

Show Others Godly Grace
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Leviticus 25

- The "man with the bird dog" on Christmas Eve story
 - He did more than was bargained for...
 - Because it was a special time of celebration he showed extra compassion and kindness to someone in need.
- There's a term for that in today's society...we call it a Random act of....(kindness)
- There's actually a Random Acts of Kindness Foundation and a Random Acts of Kindness Week each year.
- Last week as we studied in Leviticus, we said that God has commanded his children: "I am Holy...so...you be Holy." and that in spite of our sinful nature...His Spirit can equip us to be holy.
- This week's final study in Leviticus might be summarized: God says to His children: I
- Have been gracious and kind to you; you be gracious and kind to others.
- Random acts of kindness are not just good for the person receiving the kindness, but for the giver as well.
- According to numerous sources, acts of kindness aren't just the right thing to do, they have real health benefits:

- Helping others can actually give a person a rush. A rapid release of endorphins occurs after an act of kindness, which is then followed by a longer period of calmness and serenity. Over longer periods of time, this release of chemicals and result in an overall better mood and a more stable mental state.

- Kindness has been proven to help improve mental health and decrease the effects of depression, isolation, and hostility by supplying social contact. By lowering stress, acts of kindness can aid in decreasing the effects of stress related conditions such as ulcers.

- Since endorphins are the body's natural painkiller, acts of kindness that release these chemicals can decrease the overall feeling and awareness of pain.

- The mental and physical health benefits are recursive and return every time the act of kindness is recalled.

- Chronic negative behavior patterns have been shown to decrease after repeated acts of kindness.

- Acts of kindness create a sense of self worth and accomplishment. Helping another can boost self confidence and optimism while diminishing feelings of helplessness and depression.

- Building a connection with another and relating to someone in the must root of human emotions can strengthen your immune system.

What are some ways you can show a “random act of kindness” in day to day living?

- Pick up someone's tab at the drive-thru or restaurant
- Volunteer in the community (we should already be doing ministry as well!)
- Drop a quarter in another person's parking meter
- Let someone cut in front of you in line
- Hold the door open for someone
- Mentor someone
- Make a donation
- Compliment a stranger
- Give blood
- Support local ministries
- Be pleasant to everyone new you meet

Since God made us, He knows what we need to live the life He designed. That's why He set out some specific rules about Sabbath rest; displaying kindness and graciousness; and helping others find freedom from bondage.

Leviticus 25:10-12

10 Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each one of you is to return to his family property and each to his own clan. 11 The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. 12 For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields.

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- God commanded the Israelites to celebrate every seventh year as a Sabbath year in which the land would enjoy rest, slaves would be freed, and debts would be forgiven.
- Israelites could eat from what the land produced on its own, but they could not farm the land or store or sell what grew.
- After seven Sabbath years (so that would be 7 X 7 or 49 years) they were to have a YEAR OF JUBILEE
- The word JUBILEE actually means “rams horn”. They would blow the ram’s horn, their trumpet, to signal the beginning of the Year of Jubilee
- Verse 10 says to return to every man his property and each person back to their clan...in other words.
- Question: Any idea what that verse is talking about? Why would people not have their property or why would they not be with their family?

Here's what our lesson commentary tells us:

Difficult times came to the Israelites just as such times come to us. Drought and insects could ruin crops, placing small farmers and craftsmen in precarious economic situations. With no banks available, financial need often led Israelites to take drastic measures to survive, including selling part or all of their land or even selling themselves or family members as slaves in order to survive. Israelite law allowed for permanent enslavement of foreigners (25:44-46) but only the temporary enslavement of Israelites.

