

Moral Guidelines and Marriage Guidelines

Deuteronomy 22

Deuteronomy 22:1-12 - *"You shall not see your brother's ox or his sheep going astray, and hide yourself from them; you shall certainly bring them back to your brother. ² And if your brother is not near you, or if you do not know him, then you shall bring it to your own house, and it shall remain with you until your brother seeks it; then you shall restore it to him. ³ You shall do the same with his donkey, and so shall you do with his garment; with any lost thing of your brother's, which he has lost and you have found, you shall do likewise; you must not hide yourself. ⁴ "You shall not see your brother's donkey or his ox fall down along the road, and hide yourself from them; you shall surely help him lift them up again. ⁵ "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the Lord your God. ⁶ "If a bird's nest happens to be before you along the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, with the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young; ⁷ you shall surely let the mother go, and take the young for yourself, that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days. ⁸ "When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it. ⁹ "You shall not sow your vineyard with different kinds of seed, lest the yield of the seed which you have sown and the fruit of your vineyard be defiled. ¹⁰ "You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together. ¹¹ "You shall not wear a garment of different sorts, such as wool and linen mixed together. ¹² "You shall make tassels on the four corners of the clothing with which you cover yourself."*

Background Notes

Romans 10:4 says that *"Christ is the end of the law, the righteousness for everyone who believes."* With the coming of Jesus Christ, the "Dispensation of Law" ended. This does not mean that the Mosaic Law is useless today, or that we are now lawless. No! In fact, ***the moral law of God never changes***. It is the civil and ceremonial regulations of the Mosaic Law that no longer applied after the coming of Jesus Christ.

The ***moral*** directives of the Law certainly apply today. Lying, murder, and adultery, for example, were wrong before the Mosaic Law was given, they were wrong during the time of the Law, and they are wrong today - even though the "Dispensation of Law" has ended. God's moral law never changes. In fact, all of the Ten Commandments, with the exception of one, are moral laws, and they are repeated in the New Testament.

Only the "Law of the Sabbath" was not repeated in the New Testament. We believe the Sabbath regulation was a ceremonial law, and no longer applies. However, there are timeless moral principles involved in the law of keeping the Sabbath. Those principles are to put God first in the matter of our time, and to set aside time to worship Him.

The same is true of many of the other non-moral laws of the Mosaic Covenant. There are moral principles involved in some of those laws that are still good for today, because these moral principles are backed up by the rest of Scripture.

Doctrinal Points

1. The moral guidelines contained in the Law are valid today.

There are a number of timeless moral guidelines in the laws that are enumerated in verses 1-12. In verses 1-3, a moral guideline that could be labeled “finders are *not* keepers” was given. When the people of Israel found a lost item, they were responsible to return it to its owner - including keeping it safe during the process. We, too, are responsible to do our best to return any lost item that we find to its rightful owner, including lost money.

In verse 4, the “don’t pretend ignorance” moral guideline was given. It’s so easy to play ignorant and pass by someone who needs our help, especially the help that we could give.

Verse 5 contains another moral guideline. *“A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman’s garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the Lord your God.”* God is displeased with the idea of “unisex.” Last week we were seated behind a cross-dresser on a plane – a man dressed and made up as a woman. This practice is unbiblical. God intended that there would be an obvious difference between the clothing of men and women - for all time, and for all cultures.

Verses 6-7 contain the “be kind to animals” moral guideline. This doesn’t mean that we must be vegetarians, but we should observe humane practices for hunting and raising animals for food.

Verse 8 gave the moral guideline to “keep your property safe.” For example, a backyard swimming pool should have a tall fence around it. You are responsible to be a “lifeguard.”

In verses 9-11, what’s the moral guideline in laws about not mixing different seeds, or different fabrics, or plowing with different animals? There may be several principles involved here, but one guideline would certainly be “keep yourselves separate from pagan practices.” The foreign nations surrounding Israel were involved in at least some of these mixtures as part of their religious rites and practices. Israel was to be separate from all pagan practices, even though they were not immoral in themselves. We, too, should be separate from any practice that might link us to the pagan world. For example, we should avoid dressing in certain “dark” ways, or using and wearing symbols that might link us to the world of the occult. The moral guidelines contained in the Law are valid today.

