

Deuteronomy 22 • God's Order in All Things

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Deuteronomy Chapter 22. And I want to put up an outline of what we're going to be looking at in this is chapter because it's fairly full.

Chapter 22 Outline

- Spelling out “Love your neighbor”: 1-4
- The order and distinction of Creation: 5
- Preserving the means of life: 6-7
- Safety measures: 8
- The order and distinction of Creation: 9-11
- Remembering the commandments: 12
- Concerning sexual immorality: 13-30

This chapter 22 of Deuteronomy you can see online that in verses 1 through 4, God through Moses, is going to spell out some practical elements of what it means to love your neighbor. You can say all day long, love your neighbor love your neighbor, love your neighbor but of course if you don't ever really put it into practical terms sometimes, we lose sight of it. Then in verse 5, just one single verse, he's going to deal with the order and distinction of creation.

That's not the only time he'll deal with that. Verses 6 and 7 will talk about preserving the means of life. We'll talk about the smarts involved in that. Safety measures are going to be dealt with in verse 8. He'll come back to the order and distinction of creation in verses 9 through 11. He's going to talk to them about remembering the Word of God in verse 12. And then verses 13 through 30 is going to be a whole host of really interesting and somewhat embarrassing sexual immorality topics. So, there we go. Are you ready?

Chapter 22 verse 1, “*You shall not see your brother's ox, or his sheep going astray and ignore them. You shall take them back to your brother.*”

All right, stop here? What's this all about? He's now, he's giving, I like to call it putting feet or legs, giving legs to an earlier command. Let me put on the screen for you an earlier command. Leviticus chapter 19 verse 18. Look at this.

Leviticus 19:18 (ESV)

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am (Yahweh, I am) the LORD.

All right, there it is. Love your neighbor as yourself. That means love your neighbor in the way that you would want to be loved, right? That's essentially what that means. But you know, you can say that, and I can say that, and we can say, hey man, you know, love your neighbor but if we don't give some examples of what that means, it tends to go over our heads. And so, what Moses is doing now, or the Lord through Moses is doing in these first four verses anyway, is He's giving a rather simple, yet very practical sort of outline of how real neighborly care and concern might be shown.

And He's using examples of things that would happen in their culture. It's probably not something you and I are going to come around with someone's animal wandering onto your property or seeing it along the road or whatever. But that's the point that's being brought up here. If one of your neighbor's animals wanders off, or more specifically, wanders onto your land, what are you going to do? Well, let's face it. The easiest thing to do is nothing, and here's why. We're busy, and it's inconvenient. I mean, to help somebody out with their animal, it's inconvenient.

If I'm out on the road somewhere, or I'm in my field, or something as a farmer, I'm there because I've got work to do, right? I'm on the road because I need to go to town and maybe pick up supplies. Maybe I'm out in the field because I'm working my crop. I'm bringing my crop. Maybe I look up from my own work and I see my neighbor's ox or something like that wandering along. Just, and I know that it's not where it's supposed to be. And I'm thinking, oh man, take care of your animals, Mr. Neighbor, right? I mean, that's my first. I'm irritated. I'm annoyed.

Can't the guy keep this thing tied up? What's his problem? I've got work to do, right? But notice what God says here in this first verse. He says, you shall not ignore it. Oh man. So, what do I got to do? Well, if I find this animal wandering around, I need to take care of it. I need to take it back to my neighbor. Now, the other natural instinct, rather than doing nothing, when I find something of my neighbors, is to claim it, as my own, right? Finders, keepers, losers, weepers,

right? Isn't that how it goes? And that animal is on my property, and possession is nine tenths of the law, we like to say.

So, this animal wanders onto my property. I just I take it into the barn. I tie it up and I say, one more animal for me. Well, so doing nothing, or doing something, which is keeping the animal, are two responses of my own carnal nature. God says, I want you to go beyond your carnal nature, and I want you to respond to this person as you would have them respond to you if it was your animal that was found, and you would want them to return the animal to where it belongs. And again, it isn't the most convenient thing to do.

