of God. I'm going to give you a couple of them. One, the law of God reveals the holiness of God and our own sinfulness. That's what the law does. It reveals our sinfulness and God's holiness. Number two, the law restrains evil. Thou shalt not kill. Even if I want to, I'm thinking murderous thoughts, yet I've seen the command, and it restrains me. It restrains evil. Number three, the law is a tutor. Paul says that it leads us to Christ, showing us our need. What does the law do? It shows us that we fall short of the righteousness of God, and then we ask God to save us through Christ and his righteousness. And then there's one more use of the law. The law of God is a clear guide on how God's people are to live. And the only one to ever fully keep the law of God is Jesus. We need Him, not just as our example, we need him as our substitute; to take our sin, and to give us his righteousness. Let me give you one last point, and we'll call it a day here. What do we need according to this passage? Here's the sixth one.

We need preparation

We need to clearly prepare to worship. Come down to verse 15. The text says, if you're newlyweds, stay away from a woman. So, prepare, focus. You need self-denial according to verse 15. Verse 10 says we need to be cleansed, and we need to make sure that our sins are forgiven, so we are reconciled to God. This is what we do before the Lord's Supper. We'll always say, make sure you examine yourself before God, so you are ready to take the Lord's Supper. Verse 10 says you are to be consecrated, set apart. This is us calling on the grace of God found in Jesus. This is what Paul says when he's trying to disciple people in Colossians. That you might be holy and blameless and above reproach before God, and verse 11 says, be ready on the third day. I tried to point it out. That points to another third day when God raised Jesus from the dead and gives us our victory. When Jesus Christ died as a substitute in our place on a Friday, on that Saturday, the Sabbath, the Jewish Sabbath, he was completely still. And then on the third day, God raised Him from the dead. And it's that day that gives us all we need to worship, found in Jesus Christ. God demands perfection, and he gives it to us in Jesus.

My hope is that you find your strength and your life and your forgiveness and your tomorrow wrapped up in Jesus Christ, who died in our place and was raised for our victory. With that in mind this morning, why don't we spend a few moments praying and committing our lives to Christ as we get ready to sing our final worship song.

(Pastor prays)