2. The marriage guidelines contained in the Law are valid today.

Verses 13-30 contain seven types of situations that could take place. They certainly contain moral *guidelines* for today, even though they are not *laws* for today.

Deuteronomy 22:13-19 - *"If any man takes a wife, and goes in to her, and detests her, ¹⁴ and charges her with shameful conduct, and brings a bad name on her, and says, 'I took this woman, and when I came to her I found she was not a virgin,' ¹⁵ then the father and mother of the young woman shall take and bring out the evidence of the young woman's virginity to the elders of the city at the gate. ¹⁶ And the young woman's father shall say to the elders, 'I gave my daughter to this man as wife, and he detests her. ¹⁷ Now he has charged her with shameful conduct, saying, "I found your daughter was not a virgin," and yet these are the evidences of my daughter's virginity.' And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. ¹⁸ Then the elders of that city shall take that man and punish him; ¹⁹ and they shall fine him one hundred shekels of silver and give them to the father of the young woman, because he has brought a bad name on a virgin of Israel. And she shall be his wife; he cannot divorce her all his days. ²⁰ But if the thing is true, and evidences of virginity are not found for the young woman, ²¹ then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she has done a disgraceful thing in Israel, to play the harlot in her father's house. So you shall put away the evil from among you.*

²² *"If a man is found lying with a woman married to a husband, then both of them shall die—the man that lay with the woman, and the woman; so you shall put away the evil from Israel. ²³ If a young woman who is a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, ²⁴ then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he humbled his neighbor's wife; so you shall put away the evil from among you. ²⁵ But if a man finds a betrothed young woman in the countryside, and the man forces her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die. ²⁶ But you shall do nothing to the young woman; there is in the young woman no sin deserving of death, for just as when a man rises against his neighbor and kills him, even so is this matter. ²⁷ For he found her in the countryside, and the betrothed young woman cried out, but there was no one to save her. ²⁸ "If a man finds a young woman who is a virgin, who is not betrothed, and he seizes her and lies with her, and they are found out, ²⁹ then the man who lay with her shall give to the young woman's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife because he has humbled her; he shall not be permitted to divorce her all his days." ³⁰ A man shall not take his father's wife, nor uncover his father's bed."*

Case #1 (v13-19): If a husband falsely accused his new wife of not being a virgin when married, the husband had to pay a large fine to the father of the girl, and he could not divorce her. The evidence of her innocence was the bedclothes of the wedding night. "No-fault divorce" laws are not found in the Bible.

Case #2 (v20-21): If the wife of case 1 was found to be lying, then she was stoned to death. The sin of sex before marriage and lying about it is a serious sin in God's perspective, then and today.

Case #3 (v22): The sin of adultery was punishable by death. The fact that there was **no double standard with God** should certainly be a moral guideline for today.

Case #4 (v23-24): The case of consenting fornication involving an engaged woman was considered the same as adultery, and was punishable by death. Again, the fact that there was no double standard with God is a moral guideline for today.

Case #5 (v25-27): A man guilty of the rape of an engaged woman was to be put to death, but nothing was to be done to the woman. It was assumed that she was innocent. What a difference between God's Law and the sharia law that is practiced in many Muslim countries today.

Case #6 (v28-29): If a man seduced a woman who was not engaged, he had to marry her and support her for life. The only exception (according to Exodus 22) was if the woman's father said "No." But even in that case, the man had to pay the father the full dowry price. What a far cry from the secular moral standards of today!

Case #7 (v30): *"A man shall not take his father's wife, nor uncover his father's bed."* "Uncovering the skirt" is a euphemism for sexual intercourse. Incest was sexual sin in those days, just as it is today. The marriage guidelines contained in the Law are valid today.

Practical Application

Tie a string around your finger!

Sometimes people tie a string around their finger to help them remember something, and that is essentially what verse 12 is all about. *"You shall make tassels on the four corners of the clothing with which you cover yourself."* This law is also covered in Numbers 15:37-40. The tassels and blue cord on the edge of the garments were to be a constantly remind the Israelis of the commandments of the Law. Just like tying a string on your finger.

We, too, can use reminders to help us do what is pleasing to the Lord. For example, if your family is forgetting to have family devotions (which we know is important for teaching the Word to children, and is pleasing to the Lord), why not leave a daily devotional book sitting out on your dining room or kitchen table at all times, as a reminder.

Tie a string around your finger!