It's kind of like that feeling you get when you're done getting groceries, and you walk out to your car, and you unload the shopping cart, and then you look up to see that the shopping cart return area is across the parking lot and it's hot, or it's raining, or you're in a hurry, or you happen to glance around the parking lot and notice nobody else put their cart back and you're thinking AHHH! And we all know the feeling, right? We know what that's all about. And we just, it's like, I've got to get going.

And besides, don't they pay people to come out here and wrangle these things, right, and take them back in? That's probably, I don't want to take the guy's job away or anything like that. What's interesting about this, though, is that this issue of abandoning a shopping cart is a topic that if you actually, now I can't imagine you wanting to Google this, but I did. And it's an interesting topic because it gets a lot of press. I mean, you'd be shocked how many people write on their blogs about returning shopping carts. I found a quote. Let me show you this quote online. This is cute.

Abandoning your shopping cart highlights selfishness and irresponsibility. It shows someone who is entitled and thinks others should clean up after them. What we do with our shopping cart can reveal a lot about a person's character.

Abandoning your shopping cart highlights selfishness and irresponsibility. It shows someone who is entitled and thinks others should clean up after them. What we do with our shopping cart can reveal a lot about (The shopping cart can teach us a lot about society and) a person's character.

So there! They kind of put us in our place, didn't they? Now you might think that quote's a little strong, but what's interesting about this is that God felt that what His children do with someone else's property was important, and He wanted them to care about others because, okay, so maybe a shopping cart isn't the best example. The point is, an animal that He's using here in this passage is

property and was very, very important property back in those days. And a lost animal could mean lost revenue or lost resources for the family.

He goes on in verse 2 and He says, *“And if he does not live near you and you do not know who he is, (I mean, in other words, the owner of this lost animal) you shall bring it home to your house, and it shall stay with you until your brother seeks it. Then you shall restore it to him.”*

In other words, you need to take care of it. Not just tie it up and let it starve. You need to take care of it. Give it food, give it water, and wait till your brother comes seeking his lost animal.

Verse 3 says, *“And you shall do the same with his donkey or (even, if it's not an animal) with his garment, or with any lost thing of your brother's, which he loses, and you find; you may not ignore it.*

And it goes without saying, you can't claim it as your own. That's what, I once watched a documentary sort of a thing, about just people. And they, you guys remember phone booths? Back before our phone booth was in our pocket or a purses they used to actually have phone booths. Some of you younger people might be surprised at this. That's where Superman changed. But anyway, they would, this was probably done back in the 70s.

They took like a quarter. Just a simple, and they stuck it on the little counter thing there in the phone and then walked away and just trained a camera on this thing just to see what people would do. But that wasn't all of it. As soon as the person was in the phone booth and as soon as they grabbed the quarter, someone, a woman would walk up to them and say, oh, I left some money in the phone booth. Did you happen to see it there? And it was an interesting sort of a reveal on the character of different people who had just, the camera saw it just pocketed that money, right?

Did you see any money in the phone booth? No, I didn't see any money. Sorry. And yet some people would go, oh yeah, I did. Here. That's your money. No problem. Interesting sort of a thing, but our, usually our natural tendency is just to hang on to it. So, he says, even if you're your brother loses something, and he doesn't live near you and so forth take care of it for him until he comes to back to get it.

Verse 4, he says, *“You shall not see your brother's donkey, or his ox fallen down by the way and ignore them.”* Now here the man is with the donkey, the person, your neighbor is with his donkey. He's either working with it or hauling

with it. And the donkey or ox or whatever the animal is has stumbled and things maybe have fallen over. Who knows? But he says, whatever it is, don't ignore the situation. *"You shall help him to lift them up again."*

Now you might think this is inconvenient enough if this is your neighbor. Your neighbor who you probably know, probably know. But do you know that the command even gets more personal than this? If we, I won't make you turn there. I'll put this up on the screen in Exodus. Look at this. This gets way more personal.

