

Get Ready! To Love . . . Lev 19:9-18

4th message in our series Get Ready!

Intended to do exactly that – get us ready for the ministry year ahead

Looked at – Get ready to reach out; Go; Grow; This week – Get ready to love

To do so – Turn to OT; **Lev 19:9-18**

This is part of the Law that was given to Moses at Mt Sinai about a year out of slavery from Egypt

Important to understand that while this law is not for us, the principles behind the laws are – principles that come from a never changing God and that reveal his never changing heart for his people

That said, there were two primary purposes for the OT Law

1. To make a way for a right relationship between God and man

2. To ensure a right and loving relationship between his people

In other words, then, as now, it's all about *relationship*!

This whole passage is about being in a right relationship with one another

And we find here 5 principles to help us understand how we can accomplish that

To start with . . .

There's no chance of relationship apart from grace (v9-10)

Grace as in, extending favor to people that they don't deserve

Beggars/sojourners don't *deserve* grain they didn't plant, or grapes they didn't grow

To give them the leftovers is an act of grace – of unmerited favor

Extending grace in relationships . . .

- Grace always involves *giving*

And giving always costs you something

If you're not willing to bear the cost of grace, you have little to no chance of establishing or keeping a relationship with someone

Grace is to relationships like fertilizer is to lawns – it takes steady consistent application to keep the grass healthy and the weeds down

But selfishness is like grass killer on your yard – it only takes a little bit to kill your relationship or prevent them from starting in the first place

- Grace often involves *mercy*

While grace is giving others favor that they don't deserve

Mercy is withholding punishment that they do deserve

So often grace and mercy go hand in hand in relationships because people make mistakes, they mess up

Mercy withholds the punishment they deserve

And when people do things that hurt you . . .

- Grace sometimes involves *forgiveness*

Forgiveness is one of those things that is easier said than done –

Easier preached than applied

But it's crucial for every relationship – in marriage, church, work, school, you name it
You have a choice to forgive or not to forgive when you're hurt or wronged

Unfortunately, we think little about the consequences of *not* forgiving; And even less about the reasons *to* forgive

If that's you, I want to give you 5 reasons to forgive

5 Reasons to forgive someone

1. Because you love the person

2. Because it frees you from the bondage of hate and resentment

Hate and resentment will eat you alive

3. Because God forgives you as you forgive others (Mt 6:14-15)

You cannot harbor sin in your heart and be in a right relationship with God

That alone is reason enough to forgive

4. Because it frees you from the hurt of the past

5. Because it restores trust and heals relationships

You know when you've completely forgiven someone when . . .

You seldom recall the wrong, and when you do, you no longer resent it

You can remember without resentment

That doesn't happen *automatically*, and it doesn't usually happen *quickly*

It requires a commitment to let it go every time the hurt or the wrong enters your mind

If you do, eventually you'll forgive completely

There's no chance of relationship apart from the grace of forgiveness, the grace of mercy, the grace of giving

Extending it to one another is not an option, as shown by this recurring phrase –

I am the Lord (10) – Do you know who you're dealing with?

God says – extend grace because I say so, on my authority

It's for your own good and the good of those around you

There's no chance of relationship unless you do

There's no depth of relationship apart from truth (v11-12)

Anybody feel like you have a really good relationship with someone who *lies* to you?

That's because there's no *depth* of relationship apart from truth

Whether it's stealing or being deceptive in your dealings with someone (11a)

Or outright lying, or making false promises in God's name (which profanes or diminishes his holiness)

Whatever the case, there's no depth of relationship when this happens

Students, that's why parents struggle so much when they find out you've been lying to them – it tells them that their relationship with you isn't half as deep as they thought

- Apart from truth you're playing a game

You're just exchanging pleasantries and *acting* like you have a relationship

That one reason a SG might lack life – too little *truth*, and too *many* pleasantries

That's why so many churches are dead – the relationships aren't genuine because the only things said are the things that will tickle your ears and make you *feel* good, instead of the truth that will pierce your hearts and make you *be* good

Exchanging pleasantries instead of truth is why many marriages are shallow/superficial

Neither spouse is willing to speak the truth to one another – the truth of how they feel, what they see in each other (good *or* bad) . . .

Truth and honesty are essential for any kind of depth in relationship

- Herein lies the tension between truth and grace

Bible says – speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15)

Doesn't mean say everything that comes to mind

Nor does it mean telling *half* the truth

If you can let something go without anything being said, and without a root of bitterness growing up in your heart, great – let it go
That's where grace balances truth
If you can't let it go or it needs to be heard . . .
Then speak up and tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth – free of innuendo and exaggeration
That's where truth balances grace
Grace alone makes for a shallow relationship; Truth alone makes for an abusive one
But grace *with* truth makes for a deep one

There's no chance of R apart from grace; No depth of R apart from truth; And . . .

There's no desire for relationship apart from respect (v13-14)

Read vs13-14 – Who needs enemies with friends like that?

