
Ignite

"Loving Father, thank You that Your Word is true, and You are our Deliverer in this world of sin and evil. Help us to fix our eyes on Jesus, Your living Word and our glorious Redeemer. When our minds are tempted to stray from You, we pray that we will call to remembrance all that You are and all that You have done for us. Enable us to point others to You. In Jesus' name, AMEN."



SERMON SUMMARY

Note to Word Facilitator: The sermon notes below is a summary of the sermon. You may choose to further summarize it according to the needs and context of your CG members. The goal is not just to go through it “verbatim” but to prepare well, allowing members to recall and engage the message in the best possible way.

Leviticus : Sanctions & Vows - A Welcome Warning

Pr. Datuk Kee Sue Sing

Leviticus 26:1-5;14-16;27-28;

“Do not make idols or set up an image or a sacred stone for yourselves, and do not place a carved stone in your land to bow down before it. I am the Lord your God. “Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the Lord. “If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees their fruit. Your threshing will continue until grape harvest and the grape harvest will continue until planting, and you will eat all the food you want and live in safety in your land.

“But if you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands, and if you reject my decrees and abhor my laws and fail to carry out all my commands and so violate my covenant, then I will do this to you: I will bring on you sudden terror, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and sap your strength. You will plant seed in vain, because your enemies will eat it.

“If in spite of this you still do not listen to me but continue to be hostile toward me, then in my anger I will be hostile toward you, and I myself will punish you for your sins seven times over.

Deuteronomy 23:21-23

If you make a vow to the Lord your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the Lord your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin. But if you refrain from making a vow, you will not be guilty. Whatever your lips utter you must be sure to do, because you made your vow freely to the Lord your God with your own mouth.

Introduction

The 8-part series of Leviticus comes to a close with chapter 26 covering Sanctions and 27 on Vows. A prevalent theme through the ceremonial institutions, social regulations and moral injunctions is this - *"God is holy; you are therefore to be holy"*.

The whole Levitical worship system and the immensity of its requirements was an impossibility to carry out and fulfil totally. However, what God required was total obedience from His people. He rewards obedience and punishes disobedience.

Big Idea: Break God's laws, end up breaking your own heart; Keep God's laws, never will you regret it.

I. We are without excuse

The rules must be clearly spelt out and communicated before a certain conduct or behaviour can be expected. God's laws for Israel have been clearly stipulated and spelt out from the very beginning. Therefore, they can no longer plead ignorance.

1. **Prohibition of Idols** *Leviticus 26:1*

The Israelites have been warned to avoid all idols. The Hebrew word for an idol is 'elilim', meaning a 'nothing'. So anything that takes the place of God is a nothing i.e. an idol. The Israelites were faced with a pantheon of false gods such as the Canaanite's Baal, of gluttony, drunkenness and ritual prostitution. In today's sophisticated world, we face idols that are more in the SELF than on the SHELF! For us, anything that we allow to control and run our lives can become our god.

2. **Preservation of Sabbaths and the Sanctuary** *Leviticus 26:2; 1 Cor 6:19-20*

- "observe" = exercising with great care
- "reverence" = holy respect and fear (awe)

In order to fully appreciate the Sabbath law, we need to understand the significance of the words observe and reverence. The call to *observe* means to exercise God's Sabbaths with greatest care. The Israelites are to jealously and zealously guard their weekly appointment with God. They are to stop and worship, prioritize and focus on God. Today, do we adhere to the same

command given? Are we ensuring our priorities are in the right place or do we put other activities over and above the Lord's day?

To have *reverence* for God's sanctuary means to have holy respect and fear for the presence of God. Other nations had man-made gods but the Israelites had God who made man dwelling in the midst of their camp. We have a greater honour and privilege than them because our bodies are the very sanctuary of God! Therefore, we are called to use our bodies for godly purposes for God's glory.

II. Our every action has Consequences *Leviticus 26:3*

It is up to the people to choose the path they are to take. Their every action and ours has consequences. Faithfulness and obedience brings God's blessings while disobedience brings curses and calamities.

1. Reward for Obedience *Leviticus 26:4-5,6,9,11-12*

There will be temporal blessings of Prosperity and Peace that they will enjoy. There will be seasons of Plenty in the form of rain and yields of crops and fruits. There will be times of Tranquility and Joys of Society where God will look with favour and all their social wants and needs will be made. Their minds will be kept at peace and their hearts and families will be filled with joy.

Above and beyond this, they will receive the ultimate blessing - the spiritual blessings of the very presence of God. God has promised to be the Israelites' friend and king.