Exodus 23:4-5 (ESV)

If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall bring it back to him. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it; you shall rescue it with him.

If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall bring it back to him. If you see the donkey (look at this) of one who hates you lying down under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it; (In other words, leaving him stuck with this animal that can't get up) you shall rescue it with him.

Come alongside him and help him get his animal back up on its feet, or whatever needs to happen to help. But who are we talking about here? Now we're talking not about neighbor, we're talking about enemy. Here's the point. If you're going to struggle helping your neighbor, you're probably going to have a real hard time helping your enemy. If you have a natural tendency to want to help your neighbor, you might be a little more open to the idea of helping your neighbor. But here's the usual thing that's going to come up in our hearts and minds. Why should I help him? Why in the world should I help this guy?

He's done nothing but ridicule me. He's tried to hurt me. He's stolen things. He's slandered me on several occasions. I mean, the guy is just, he's not worth it. He's not worth my time. Now we're, hey, I got things. I got my family to take care of. I can come up with all kinds of excuses. Can't you? Couldn't we, if I gave you a piece of paper and numbered it from one to 10, could you list 10 excuses why you shouldn't help your neighbor? I could do it probably in 60 seconds because I'm good at excuses. I don't need any help to make excuses.

But God says, even if it's your enemy. Can you roll that through in your mind right now? You're driving along to work, and there's this person at work who's been going to the boss and bad mouthing you, getting you in trouble. And you are in trouble because of this person. And you see them broken down along the side of the road. What do you do? The heart of the Lord, and I know we're not

under the Law, but the heart of the Lord is pretty clear here. Help them. Help them. Take care of the situation, whatever it may need.

You see these first four verses of the chapter they make us pretty uncomfortable because they strike at the core of the existence of our sinful nature, which can easily be very much in control of our lives if we allow it to. As believers, as you well know, I'm assuming, you know. As believers, we are not obligated to the flesh any longer, we've been set free from the tyranny and control of the sinful nature, but we can still choose to go there. And if I'm angry at somebody. I probably will.

If somebody has made me mad and somebody's slandered me and done something to hurt me or my family and I see them in a difficult situation, my flesh wants to say, HA! He's getting his. But God wants me to rise above that. He wants you to do the same. He wants us to look at that situation and say, You know what? This person's a sinner just like me. And but for the grace of God, there's no difference between the two of us. I need to reach out and help this person. I don't want to.

And I think that's fairly safe to admit. I don't want to do this. I don't want to help this person, Lord. But you know what? You want me to rise beyond this sort of a base, carnal response to this individual. You want me to speak words of redemption, restoration, kindness. Even though I'm not getting any of that in return. Boy, that's hard, right? Can we just all admit, I mean, we're talking about some of the hardest, most difficult things you can imagine. And apart from the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, pfft, forget it.

Now, verse 5 is going to seemingly change the subject matter here. And it stands here in these verses on its own. But it says, *"A woman shall not wear a man's garment, nor shall a man put on a woman's cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God."*

All right. We need to take a look at this, and we need to ask ourselves some questions about it because I'm sure most of you are aware that many, even Christians have taken this command here in verse five as kind of a proof text, if you will, on women wearing pants particularly, and that's where they hone in. The problem is, what if pants are common for women in a particular society to wear, then it's no longer men's clothing. The fact is, even in Old Testament times, there were pieces of clothing that men and women wore in common. Even back during the time of Moses, during the time of Jesus.

Long robes, wrapping garments, they were common for both sexes. Sure, there were certain elements or even colors that set them apart from one another but essentially the garments were very similar, and yet the point of this passage is not just about garments. He's using garments as an example. The point of the passage is preserving the distinction of gender. And boy, isn't that a subject for 2017! I mean, good grief. It strikes, this sort of a verse strikes right at the center of so much controversy and disagreement that is going on within our culture right now.

