

Introduction

How does our vertical relationship with God impact our horizontal relationship with other Christians? How does this impact affect how we should help each other when there are physical needs?

Read Deuteronomy 14:22-29

Leaders:

1. Summary:

Every year: Tithe (give a 10th) of all that their field produces

- They are to eat it in front of the Lord at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his name. This also makes God the host of this meal.
- Provision also built in if they lived too far from sanctuary for it to be practical to carry, they exchange locally and convert money back into substance at the sanctuary rests on the joyful meal of fellowship eaten by the whole family in presence of God
- They are told not to neglect Levites by inviting them to the meal

Every 3rd year: the tithe should be brought to town to be deposited

- This food be is to be distributed to those who are less fortunate: Levite, sojourner, fatherless, and the widow who are in your town
- The marginalized were not to be dependent on the political system, but rather the citizens
- Then there is a blessing accompanied by doing what God had commanded them to do

Notes to Leaders:

- Tithe – 10%
- A dwelling for his Name– Currently it would be the tabernacle, but in the future, there would be a fixed place where his temple would reside

a. Reflect on the Vassal-Suzerain relationship between Israel and God, how does a tithe meal lead us to “fear the Lord”?

- This meal was to remind Israel that God was their king and ruler and to him should be owed tithes (such as how other vassal states would offer tributes to honor their rulers)
- This meal also showed God’s grace to Israel, as the tithe belongs to God, but he, as the host of this meal, graciously shares this meal with his people

b. How do these events speak about our heart of giving towards God and to those in need?

- Our heart towards God is one of reverent gratitude and reverence. An open heart towards God.
- Our heart towards those in need is one where we have open hands and heart towards them

c. How does feeding those in need relate to God’s blessing? (cf. Prov 14:21, 19:17)

- There are blessing to doing what God commands his people to do
- God’s blessing continues as they live as commanded i.e., taking care of the marginalized among them

Read Deuteronomy 15:1-18

Leaders:

1. Summary

- Every seven years we are to release our neighbors from the debt that was lent to his neighbor. This is to be done because the Lord has proclaimed this release.
- We may continue to hold foreigners to their debts, but our brothers we are to release.

- No poverty ought to exist in the rich land that the Lord your God is giving you, this is only true if we obey God, careful to do all the commandments. Lord will bless you as promised, and we will lend to many nations, and not rule.
- We should love fellow brothers who are poor, do not harden your heart or shut your hand against him. Even if it is close to 7th year, we should not think this way, this is unworthy thought, we should give as much as they may need and is sufficient, for if they cry against you, you are guilty of sin do it freely, do it without begrudging, because you will bless you and your work. There will always be poor in the land.
- In situation where our brother is in severe poverty, Israelites may put themselves in servitude for 6 years, but on the seventh they must be let go free. When he is released, send him away with your flock, seed, wines. As you give be reminded what the Lord has blessed you with, and recall the slavery you experienced in Egypt, and when the Lord redeemed you and had the Egyptians furnish you.

Notes to Leaders

- *Is the release one-year or permanent:* there is a discussion among academics whether this release of debt was a one-year remittance of the payment or a full remittance of the payment. Some have argued that this debt relief was only applicable for that Sabbath year. However, I still contend that this release was a full release from all owed. There are a number of reasons for this, but perhaps the best textual reason I can give is found in v.2b where it says, "every creditor shall release what he has lent to his neighbor." This seems to apply directly to all that is owed, rather than just the portion owed in that Sabbath year. Ultimately, whether one believes it is one-year remittance or a full remittance of payment does not change the conclusion.
- *Israelite slavery:* was voluntary when they could not pay off debts (indentured servitude) and very different than how it was practiced in our modern setting around the world.

a. What is God's ideal for the poor, and how would this be achieved? (v.4-5)

- That there is no poor in the land, because the Lord has blessed them in the land
- This would be achieved if they continued to obey (included in the way they tithe and release people of debt on sabbatical years)

b. what are the national implications of God's blessing? (v.6)

- This blessing of following God's commands would lead them to what is promised (cf. exodus 23:22-26 and Lev 2:3-13)
- Furthermore, they would be lenders to the world, and that is would mean they would rule over many nations

2. Practical reality

- God desire that there should be no poor among them, they should give to the one who has become poor. This means lending to them what they need
- We should also be careful, because we can also sin if the needy person cries out against us, we would be guilty (v.9)
- God will bless our work as we bless our brothers (v.10)

a. What is the correct and incorrect heart disposition towards those Israelites in need?

