



2019 YEAR OF SCRIPTURE
Monthly Devotions
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At the moment, what is your favorite book of the Bible and why?

Not Leviticus?!

I am assuming no one said “Leviticus” is their favorite book☺ I often find that people have good intentions of reading the Bible from beginning to end, only to get stuck in Leviticus and give up. So let's see if we can mine some treasures from its pages that will help us through.

“Leviticus” – the book's title comes from the Greek meaning “the book of the Levites”. The Levites were the tribe of Israel chosen by God to be priests. They were thought to be descendants of Moses' brother, Aaron, the first High Priest of Israel. The first chapters are often referred to as the “Priestly Code”, and describe offerings, rituals, laws and rites for the people of Israel. The second part contains laws that are referred to as the “Holiness Code”, a guide to the people for how to live in the presence of God's holiness. While many of the teachings are for a specific time and place and sound strange to us today, there are some teachings that are timeless.

In our reading for today from the Holiness Code section of Leviticus, we hear some of God's instructions through Moses for the people of Israel. They are about to end their wilderness wanderings and enter the promised land of Canaan. (The headings for each section of verses are added for clarity.)

Leviticus 19: 1-4, 9-18

¹The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

²Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them:

Be Holy (Set apart for service to God)

You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. ³You shall each revere your mother and father, and you shall keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God. ⁴Do not turn to idols or make cast images for yourselves: I am the LORD your God.

Be Giving (Share what you have with the poor)

⁹When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. ¹⁰You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the LORD your God.

Be Honest (Be someone people can trust, someone God can trust)

¹¹You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; and you shall not lie to one another. ¹²And you shall not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God: I am the LORD.



Be Fair (Put yourself in your neighbors shoes)

¹³You shall not defraud your neighbor; you shall not steal; and you shall not keep for yourself the wages of a laborer until morning. ¹⁴You shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind; you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

Be Just (Be an advocate for human rights for others)

¹⁵You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor. ¹⁶You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbor: I am the LORD.

Be Love (Show mercy, forgiveness, and loyalty to each other)

¹⁷You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself. ¹⁸You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

Jesus, the fulfillment of God's teachings

Close to 1,000 years later, Jesus grows up with the teachings and guidance of the Hebrew Torah (Writings attributed to Moses). As he begins his ministry, he says...

Matthew 5:17

¹⁷"Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill."

How do you see Jesus, in his life, fulfilling these teachings? (opt. – go section by section)?

How do you see us, as the local church, currently fulfilling these teachings (be specific)?

Where and how might Jesus be calling us to fulfill these teachings in new ways?

Matthew 22:37-40

³⁷He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' ³⁸This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Prayer

Lord, bless those gathered around this table tonight with a vision for the church that fulfills your teachings and bears your love. Guide us always by your Word. Amen.