Not only are gender differences being blurred today, they're being obliterated. You guys have got to understand. Gender differences have been blurred for a long time. We just didn't really care because it didn't come out in quite as much of a, in your face sort of a way, but we've been blurring gender distinctions for a long time for generations and just little by little, by little. And yes, it's gotten much faster and more significant in recent years, but now we've graduated into what we've created these days, which is the idea of sexual identification. You guys familiar with that?

Essentially, that means that whatever gender I identify with, others are obligated to respect my position as legitimate and real even if all appearances say something else. Doesn't matter if I'm biologically a man, if I say I identify as a woman, then you have to respect that. And you have to afford me the usual allowances that you would give to a woman or you're going to get in trouble because the government's even behind this nonsense. And they're starting to even put teeth to the laws related to some of these things.

That means basically, think about it, if a man, who is clearly and biologically a man, came here to Calvary Chapel, Ontario, and happened to say that he identified as a woman he, we have to supposedly allow him to go into the women's restroom, and have all of the usual sort of rights of a woman. In fact, we're obligated to even call him by feminine titles if he so desires. And it's madness. It's madness. Let's just call it what it is you guys. It's insanity. And this is being foisted upon us in our culture.

And the Lord's going to have more to say about this whole idea of mixing things in a bit but notice in this passage or in this verse five, He is speaking of the preservation of gender distinctives. A man is a man, a woman is, oh, and by the way, they've come up, they've said there's now there's more than two genders. There are multiple genders, that's what we're being told now. There are multiple genders now. You may not be a man, you may not be a woman, you may be something else. Yeah, so anyway, that's the craziness that's going on in our culture.

Verse 6 goes on He says, *“If you come across a bird's nest in any tree or (maybe) on the ground, with young ones or eggs and the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young.⁷ You shall let the mother go, but the young you may take for yourself, that it may go well with you, and that you may live long.”*

Is this all about cruelty? It's not actually. It's about common sense. Imagine that it was a matter of, like, an egg laying hen that you came across and the Lord would say listen, if you come across this hen who's laid some eggs, you're free to take the eggs but leave the hen alone. Why? The idea here is that if you take the hen or kill the hen to eat the hen, your supply of eggs is going to be gone. And it's really common sense, but it speaks of preserving the Lord's provision.

You might remember when we were talking earlier, God was saying to the Israelites, when you go against a foreign country and you begin to chop down some of the trees to build siege works so that you can attack them, leave the fruit bearing trees because that's my provision. That's part of my provision. So, don't ruin the land. Don't ruin the provision that the Lord has made. A hen or an animal that can lay eggs, a fowl bird, whatever. That's the provision of the Lord.

So, go ahead and take the eggs, but leave the hen, right? The whole idea here is do not undermine the resources that God has given for the continuation of life. That's the point. Now, I suppose you could probably apply this to some pretty earth first sort of topics, and I'm not going to get into all the politics of that, but there are environmental groups in our world that are very much opposed to the way we treat the earth, and fundamentally, they're probably right. I don't agree with their conclusions that a tree has as much right to be here as you do. Personally, I don't believe that.

I think that's taking it a bit too far, but what they have to say related to not shooting ourselves in the foot and eliminating the natural resources that the earth provides for us, which by the way, are God's provision for us. There's a lot of smarts to that. And we've got to be careful as Christians not to thumb our nose at that whole idea. Do you understand that in the book of Revelation it talks about the judgment of the Lord coming upon the people of the earth for ruining the earth.

You aware of that? You can look it up in the book of Revelation. I don't have chapter and verse in front of me because I just thought of it. But it literally speaks of God's wrath being poured out upon those who ruined the earth. So, this is something we need to take seriously. God has given us things to sustain

us, and it is unwise for us to be short sighted through poor stewardship related to those things.

