

# Holiness in all of life

*From Sinai to Canaan*

## Study 3

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### Warmup



When people get caught up in a fad or a new hobby, they often display an all-consuming appetite for their new found love. (Like when someone catches the cycling-bug, they buy a bike and all the gear, read bicycle magazines, take interest in professional tours, join a local club, eat performance enhancing foods, etc, etc.) Can you think of a time in your life when something became your all-consuming passion?

### Introduction

At this stage in our journey from Sinai to Canaan, the people are still camped at the foot of Mt Sinai. They had received the Ten Commandments by the mouth of God (Exodus 20), and been severely chided for the incident concerning the golden calf (Exodus 32).

During this time at Mt Sinai, Moses received more laws to govern and direct the life of the Israelites, and the Book of Leviticus records some of these laws. It is difficult to be precise about the date of the Book's composition, but it may be that it was composed by Moses during the 40 year journey, and put in its final form before his departure.

Although the title suggest that it is of specific interest to the Levites who had been assigned the role of supervising corporate worship, its directions and commandments apply to all the people, especially its recurring call to holiness. Christians are called to something that is to be all-consuming, all pervading, and for all of life. It is called holiness.

### *Read Leviticus 19: 1-37*

<sup>1</sup> The Lord said to Moses, <sup>2</sup> "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.

<sup>3</sup> " 'Each of you must respect his mother and father, and you must observe my Sabbaths. I am the Lord your God. <sup>4</sup> " 'Do not turn to idols or make gods of cast metal for yourselves. I am the Lord your God. <sup>5</sup> " 'When you sacrifice a fellowship offering to the Lord, sacrifice it in such a way that it will be accepted on your behalf. <sup>6</sup> It shall be eaten on the day you sacrifice it or on the next day; anything left over until the third day must be burned up. <sup>7</sup> If any of it is eaten on the third day, it is impure and will not be accepted. <sup>8</sup> Whoever eats it will be held responsible because he has desecrated what is holy to the Lord; that person must be cut off from his people. <sup>9</sup> " 'When you reap the harvest of your

land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest.  
<sup>10</sup> Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen.  
Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the Lord your God. <sup>11</sup> 'Do not steal. ' 'Do not lie. ' 'Do not deceive one another.

<sup>12</sup> 'Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord. <sup>13</sup> 'Do not defraud your neighbour or rob him. ' 'Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight. <sup>14</sup> 'Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the Lord. <sup>15</sup> 'Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favouritism to the great, but judge your



neighbour fairly. <sup>16</sup> 'Do not go about spreading slander among your people. ' 'Do not do anything that endangers your neighbour's life. I am the Lord. <sup>17</sup> 'Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbour frankly so you will not share in his guilt. <sup>18</sup> 'Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord. <sup>19</sup> 'Keep my decrees. ' 'Do not mate different kinds of animals. ' 'Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed. ' 'Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material. <sup>20</sup> 'If a man sleeps with a woman who is a slave girl promised to another man but who has not been ransomed or given her freedom, there must be due punishment. Yet they are not to be put to death, because she had not been freed. <sup>21</sup> The man, however, must bring a ram to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting for a guilt offering to the Lord. <sup>22</sup> With the ram of the guilt offering the priest is to make atonement for him before the Lord for the sin he has committed, and his sin will be forgiven. <sup>23</sup> 'When you enter the land and plant any kind of fruit tree, regard its fruit as forbidden. For three years you are to consider it forbidden; it must not be eaten. <sup>24</sup> In the fourth year all its fruit will be holy, an offering of praise to the Lord. <sup>25</sup> But in the fifth year you may eat its fruit. In this way your harvest will be increased. I am the Lord your God. <sup>26</sup> 'Do not eat any meat with the blood still in it. ' 'Do not practice divination or sorcery. <sup>27</sup> 'Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard. <sup>28</sup> 'Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the Lord. <sup>29</sup> 'Do not degrade your daughter by making her a prostitute, or the land will turn to prostitution and be filled with wickedness. <sup>30</sup> 'Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the Lord. <sup>31</sup> 'Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God. <sup>32</sup> 'Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the Lord. <sup>33</sup> 'When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. <sup>34</sup> The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God. <sup>35</sup> 'Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity. <sup>36</sup> Use honest scales and honest weights, an honest ephah and an honest hin. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt. <sup>37</sup> 'Keep all my decrees and all my laws and follow them. I am the Lord.' "

## First Impressions

Record some of your own first impressions about the passage you have just read.

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### Question 1

In reading this chapter, there is a strong desire to sort the laws into different categories. There may be a time and place to do this, but Moses recorded them in the order that God spoke them (v1). This arrangement, of having laws for different areas of life, sitting side by side, is deliberate. What do you think the Israelites were to understand by this?

### Question 2

The repeated call in Leviticus is to holiness (v2). To be holy essentially means to be different, and especially to be different from the world in the way that we think, speak and act.

For what major reason are the Israelites to be holy? In what areas of life are the Israelites to be holy? Who says and what defines what holiness looks like?

### Question 3

What laws do you most admire in this chapter? What laws do you find unusual or hard to relate to? What laws were you surprised to find?

### Question 4

The laws in Leviticus 19 have a basic theme of love for God and love for neighbour. Choose some verses from the chapter that illustrate this point.

It is no coincidence that Jesus cited this chapter in his teaching about the meaning of the law. Eg The Parable of the Good Samaritan recorded in Luke 10:25-37.

Reread Leviticus 19:33,34. What might be pointed out to the expert in the law who said to Jesus: "And who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:29).



## Question 5

If Christians are also called to holiness (see 1 Peter 2:14-16 which quotes from Leviticus 19), will their behaviour look exactly the same as the Israelites?

What things do you suppose from Leviticus 19 might no longer apply to all Christians?

What things from Leviticus 19 do you suppose will apply to all Christians everywhere?

Comment:

When Jesus declared that all foods were clean (Mark 7:19), he established a 'discontinuity' with the Old Testament on that issue. God's people were no longer to be distinguished by the food they ate. One suspects that things like 'holy haircuts' (19:27) also fit into this category.

Equally when Jesus affirmed the sixth and seventh commandments in his Sermon on the Mount, he established a 'continuity' with the Old Testament on moral issues. One suspects that things like rising in the presence of the aged (19:32), which is in accord with the fifth commandment, applies to all Christians in all places and in all generations.

## Question 6

In reading through Leviticus 19, one cannot help but feel one's omissions and commissions, and shortcomings and transgressions. What is the comfort of knowing that Jesus is our 'righteousness, holiness, and redemption' (1 Corinthians 1:30)?

What is the challenge of also knowing that 'without holiness, no one will see the Lord' (Hebrews 12:14)? What areas in your life do you need to resubmit to the governance of the Lord?

## Conclusion

It's helpful to remember that the Israelites who were first taught Leviticus 19 did not think of these laws as a way of acquiring merit in order to be saved, but as a way to live in response to the God who had redeemed them from slavery by grace and the blood of a lamb.

