

**Sermon title:** Holiness in our daily lives

**Sermon text:** Lev 19:1 – 2

## **Introduction**

A. Leviticus was the first book Jewish children studied in the synagogue.

B. When we read Lev 1 – 8, we get the impression that God’s holiness is tied to ancient rituals (or a set of “do’s and don’ts).

C. However, as we study Lev 19, we realize that holiness is tied to our actions/attitudes in our daily lives.

## **Study Topics**

1. Holiness is based on the character of God and we are to reflect God’s character in our lives.

2. Develop compassion for the poor, foreigner – Lev 19:9 – 10

3. Do not bully/mistreat the vulnerable employee – Lev 19:13b

4. Do not exploit your neighbour’s ignorance for personal gain – Lev 19:14

**“I am the LORD” – v2 – 4, 10, 12, 14, 18, 25, 28, 30 – 32, 34, 36, 37**

The Lord said to Moses, 2 “Speak to the **entire assembly** of Israel and say to them: ‘Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.’

## **Observation**

1. This chapter begins with God’s character “I am the LORD”.
2. “**entire assembly**” refers to the entire nation

## **Application**

1. In this chapter, the practical commands and entirely based on God’s character.
2. Therefore, holiness is not just a concept – holiness is just an ideal for Christians to aspire to.
3. Furthermore, holiness is not limited to our ministries in church. Holiness is present in our daily lives – everywhere, every time.

## Lev 19:9 – 10

9 “When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or (do not) gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 Do not go over your vineyard a second time or (do not) pick up the grapes that have fallen.

Leave them (the harvest leftovers) for the poor and the foreigner. I am the LORD your God.

(Dt 24:19 – 22)

### Explanation

1. Landowners - rich (implied) resident Israelites
2. “Poor” – resident Israelites (e.g. widows, fatherless, orphans)
3. “Foreigners” – resident non-Israelites
4. Harvesting practices

### Observation

1. We cannot maximize personal economic value to the exclusion of caring for society’s disadvantaged.
2. There are two categories of the disadvantaged: “poor” and “foreigner”
3. “Remember that you were slaves in Egypt”: Remember the time that you were desperate and God saved/sustained you.
4. Allowing the poor and the foreigner to glean the leftovers reflects the character/nature of God.

## **Application**

A. God wants us to develop practical compassion for those who are socially disadvantaged. God does not just want us to develop an emotional feeling but He wants us to take practical steps to help the socially disadvantaged.

B. As God has blessed you in your harvest (job, family, children etc), you have the privilege to provide for others (who through no fault of theirs) are less fortunate amongst you.

C. God wants us to remember the times when we were desperate and God stepped in to save/sustain us. Don't compel those workers to work until the point of desperation/exhaustion.

D. God wants us to know that there is dignity in work. Providing the poor with meaningful jobs gives the poor dignity in work. God cares for the socially disadvantaged and expects us to do likewise.

**Lev 19:13b** – Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight.

**Deut 24:14 – 15** <sup>14</sup> Do not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner residing in one of your towns. <sup>15</sup> Pay them their wages each day before sunset, because they are poor and are counting on it. Otherwise they may cry to the LORD against you, and you will be guilty of sin.

## Explanation

1. All workers in ancient days were daily paid workers.
2. Workers worked in the fields in the day and received their salary in the evening.
3. Their wages were just sufficient for them for one day; therefore they were vulnerable.
4. No such thing as social safety nets (e.g. CPF, insurance policy, HDB housing schemes, CDC vouchers, Edusave etc) or regulatory labour protection (MoM regulations regarding FDW etc)

## IMPLICIT ASSUMPTIONS:

- a. The hired worker has already performed an honest day's work. This does NOT apply to lazy, scheming workers.
- b. The landowner is having a normal harvest and is able to pay the worker – i.e. not drought or crop devastation by insects etc

## Observation

To withhold a worker's wages after he has done an honest day's work was to deprive him of his living.  
I.e. to have maximum leverage over the hired worker.

Notice in Dt 24:14 that the hired worker could be either a fellow Israelite or an alien (resident non-Israelite).

## **Application in normal employer – employee context**

1. This verse applies to employers who are individuals or employers who are organizations.
2. There are employees (either Singaporeans or foreigners who live in Singapore) who need a job – to provide for their family's basic needs.
3. Some employees have long-term sickness or loved ones who live overseas who depend on their salary. In short, the employees are vulnerable.
4. In addition, these vulnerable employees rely on a regular (vs arbitrary period) fair wage (vs predatory wage) from the employers. There are some unscrupulous bosses who deliberately hold maximum leverage over an employee.
5. As an example, some bosses who deliberately give an employee a poor rating at their annual assessment – AFTER the employee has done an honest year's work. Consequently, the employee is forced to leave the company, take a pay cut in another department or forfeit his annual bonus, annual increment and job progression. The employee will cry out to God against the employer for this injustice.
6. We also read in newspapers that some employers who deliberately deduct the employee's wage for **accidental** (not deliberate or negligent) damages to the employer's property (e.g. broken cups/dishes, damaged/faded clothing etc)

## **Lev 19:14**

**Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the LORD.**

### **Observation & Application 1 – Immediate principle**

1. These commands paint a vivid picture of cruel treatment of people with disabilities. A deaf person could not hear such a curse, nor could a blind person see the block.
2. Do not despise or mock those with permanent physical disabilities (e.g. blind, deaf, mute, lame).  
“pai kar (lame)”, “4 eyes”, “Botak”, “Fatty” and albino. Teachers should be on the lookout for children who mock other children with physical disabilities.

### **Observation & Application 2 – wider principle**

- 1 Do not take advantage of the ignorance, weakness, or inexperience of your neighbour.
2. Information asymmetry. Don't exploit others because of your information advantage. E.g. buying a big-ticket item (e.g. buying a house, business, insurance policy or a car).

Often, the selling agent (housing, business, insurance or car) has more information/knowledge than the buying person. Don't use your information advantage to exploit the unknowing buyer.

## Summary

1. Holiness is based on the character of God. Our lives are to reflect the character of God.
  
2. Lev 19:9 – 10
  - a. Do not maximize our personal profit to the absolute exclusion of the poor and disadvantaged. Giving the poor an opportunity to work and this gives them dignity.
  
  - b. We are to reflect the character/nature of God – especially towards the poor and disadvantaged.
  
2. Lev 19: 13b
  - a. Do not bully/mistreat our vulnerable employees.
  
  - b. Otherwise, our bullied /mistreated employees will cry out to God and we will be guilty before God.
  
3. Lev 19:14
  - a. Do not mock/despise those have physical disabilities
  
  - b. Do not exploit your neighbour's ignorance for personal gain