Verse 8, *“When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring the guilt of blood upon your house, if anyone should fall from it.”*

Now, what people, what you and I may not understand as an American audience is that roofs were flat back in those days and they lived on top of them. They bathed on top of them. It was like a porch or a patio or a place for the family to hang when the weather was okay. And so, people would go up on their roofs pretty regularly. So, God is saying through Moses here that if you do not provide this measure of safety, which is in the form of this parapet or this stub wall if you will, around the perimeter of the roof line, you could be guilty of actually the shedding of blood because you're negligent by not providing this safety feature on your roof.

Again, these are more commands in God's Word that come down to caring for people. Do you care for people? Do you care about people? Do you care about what happens to them and just making life safe, and God's trying to speak to these people about a society where people look out for one another. Right? Where we care about one another. Where I care about how you feel, and whether or not you can get from point A to point B safely and that's, we should care about these things.

That's why we have laws and ordinances and things in our culture to try to make life safer and I understand how laws can easily get very burdensome and in fact even ridiculous at times. But the vast majority of the laws that are given in our land are actually pretty smart if you follow them. So, this is part of what this is talking about, just caring for other people.

Verse 9, we're going to return to the idea of not mixing things. *“You shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds of seed, lest the whole yield be forfeited, the crop that you have sown and the yield of the vineyard.”¹⁰ You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together.¹¹ You shall not wear cloth of wool and linen mixed together.”*

What in the world is this all about? You know, we read this today from a modern American mindset and we're kind of like, I don't get it. What did God have against these things? Well, do you remember when you go back to the beginning in the Book of Genesis, you'll remember that there is this phrase of repetition. According to its kind, or according to their kind. And it begins in

chapter 1 of Genesis talking about the creation of the animals given each according to their kind and then when you get into Genesis chapter 2 and you see the creation of the man it talks about how he gave names to all of the animals.

He categorized them. But for the man, there was no companion, no suitable companion, according to his kind, right? And so, God creates the woman, so that there can be a companion after his own kind. And so, God is speaking about the order of creation that He made for us, that is created according to their kind. And this is a huge part of understanding, not just creation, but God's character. Please hear me. This is not just to help you understand creation. It's to help you understand God's character.

Because you'll remember that the apostle Paul, I won't take here or show you this, but you'll remember in 1 Corinthians, Paul spoke about God, and he said, our God is not a God of disorder. You know what that means He is? It means He's a God of order. According to its kind. So, He's speaking to the people of Israel and He's driving home this idea of order and propriety by commanding His people not to mix things. Now, the mixing of things doesn't, they're not inherently immoral.

So, we look, that's why we look at these things and we're, we read them in our Bible and we're what's, what is wrong with mixing fabric? What is so immoral about mixing fabric? It's not. It's not immoral. These are not moral commandments per se. They are principles that carry a larger application than the one in which they're given. And again, it had to do with mixing things that were contrary. And these kinds of lessons that God is laying out here in the Word have a broader application through life.

And especially as the nation of Israel would grow up and begin to rub shoulders with the nations around them, the pagan nations with their worship practices and their cultures and their societies of incredible wickedness. It was important for them to understand not mixing, and order, and so forth, if they were to survive. And what God is doing to the nation of Israel is very much like you and I would do with a child. Sometimes we don't teach children the broader idea behind something because they just can't grasp it. Right? So, we teach them a simpler principle which later on they can apply in a broader sense.

And so, we might start with something very small. Something very simple. And God is doing that with the nation of Israel at this point. And He's talking about the clothes and mixing seed and mixing fabric and so forth and so on because there is order in God's creation. Now again, this speaks right to the middle of

where we are in 2017. We've cast off the order of the Lord, haven't we? I mean, it's just, it's crazy the things that we've cast off. We've cast off the order of the home. We've cast off the order of the family. We've cast off the order of marriage. We've cast off the order of sexual intimacy.