- If you oppress your neighbor – use some position or advantage you have to coerce them or maintain the upper hand, you show a lack of respect for them . . .
And negate any desire they may have for a relationship with you
If you withhold something from someone that is due them – like wages, a compliment, a response (like not answering your spouse or your parent because you're mad at them), or a phone call . . .
You show a lack of respect

If you take advantage of someone by –
Physically abusing them; Verbally abusing them; Mistreating/misleading handicapped
You show a decided lack of respect for them – God says don't do it

If you go around as a slanderer of others (16) – you show a lack of respect for them, and quench any desire on their part for a relationship with you
Which is why one of our membership commitments says –
I will neither gossip nor listen to gossip concerning any member(s) of this body and will, when personally offended, speak directly and lovingly with those involved.
Gossip and slander tear down relationships in the body of Christ as fast as the words come out of your mouth

If you're guilty of abuse, oppression, or slander – the time has come to cultivate a healthy fear of God (14b) and a healthy respect for those he created
There's no desire for relationship apart from it

There's no genuine relationship apart from justice (v15-16)

Do no injustice in court (15) – don't take advantage of one another

- Can't take advantage of one another and expect to have a genuine relationship
At best you'll have an uncomfortable co-existence; At worst, you'll have a falling out
Neither of which is a genuine relationship
Taking advantage of one another is not just; It's not right
And it won't result in a genuine relationship
- Neither does favoritism result in a genuine relationship
While I don't think we're at risk of being partial to the poor just because they're poor . .
It's ridiculous how much favoritism we show to the *great* (the wealthy)
You shall not be partial to the poor or defer [show favoritism] to the great (15)

Yet in churches and para-church organizations (places where this should be done the least) – we schmooze them; Put them in leadership positions they have no business being in; Cow-tow to their whims; Act like they're our best friend just to get their money
It's *not* wrong to ask wealthy people to give of their money
And it's *not* wrong for wealthy people to be in positions of leadership
It *is* wrong to put them positions they're not qualified for, in order to *get* their money
When that happens, the relationship is not genuine; It's a façade

You can't take advantage of people and expect to have a genuine R with them

You can't show favoritism and have a genuine relationship at the same time; And . . .

- Can't endanger the life of another to secure your own, and have a genuine R with them
You shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor (16b) – don't do anything to secure your own well-being by endangering the life of another
That would be like throwing someone out of a life raft so you could get on, and then acting like they're your best friend while they drown

While that's not a regular occurrence for us, this sort of thing is happening every single day in abortion clinics across our country
Young, desperate women are being influenced to secure their own emotional well-being and quality of life, by taking the life of another – their baby
Those who *perform* the abortions, and advance the *business* of abortions, are securing their own *financial* well-being by not only taking the life of those babies, but endangering the life of their mothers as well

Some of you have had abortions or advocated abortions, and regret it terribly
And you've long since confessed that to the Lord and received his gracious forgiveness – rest in that; This is not meant to make you feel bad again
It *is* meant to help you prevent others from making the same mistake
And to wake the rest of you up to the daily tragedy of those who are securing their own well-being by endangering and taking the life of others

There's no genuine relationship apart from justice; No desire for R apart from respect
No depth of R apart from truth; No chance of R apart from grace; And finally . . .

There's no enduring relationship apart from love (v17-18)

Self-sacrificing, self-giving love is the bond/glue of all relationships

Love that is based on commitment, not feelings
Love that gives without any expectation of receiving
Love that is patient and kind; Love that does not insist on its own way
Love that bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things
It's love that ties us together; And it's hate tears us apart

You shall not hate your brother in your heart (17a)

- If hate is the state of your heart, your relationship won't endure
We often think that the law was all about external behavior, and nothing about the heart
We think that way because that's how the Pharisees by the time of Christ had perverted it; But that's not how God originally designed it
Crossing your t's and dotting your i's on the outside, while hating your neighbor on the inside, does not produce enduring relationships

Instead of harboring hate, we need to speak straight

You shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him (17b)

You incur sin when you *harbor* anger instead of talking it out

When you hold it in and spin on it, instead of letting it out

Communication is the key that unlocks the hatred of the heart

If hate is the state of your heart, your relationship won't last

- If getting even is what you do, your relationships won't last
Every time I see the bumper sticker – “Don't get mad, get even” – I think ya right,
that'll make it better; That'll solve everything – Fool!
Getting even or taking *vengeance* (18) –
Escalates the situation; Increases your guilt; Causes you to live in fear of retaliation
It's true on a national scale with civil wars
It's true on a personal level in far too many marriages, homes, workplaces, churches
- If bearing a grudge (refusing to forgive) is what you prefer, your R's are doomed
Because the weight of a grudge, the weight of holding something against another
person, increases over time
If you don't let it go, if you don't forgive them, if you don't *choose* to show mercy –
the weight of that grudge will crush you
It'll be like a 10 pound weight on your chest that at first is no big deal, but
eventually you will suffocate emotionally/spiritually under its weight
If bearing a grudge is what you prefer – your relationships won't endure

The better way, God's way, is to – *love your neighbor as yourself* (18b)

To want the same things for others that you want for yourself

And to want them to the same degree – there's the catch

Your desire to see others happy should match your desire to be happy yourself

Your passion to see others blessed, should match your passion to be blessed yourself

Wanting the same things to the same degree for others as you do yourself, is loving
your neighbor as yourself

It's the only kind of love that sustains a relationship and causes it to endure

Summary

Get ready to love because life is meant to be lived in relationship with others

Requires that we extend much grace; Speak truth; Show the utmost respect

Treat one another right; Love each other as ourselves

Pray – don't say amen

Close with song – “I Love You Lord”