- do not harden our heart against our brother or shut our hand against him (v.7)
- We should open our hand and lend to him sufficiently his need (whatever that might be) (v.8)
- We should not have unworthy thoughts of not lending to him (v.9)
- We should give to him freely and not give to him grudgingly (v.10)

b. How seriously should we take what is said here? (v.11)

- We should take this very seriously because God has commanded our obedience in this matter

3. How should the Israelites treat other Israelites in their servitude? (v.12-18)

- He should serve us 6 years and release him from the seventh
- When he is free, then we should furnish him liberally out of our own possessions
- His giving should be done knowing that God has blessed him, God has delivered them from Egypt.
- If this Hebrew wants to stay, an awl would be put through his ear and that person would serve them forever
- They are reminded that if the servant goes you should not make it hard on that person because they were had a half the cost of a hired worker
- = There is a blessing that comes with obeying the Lord in this

a. In what way does God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt affect their treatment of their fellow Hebrews? (v.15)

- The giving of the Israelite to their fellow Israelite is marked by the blessing and deliverance that God has done for them
- When Israel left Egypt, God has given the people liberally many possessions by the Egyptians. This should be on the mind of Israelites who are releasing servants themselves.

These sections deal with the horizontal relationship between the people of God, and though we are no longer under the Old Covenant, there it is still a duty to love our covenant community with extreme actions:

- 1. Do you think how we love our Covenant community is different from Old to New Testament? (Luke 12:33-34, Acts 2:44-45, James 2:15-16)**
 - It is the same heart of charity from old to new Testament
- 2. What does our relationship with one another say about our vertical relationship with God? (John 13:34-35, 1 John 3:17)**
 - You are shown to be God's disciple in the way we love (by our actions) (John 13:34-35)
 - You are shown to truly know what Christ has done for you, and that he abides in you (1 John 3:16-17)
- 3. What should the disposition be of those who are in need (romans 13:8, 1 Tim 5:8)? How should we interact with people who are idle? (2 Thess 3:6-12)**
 - The disposition of those in need that they desire to pay back debts (Romans 13:8)
 - The needy should be taken care of by their family first (1 Tim 5:8)
 - Those who are idle we should not entertain giving to them, because they are walking in a way that they should not be. God commands them to not be idle, rather work quietly and to earn their own wages (2 Thess 3:6-12)
- 4. What are some practical ways we can love people in the church with need? If someone in the church is asking for material help, how should we respond individually?**
 - Depends on groups answers

Read Deuteronomy 15:19-23

1. **What were the instructions for choosing the herds and flocks to be sacrificed? What were the instructions for eating the animal?**
 - These sacrifices apply to the ones spoken of in 14:22-29
 - These sacrifices were to be firstborn males, dedicated to the Lord
 - Since they were set apart for the Lord they were not to work or to be sheared
 - They were to be set apart to be eaten as spoke about in previous passages
 - They were not to be blemish, lame, or blind or have any serious blemish whatsoever
 - When in towns on 3rd year, both clean and unclean people could partake in eating it as if it were a deer or gazelle Which means like wild game, they could be eaten by anyone no matter state of their cleanness
 - The blood however was to be poured out because blood was a sign of life and was not meant to be eaten by Israelites (Lev 17:11-14)

Note to leaders

- God loves those who are clean and unclean, and the animal sacrificed was not a symbol of the types of people that God loves, but rather a representation of Christ who he will give up for all
 - a. **In what ways is the animal portrayed here like Jesus?**
 - firstborn over all creation– Romans 8:29, Col 1:15,18
 - Without blemish or without sin in this case – 1 Peter 1:19, Hebrews 9:14
 - Jesus is true food – John 6:55-59
 - Blood of Christ is precious, and his life blood is important for us – Matthew 26:28, 1 John 1:7, Eph 1:7, Eph 2:13

God's people, in every age, should be marked by their charity to one another. We should love people not just with our hearts but also with our hands and possessions. When we do this, we show that we truly understand the salvation and blessing we have received in the Lord, and when we obey God in loving one another this way, he is pleased with us. Let us look to bless each other the way God has richly blessed us.