2. Punishment for Disobedience *Leviticus 26:16,31-33, 23-24; 1 John 1:9*

If Israel was disobedient, she will experience Poverty instead of Prosperity, Peril instead of Peace, God's absence instead of His presence in their midst. If they persist in their disobedience, God will punish them "seven times over" meaning complete punishment that will progressively increase in severity.

However, God promised to restore all sinners who turn to Him in faith no matter what they have done.

III. Our talk is not Cheap *Leviticus 27:1-8, 9-13, 14-15,16-21, 22-25; Matthew 5:33-37*

God knows all along that we will regret making vows because we cannot fulfil it. Therefore, He graciously provided a way out by introducing a buy back rule where if an Israelite changes his/her mind on the vow, they can buy it back but the priest will value their asset and put a 20% penalty surcharge on it. The intent was to teach a lesson that making vows are not to be taken lightly, rashly nor hastily. That they should count the cost before making any agreement or promises. It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfil it.

What about making vows today? If our words cannot be backed up by integrity, character and moral behaviour, it amounts to nothing. We do not need an oath to guarantee what will come true, our word is our bond. Therefore, as Jesus said, let our Yes be Yes and our No, No.

Conclusion

Faithfulness and obedience brings God's blessings while disobedience brings curses and calamities. Yes, there are consequences for disobeying God but God promised to restore all sinners who turn to Him in faith no matter what they have done. God has put the power of choice in our hands to decide - choose Rebellion that brings about ruin and destruction OR Repentance that brings about reconciliation and restoration. Let us choose good, life and blessings.



SERMON REFLECTION

Although the literal sense of the Law may seem outdated but the spirit of it is as relevant today as it was more than 2000 years ago. We first need to understand the context of Leviticus before we can truly begin to have a deeper appreciation of the Gospel and its relevance. The book was written during the one year encampment at the foot of Mt. Sinai after the Exodus from Egypt, where God brought the Israelites

out from bondage and slavery. God's desire was to have a covenantal relationship where He reaffirmed His promise to dwell with them and be their God. But because He is holy, the only way to enter His presence was for His people themselves to also be holy. Unfortunately, the Israelites were unable to keep God's uncompromising standards set about in Deuteronomy (613 laws/teachings) and so this book dealt with providing a way out for them to become pure and clean again through ritualistic sacrifices, social regulations and moral living.

What rings through clearly is God's Love, Mercy and Grace. He desires an intimate relationship with us but because He is holy, He cannot compromise on what is good and righteous. As Paul puts it, we '*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*' (*Romans 3:23*). God knows that the whole Levitical worship system and the immensity of its requirements was an impossibility to completely fulfil. So He provided a way out in the form of a sacrificial system - that we can be restored and able to approach His holy presence. While the sacrifice of animal blood could temporarily cleanse the Israelites, we have Jesus, the Lamb of God, whose blood atones for all sins past, present and future.

We know our true identity. God resolved to set apart a people for Himself that were so holy that they would become a beacon of light to the surrounding nations, like a watch tower pointing to the glory of God. The Israelites were to be '*a kingdom of priests and a holy nation*' (*Exodus 19:6*) thereby effectively being both a mediator for all humankind and an ambassador for God. God's laws tell us about our identity in Christ - that we are a child of God and Jesus' finished work on the cross has given us the right to call Him, 'Abba Father'. The promise of having a kingdom of priests and a holy nation has now been fulfilled for we are all holy priests and ambassadors in Christ.

Obedience must be our response. We are called to model servant obedience of the greatest master that ever lived - Jesus Christ. Just like any good child, Jesus seeks to do what pleases the Father. **What is obedience?** It is to be completely devoted and surrendered to the Father's will. For the Israelites, the choice of obedience brought either blessings or curses. For us Christians today, the stakes are higher. It is a question of choosing between eternal life or eternal damnation. **What is obedience?** It is to delight coming into the presence of God. For the Israelites, celebrations and sanctuary worship remind them of God's goodness and center them back on true priorities in life. We are called to have an attitude of thanksgiving and to put God as the first and foremost priority in our lives.

But how can we ever achieve total obedience? Shall we give up in this effort of futility? Thankfully, God has graciously provided the way to victoriously battle with sin. He has given us the Holy Spirit whom we call 'Holy' because making us holy is His ministry! Because of God's grace, we can fully surrender our souls to the Holy Spirit for He will complete the work of sanctification within us. He will not let us fall away: *The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand (Psalm 37: 23-24).*

Lord Father, you are all-knowing, all-seeing and all-powerful. We were made to be in an eternal relationship with you. The very fact we wake up this morning and are able to come to you is by your saving grace. Holy Spirit, thank you for preserving, nurturing, guiding and comforting us. We make a commitment, imperfect as it is, to you - Come complete the work Christ began in us. Amen.