- By the way, interesting fact - Those words in verse 10: “Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof ” is inscribed on the Liberty Bell, which hangs in Independence Hall in Philadelphia. (I’ve never read the Kuran so I don’t know if any of its words are inscribed on any of our American symbols but I know THE BIBLE’s words ARE!)
- The ULTIMATE way we as THE CHURCH can show people the way to FREEDOM is by sharing the Good News of the Gospel!
- In addition to that, what are some ways that THE CHURCH can help people ENJOY FREEDOM in their lives? What about some of the programs we offer people?
 - Freedom from debt
 - Freedom from marriage problems
 - Freedom from the bondage of addiction
- Verse 11: “do not sow or reap”. Question: Why no farming?
 - A rest for the people
 - A rest for the land
- Question: We all understand pretty well why the people needed a rest. Why would the land need to rest?
- Question: When we buy a product that comes with a MANUFACTURERS WARRANTY...what can VOID the warranty and make it not apply?
 - Not using the product according to the manufacturer’s instructions

Statement:

God created us and everything around us and He has a design for the CORRECT OPERATION of His CREATION. If we want to live ABUNDANTLY we need to FOLLOW THE CREATOR’S instructions.

- By the way, this was a HUGE leap of faith on the part of the people
- Because the Jubilee Year was just after the 49th year, a Sabbath year, they would not work the fields for TWO YEARS IN A ROW!
- Question: Why would God CHALLENGE them to go two years in a row without farming?
 - He wanted them to TRUST Him. He was testing their faith in Him as PROVIDER of life’s basic needs.

Leviticus 25:13-17

13 " In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to his own property.

14 " If you sell land to one of your countrymen or buy any from him, do not take advantage of each other. 15 You are to buy from your countryman on the basis of the number of years since the Jubilee. And he is to sell to you on the basis of the number of years left for harvesting crops. 16 When the years are many, you are to increase the price, and when the years are few, you are to decrease the price, because what he is really selling you is the number of crops. 17 Do not take advantage of each other, but fear your God. I am the LORD your God.

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- Verse 13: In the Jubilee year, Israelites who had lost control over their ancestral lands – whether from debt or sale – would be restored to that property.
- Question: If you sold the land to someone, why would they have to give it back to you? Anyone have a thought?
- In God’s design for the Israelites, it was really more like LEASING the land:

Warren Wiersbe tells us:

Any property that was sold since the last Year of Jubilee would revert to its original owner, for the Lord wanted His land to remain with the tribes, clans, and families to which it had been allotted. For parents to care for their families, they had to have land to cultivate, and the private ownership of property gave stability to the economy. The Lord owned the land and only loaned it to His people. He wanted them to have a sense of proprietorship and responsibility in caring for His property.

- Verse 14: What does God command the people about when they DO buy and sell land?
 - Don’t cheat your neighbor.
 - God new their nature so he told them in advance to BE HONEST.
- Verses 15 and 16 get SPECIFIC about how to set the PRICE for land. Basically, you were buying the NUMBER OF YEARS of harvest you could grow between the transaction and the next Jubilee year.
- Verse 17: In case they didn’t get it in verse 14, God reminds them again “DON’T CHEAT ONE ANOTHER”...but He adds a REASON at the end...what is it?
 - FEAR YOUR GOD, FOR I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD
 - Last week someone made the point, we’re made in God’s image so we need to reflect God’s image.
 - God’ wouldn’t be dishonest so WE must not be dishonest.

Leviticus 25:18-22

18 " Follow my decrees and be careful to obey my laws, and you will live safely in the land. 19 Then the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live there in safety. 20 You may ask, "What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?" 21 I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years. 22 While you plant during the eighth year, you will eat from the old crop and will continue to eat from it until the harvest of the ninth year comes in.

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- Verse 18 says “follow my plan and you’ll live safely in the land.”
- Does that mean if I do everything God tells me to nothing bad will ever happen?
- Our own observations of life would tell us that isn’t the case
- Does it mean the if I do everything God tells me to I’ll be RICH?
- Our own observations of life would tell us THAT ALSO isn’t the case
- What DID God promise the Israelites if they would observe the Sabbath rest with no farming?

