

# **Social Laws**

## Deuteronomy 21:1-26:19

### *Study Guide*

Over the last couple of weeks, we have been studying specific laws of conduct that God gave to Israel. These specific Laws were a detailed guide of how they should keep the Ten Commandments in everyday life. They provide a structure to insure that the children of Israel actively loved God and their neighbor.

God has already given specific laws on how to honor him through worship and how to honor him through civil government. Here, God gives detailed instruction on how they can honor Him in matters of everyday life and conduct.

A casual reading of these chapters may lead the reader to think that it is just a list of various and unrelated topics: lost property, unacceptable clothing, city planning, agricultural guidelines, sexual conduct, marital problems, public health, and the list continues. However, when read more carefully, the overall theme is unmistakable. Because God's character is completely generous, just, and loving, no one ought to live a life that is selfish and careless toward one's neighbors. Man must imitate God and practice responsible love in society.

### **Day 1**

#### **Read Deuteronomy 21:1-23**

1. God knew that His people, who were sinful people living in a sinful world would be faced with hard circumstances and tragedies. This passage regulates how Israel is to respond in the midst of such unfortunate circumstances. List the 5 troubling situations that God gives instruction concerning.





## Day 2

### Read Deuteronomy 22:1-30

1. Continuing with the theme of being a responsible neighbor, God gives a commandment regarding how to care for other's personal property. What example does God give in the first four verses of this passage to show that He does not have a "finders keepers, losers weepers" attitude?

**Deuteronomy 22:5 A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment.** Gender-distinctions are part of God's plan and must be kept. Sexual promiscuity, homosexuality, and transvestite practices were common practices of the Canaanites. This law that Israel abstain from wearing clothes and jewelry which was the cultural norm of the opposite sex, would insure their separateness from such pagan rituals.

2. Surely there must be more to verses 6-8 than God's concern for birds and architecture. How do these verses follow the theme of being a responsible citizen to others in society?



**Deuteronomy 22:28-29 she shall be his wife.** Under the Mosaic Law, couples who were guilty of engaging in premarital sex had to marry. This law protects women from being taken advantage of. In that culture, men did not want to marry a woman who was not a virgin (see 22:13-21). The only men who had to marry virgins were Levites, but the cultural stigma ran through all the tribes. A single, unmarriageable woman would be destined for a life of poverty in such a male dominated society. God's law forces men to take responsibility for their mistreatment of women and care for them as their husband if they defile them.

Couples today are not under this law and have no responsibility to marry each other if they engage in premarital sex. Women today have many opportunities to earn income and the social stigma of being unmarriageable is not as prevalent. However, the principle of male responsibility is still relevant. If a pregnancy results, men must take financial responsibility to make sure that the full weight of the consequences of his actions does not fall on the woman alone. However, even in this situation, marriage is not required.

6. We so often fail to think how our selfish actions will affect the society around us. Pray that God would forgive you of the many times that you sin against people because of your self-centered behavior. Thank Him for rules which restrain you from hurting those whom you should love. Commit to never taking advantage of another person by sexually using them to fulfill your own desires. Pray for you children: that God will provide them with a godly mate whom they can give their entire self to in a pure, loving, and sacrificial way.

### **Day 3**

#### **Read Deuteronomy 23:1-24:4**

1. What four classes of people were not permitted to enter the assembly of the Lord in worship before God's presence?



5. Thank God for His commands to Israel and the insight that they give you into the mind of God. Notice these general principles and how they should affect your behavior.
- (1) God did not want those coming before His presence to be those who had mistreated His people or bore the mutilations associated with idolatrous worship. Therefore, do not sin against others and expect to be able to come before God in acceptable worship.
  - (2) God wanted the camp to be clean from impurities so He would not see them as He walked among them. From this you can worship God for His omnipresence which is always with you, His omnipotence which protects you from harm, and His omniscience which always sees you and knows what you are doing. May these truths be a huge deterrent from private sins.
  - (3) God's laws concerning promises show us that He is a God of truth who always keeps His Word.
  - (4) His laws concerning runaway slaves and divorce show that God is a helper of the helpless.

Worship Him for the attributes of greatness which you can only look at in amazement, and worship Him for the attributes of goodness which you too can imitate.

### **Day 4**

#### **Read Deuteronomy 24:5-25:19**

1. The laws in this section protect newly married couples (25:5), debtors (24:6, 10-13, 17), vulnerable people (24:7), community health (24:8-9), employees (24:14-15), the innocent (24:16), the weak (24:17-22), offenders (25:1-3), and even animals (25:4). Write out, in a couple of sentences, truths about God's character based upon these laws. How will these truths about God's character affect how you daily live?



Deuteronomy 25:12 **Cut off her hand.** This punishment may seem severe. However, one must keep several contextual issues in mind. First, God views the human body with dignity and sanctity. Men and women are not free to use their bodies to inflict harm on their neighbors. Second, God views womanhood with dignity and sanctity. He has several laws which protect them from being used or mistreated. With this honor comes responsibility. A woman must not to use her protected status to hurt men. A man would never be permitted to hit a woman; therefore, he was totally defenseless in such a fight. God sees this as a very unfair and one-sided battle. Thirdly, God views human life with dignity and sanctity. Such an action against a man, regardless of where the fault lay, could rob a man of the ability to produce a family. In that culture, this was probably the worst thing which could happen to a man. The fact that there is no recorded incident of this situation or punishment ever occurring shows that God's Law was sufficient as a deterrent to protect the sanctity of men, women, and future children.

What principles may we glean from such an incident? We can learn that the end does not justify the means. It is possible to do the right thing in the wrong way. It is commendable for a wife to want to protect her husband, but she is not given the freedom to use unlimited force. Neighbors are not to act indifferently to the needs of others, even during a fight.

5. What did the Amalekites do to Israel? How will God punish them for this action? How should this affect the way that our nation deals with Israel and how you personally deal with Jewish people?

6. Pray that God will help you be a friend to the friendless and a helper to the helpless. Ask Him to help you identify those people around you who are in tough situations. Make yourself available to be used by Him to give them hope.