Contributed by Darren Lim and the Ignite team



APPLICATION

Note to Word facilitator:

As you prepare for this session, this is a great time to pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you to use the questions efficiently. You can select, modify or entirely create your own questions, according to the needs of your CG, especially if you feel that there are too many questions than required for the allocated time. The questions below are crafted with a certain flow in mind. You could use these towards the end or insert them in between your own sermon reflection and summary.

Suggested Icebreaker Questions

- Share one thing you are grateful for this week.
- What is one thing you find very hard saying 'no' to? [Note to facilitator: Some examples may be sweet desserts, social media, football, etc.]

Suggested Word Introductory Questions

- When was the last God moment you experienced in your life? How has God worked in and through that experience?
- You are applying for a job posting with one key criteria: A radical and faithful Christ-centered Christian. Do you think you would get the job? Why or why not?

Suggested Questions linked to the Sermon:

- “Today, IDOLS are more in the SELF than on the SHELF!” How does that speak to you personally? *[Note to facilitator: You may consider: What is the object of your affections, your efforts, and your attention? Where does the majority of your time go? What do you spend the greatest amount of your resources on?]*
- “God blesses the righteous but punishes the disobedient” - In light of Christ’s redemptive work at the cross, is this still relevant? How does it challenge you to live a radically changed life?
- What was Christ challenging believers to do when He said, “Let your word be a ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’?” (Matthew 5:37). What steps can you take to become known as a person who keeps his or her word?
- What unfulfilled promise, if any, have you made that you need to carry out as soon as possible?

Question Bank *(Extra questions you can use to bring discussion further as you see fit):*

- Among the blessings of prosperity, peace and presence (of God), which do you consider the most important to you? What do you think you need to do differently to enjoy more of that?
- Knowing that “our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 6:19-20), what would you change today to live such a life that honours God and fulfils His good will for us?
- Share one area/situation in your life [personal/family/work/social/etc.] where you struggle to sense the presence of God. Why do you think this is so?
- “I am experiencing God’s blessings in my life”. Please share why you agree or disagree.

- How would you describe yourself as a Christian in one sentence? Alternatively, how would a close confidante describe you as a Christian?
- Have you ever failed to keep a promise made to someone recently? What actions did/could you do to make things right?

Note: We have come to the end of our sermon series on the book of Leviticus. You may like to...

1. Ask CG members what they have learned most from this series and how they plan on further applying it to their lives, in community
 2. Encourage CG members to review what they have learned from the previous sermons.
 3. Run through the big ideas from each sermon with CG members.
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PRAYER



Photo by Timothy Eberly on Unsplash

Note to CGL: You (or someone you assign this portion to), may lead by praying OR reading these prayers together as a CG during worship.

Bolivia

- Righteous and wise leaders to rise and to be preserved in the face of political persecution.
- Ethnic tensions over natural resources will be resolved in an equitable and peaceful manner.
- Christian leaders to be taught and disciplined well so that the people can in turn be well-disciplined.

Henry Cheah, SIM Bolivia

- God's protection and healing against Covid-19
- as Henry and his team work amongst the people.
- Participants from the mission seminar will put into practice what they have learnt when they return to their respective churches.

Primary Schools

- As schools have reopened in full, pray for God's protection and for:
- Teachers to have wisdom and patience to teach, guide, nurture and discipline the children.
- Students to be alert and disciplined to maintain health SOPs, and to be teachable and obedient.
- Parents not to be overly protective but trust and work together with school teachers to discipline and develop their children.



OTHER RESOURCES

*Below are some links to resources for you. Do **CLICK** on the images below!*

FEATURED

In view of our current changing landscape that affects us individually and corporately, here are some featured resources for you this month!



Holiness

6 minutes 34 seconds

[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

In this video, we explore the paradox that God's holiness ...

[Bible](#) [Doctrine](#) [Prayer & Spirituality](#) [Christian Living](#)

[Video Clip](#)



Sacrifice and Atonement

7 minutes

[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

In this video on sacrifice and atonement, we trace the the...

[Bible](#) [Doctrine](#)

[Video Clip](#)



Overview: Leviticus

8 minutes 16 seconds

[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

Israel's holy God invites them to live in His presence desp...

[Bible](#) [Christian Living](#)

[Video Clip](#)



Holiness as the Church Bearing Fruit

seedbed.com

Holiness, as we have seen, is not merely about eradicatin...

[Timothy Tennent](#)

[Bible](#) [Doctrine](#) [Teaching](#) [Christian Living](#)

[Article](#)

OTHER RESOURCES

Discover a host of other resources curated for you [here!](#)



DUMC STORIES

Be blessed by a compilation of inspiring DUMC Stories that you can share with others!

