

**Date** : 10 March 2024

**Theme** : Our identity as God's covenant people

**Topic** : Living out God's 10 Commandments

**Passage** : *Deuteronomy 22 - 25*

**Key Verse** : *...so that you do not defile the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance... Deuteronomy 21:23 nkjv*

## Introduction

*Deuteronomy* is an exposition (= explanation) of God's Law (given some 40 years earlier to the previous generation) and now to a new generation, as an expression of His love and care for them.

*...Moses proclaimed... all that the Lord had commanded*

*...Moses began to expound (explain) the law... Deuteronomy 1:3, 5*

a) Our problem: Why can't we see God's love in His Laws?

- We have a wrong view of the word *law*.

Our English word *law* has a negative and restrictive connotation, but the Hebrew *Torah* (=instruction) is positive. The *Torah* is more instruction than prohibition. *Deuteronomy* is in this positive view of God's law. (God's plan to restore to mankind, for their good in the Torah, what the man and woman lost in the garden).

- We hold an immature view of freedom from laws.

Like children, we do not see that our parents' prohibitions are for our welfare, because we do not yet understand the dangers around. Similarly, many Christians think immaturely that God's laws are to keep us miserable, when really they are there to keep us safe (like lines drawn down the middle of the highway curb our freedom but they keep us safe from veering into the path of oncoming traffic).

Thus, Moses had to expound God's laws all over again in *Deuteronomy* to show that God's provision of His laws was actually an expression of His love for them.

- We hesitate over the need for covenant renewal

Recently, some of us balk at the need for covenant membership renewal because we forget that our congregational gatherings on Sunday mornings are covenant renewal times, not just attending church. *Deuteronomy* is a covenant renewal document between two parties – God and His people, covenanting as one people (not just one individual) to obey Him.

Unlike the unconditional covenant God made with Abraham, the covenant between the Lord (Yahweh) and His people was bilateral – a two-way street. God would keep His promise to bless if the people remained faithful. That's why we pursue Christ-likeness in an authentic Christian community, with others in BC. We learn and worship as a body in community settings that renew and foster our community membership to serve God's Kingdom.

b) Another problem: Why such a collection of unrelated laws?

- Unfortunately, for many of us reading *Deuteronomy 22-25*, (the focus of our study today), the chapters seems to suggest a random list of sundry laws.

Rather than dismissing them, we need to remember there is wisdom in all the Law. These chapters are unique amongst the chapters in the *Torah* (the Law) because of the laws regarding sexual purity.

- We study these chapters because there are *weightier* matters of the Law *Matthew 23:23* – laws that pertain to justice, mercy and faithfulness being at the top of God's Law.

*...(the poor) will thank you, and it will be regarded as a righteous act in the sight of the Lord your God. Deuteronomy 24:13*

As a covenant renewal document between two parties, *Deuteronomy* requires that a man's love for God (Commandments 1-4) should also motivate him to love his neighbour (Commandments 5-10).

## I. How are the 10 Commandments to be lived out?

So as not to defile the land, the list of statutes (rules) are the practical outworkings of obeying God's 10 Commandments.

### 1. Love God (Commandment No.1)

Have nothing to do with idols, even for fun.

- Don't wear anything that pertains to the opposite sex

Why is this important to God?

The blurring of gender identity by cross dressing is the first step of deception of the spirit of Asherah. It seeks to undermine God's plan for men and woman in creation.

(Ashtoreth, Astarte, Ishtar are names of the same spirit worshipped in different languages. The god Ishtar is androgynous, marginal, ambiguous, both female and male, shattering the boundary between the sexes).

- The scheme of the enemy is to remove the masculinity of man and reduce the femininity of woman. The purpose is to cause man to desire man. Homosexual attraction defeats God's purpose in the marriage of one man and one woman, undermining the marriage covenant.
  - From the writings of St Jerome in the early days of the church, June was the designate time to show pride in their cross dressing and promote homosexual acceptance. So the Pride parade and the use of the sign (the rainbow colours) continue to be held in June every year.
  - This Asherah spirit operates at high levels of authority and through presidents of nations. (Ex-Present Obama and university professors actively support the LGBT agenda).
  - They say it's just for fun; unisex attire was first introduced in 1968, for fun. God calls it an abomination. He hates it.

Cross dressing de-sensitizes us to accept homosexual behaviour as normal. Sad to say many Christians are ignorant of the agenda behind cross dressing and LGBT and where it is leading to. Many Christians join in Pride parades for fun.