- What did he say in verse 19?
 - The land will yield its fruit, so that you can eat, be satisfied, and live securely in the land
- How about another verse 19 in the New Testament?

What did Paul write in Philippians 4:19?

(New International Version)

19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

- Follow my plan and I will supply your needs
- Show kindness and graciousness to others and I'll make up the difference
- Question: We sometimes HESITATE to do something GENEROUS or to GIVE to help another... How might that HESITATION TO HELP be related to God's promise to SUPPLY OUR NEEDS?
 - We're afraid we'll RUN OUT of what WE NEED!
 - We're afraid to TRUST GOD to supply our needs if we are GENEROUS and GRACIOUS to others
 - That's what this next section is about...

Leviticus 25:35-38

35 " If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you would an alien or a temporary resident, so he can continue to live among you. 36 Do not take interest of any kind [a] from him, but fear your God, so that your countryman may continue to live among you. 37 You must not lend him money at interest or sell him food at a profit. 38 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God.

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- Cut somebody some SLACK!
- If you see someone who has fallen on hard times... give them a hand!
- Verse 37 is interesting: don't LEND with interest.

Deuteronomy 23:20 (New International Version)

20 You may charge a foreigner interest, but not a brother Israelite, so that the LORD your God may bless you in everything you put your hand to in the land you are entering to possess.

- They could charge interest to a foreigner but not to a fellow Israelite.
- Remember, there were no banks in ancient Israel, these were individuals helping people when they hit hard times.
- By the way, in that day WHAT WAS THE ONLY REASON FOR GOING INTO DEBT?

- Did the Israelites whip out their Mideastern Express cards to buy a shiny new chariot or to go out for a five course lamb meal at the Palm?
- Borrowing was for when you were in hard times and needed help, not just because you wanted something you couldn't afford.
- In the year of Sabbath God's plan was to RESTORE people and things back to where they were so everyone could keep their LAND and their FREEDOM
- Basically, God was saying in these verses, I SHOWED you KINDNESS and gave you FREEDOM... YOU DO THE SAME TO THOSE WHO NEED IT.
- Now here is an interesting fact about these years of Sabbath God told the Israelites to observe
- God designed this system of SABBATH years knowing what was BEST for His people and His creation
- A year off with no farming (in fact TWO years off at the time of Jubilee)
- Sounds like a pretty good plan doesn't it?
- But it would take a LOT OF TRUST in God to provide for your needs
- Now here's the REST OF THE STORY (as Paul Harvey might have said)
- They NEVER OBSERVED these SABBATH RESTS!

Warren Weirsbe:

We have no biblical evidence that the Jews ever celebrated the Sabbath Year, in fact, the Bible indicates that they didn't: "To fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years" (2 Chron. 36:21).

[WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?] Apparently...

God sent Israel into Babylonian exile for seventy years in order to give the land the rest it needed (Jer. 25:8-11; 29:10). This suggests that for nearly 500 years, the Jews had disobeyed God's law concerning the Sabbath Year. It's a basic principle of life that whatever we rob from God, we can never keep and enjoy ourselves.

- They didn't follow God's LOVING design...so He accomplished it in another way that was more painful for them

Statement:

Following God's plan gives us FREEDOM. Not following His plan leads to MORE BONDAGE!

- Cutting people some slack
- Showing a gracious spirit to others
- We started this lesson talking about Random Acts of Kindness

George Washington Carver said something great about showing kindness:

How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in your life you will have been all of these. ~George Washington Carver

- Pretty profound!

So what's the TAKEAWAY?

- God has been GRACIOUS to US and we need to reflect His image by being KIND and GRACIOUS to others.
- God has committed to SUPPLY our needs so we need to TRUST Him enough that we're not afraid to GIVE and SHARE of our resources and time to help others who are truly in need.
- God has given US FREEDOM and we need to demonstrate how grateful we are by helping others enjoy freedom as well.
- The FIRST FREEDOM we can share with others is the FREEDOM IN CHRIST through the Good News of the Gospel.