### 2. Love your neighbour *Deuteronomy 22: 1 - 4*

Love expressed in care and concern for one's neighbour, comes through in several concrete situations, such as:

- Respect his property
- Restore his livestock, oxen, donkey
  - Love of neighbour prompts our duty to preserve and return misplaced property.

### 3. Care for the least of God's creatures *Deuteronomy 22: 6 -7*

Do not destroy wild life

They are a necessary part of the eco-system which God has designed. The earth is the Lord's and He wants us to use it correctly. Show kindness to God's creatures.

### 4. Protect others from danger. *Deuteronomy 22:8* (Commandment No. 7. No killing)

Consider the safety of those who will one day access roof tops, therefore safety barriers must be provided. Pay due diligence to danger (for example, ensure electrical equipments are child proof).

### 5. Stay pure from sexual immorality *Deuteronomy 22: 13 - 30* (Commandment No. 7. No Adultery)

Treat members of the opposite sex with respect.

- Do not slander your wife's reputation *Deuteronomy 22:13*
- Do not commit adultery *Deuteronomy 22:22*. It perverts marriage and destroys family.
- Sexual immorality of every form defiles the land and the people in it.
  - do not do anything indecent because the Lord moves about in our midst *Deuteronomy 23:14*
  - do not participate in prostitution to make money to offer to God. *Deuteronomy 23:17, 18*

6. Make a vow and keep it *Deuteronomy 23:21 - 23* (Commandment No. 8. No stealing)  
 God requires us to keep our promises. Failure to do so amounts to stealing from God.  
 God's people should follow through with their commitments to Him and to others.  
 Therefore, treat your marriage vows seriously, because the Lord requires an accounting.
7. Be fair and generous (on charging interests and loans) *Deuteronomy 24: 10 - 22*  
 (Commandment No. 8. No stealing)
  - Do not withhold the pledge of clothing from the poor.
8. Don't take advantage of the poorer brethren *Deuteronomy 24:14*, instead help them  
 (Commandment No. 9. No false witness against your neighbour)
  - The poor orphans, widows, low wage earners are vulnerable. God looks out for them.
  - Do not withhold their wages.
9. On differing weights and measures *Deuteronomy 25:13 - 16* (Commandment No.10. No coveting)
  - Use the same weights and measures for both buying and selling to ensure fairness in business.
10. Do not covet the possessions of the enemies of Israel.  
 God had commanded them to be exterminated. *Deuteronomy 25: 17 - 19*

## II. Why does God set such behavioural standards for His people?

- a) Because of their shared identity with one another  
 40 years of wilderness living had forged their identity as one people (before, slave mentality).
- b) Their covenant faith in Yahweh  
 40 years of trials and testing, trust and divine favour thrust them into a covenant of faith and dependence on God.
- c) Their covenantal relationships in community  
 These divine principles of debt release, civic responsibility, fair weights and measures can only operate within the context of 'family' (covenantal relationships). For example, cancelling debts is not simply economics, but freeing fellow brothers and sisters from their bondage. The poor *brother Israelite* needed help *Deuteronomy 24:14*, emphasises the family nature of the obligations. (The word *brother* occurs at least 19 times in *Deuteronomy 22 - 25*).

## III. How do these principles apply to us today?

### My Application

1. Danger of apathy, pride and self-sufficiency 
  - Do not ignore your brother's lost property.

Many people today believe that each person should mind his own business. Our modern law imposes no duty to help another in distress. But what if it's a brother?  
 God's law puts things in perspective. It says to return a lost thing which belongs to a brother. The relationship word *brother* changes the whole dynamics of the lost property.  
*...do not ignore it... Deuteronomy 22: 1, 3, 4* (the lost donkey, or cloak, anything a brother loses).
2. Danger of imitating the practices of godless people 
  - Keep distinct between the sexes in clothing

*...a woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the Lord your God.*

Why is it an abomination to God?  
 Because of the practice of masquerading (women appeared in men's garments and men in women's garments) in the worship of Astate.

## My Application

3. Use your assets for the common good *Deuteronomy 23: 24, 25*

God requires us to be open with our resources to those in need, while also exercising good stewardship of the resources He entrusts to us.

On the one hand, God's command is to use what is His for the good of the community *Deuteronomy 23:24*; on the other hand, *Deuteronomy* does not treat a person's private field as common property. *Deuteronomy 23:25*

4. Economic justice *Deuteronomy 24: 14 - 15; 25:13*

- Not to withhold wages of the poor and needy
- Use same weights and measures for all customers. Do not cheat.