We've just cast it all out. We've just let go of it all. And we're reaping the whirlwind because of it. But we've just, we've let go of God's order. Husbands and wives do you know that largely, I want to be careful not to use hyperbole. But I will say that a lot of what is behind marriage problems is that we've cast off the order that God has laid out in the Word related to the husband, related to the wife, and how they're to come together in marriage and relate to one another. You know, God's given us some wonderful insights in the Scripture about marriage, and yet we've just, we've cast it off, but it's order, right? Now, we understand order. We understand order as it applies to other things.

We understand it as it applies to a combustion engine. I know that if I put something in the gas tank other than gas. It's orderly to put gas in there. It's orderly to put fuel in the crank or oil in the crank case. It's orderly to run it a certain, you know, according to the specifications. But if I get out of that order, do I have any right to pound my fist and say, this isn't working. And yet we do it with our lives. We do it with our marriages. We do it with our homes. We do it with our parenting. We've gotten out of order. We've just taken God's order, and we've cast it to the wind. And God is speaking to His people about order, after its own kind and He's using simple examples of a broader principle, right?

Verse 12. Verse 12 simply says, *"You shall make yourself tassels on the four corners of the garment with which you cover yourself."*

And were it not for the Book of Numbers, we'd probably see this verse here as like an interesting fashion statement. Oh, God wants us to have tassels on our clothes, so let's do that. But we do have the book of Numbers, and what we read in Numbers chapter 15 is,

Numbers 15:38-39 (ESV)

Speak to the people of Israel and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a cord of blue on the tassel of each corner. And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, to do them, not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes...

Speak to the people of Israel and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a cord of blue on the

tassel of each corner. And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and (look at this) remember all the commandments of the LORD, to do them, not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes...

So, what were the tassels there for? To remember. Do you know that remembrance is a big deal to God? He cares a lot about remembering. He talked a lot about remembering in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, we have a lot about remembering. We have communion that was given to us, to do this in remembrance of everything Christ did. And when you read through the Epistles, particularly Peter but others as well. Paul writes to Titus and says, teach these, remind them of these things. Peter says, I'm going to keep reminding you of these things as long as I'm in this tent of this body I'm going to keep telling you.

I'm going to remind you to remember, remember, remember because we so easily forget, and we have this incredible, uncanny ability to recall frivolous and unimportant details that may cause us to win jeopardy but it's not going to help in our relationship with God from the understanding of remembering the things that are really truly important. So, the tassels were all about remembering and really, it's just given to them as a way of remembering. That's all. Pretty simple isn't it?

Now, verses 13 through the end of the chapter all deal with various aspects of sexual immorality, so buckle up. Verse 13, *"If any man takes a wife and goes in to her and then hates her ¹⁴ and accuses her of misconduct and brings a bad name upon her, saying, 'I took this woman, and when I came near her, I did not find in her evidence of virginity,' ¹⁵ then the father of the young woman and her mother shall take and bring out the evidence of her virginity to the elders of the city in the gate."*

Alright, stop there. We've got some explaining to do here because this is like, so far beyond us culturally, as to be like, what in the world? Well, first of all, you have a situation, as bizarre as it sounds, of a guy who just is looking for an excuse to get rid of his wife. He doesn't like her anymore for whatever reason. So, he begins to slander her saying, that I think she was promiscuous before we got married. And he bases this on the fact that he didn't find the evidence of her virginity.

And so, it says in verse 15 that that accusation should motivate the father and the mother of this young woman to come to the elders at the city gate, which is where legal transactions took place, and to bring with them this evidence. Now, bear with me here, please. Records from various cultures in the ancient near

East refer to a blood-stained garment or a bed sheet from the wedding night as evidence of a woman's virginity back in those days. And so, this evidence was something that a prudent mother and father would retain. There are cultures, and I don't mean to be purposely sensational or crude or anything, I'm just telling you.

There are cultures where the parents camp out outside the wedding chamber on the wedding night because they want to go in there right afterwards and gather up the evidence. Believe me, it's something that was a reality. But this was evidence of a woman's virginity, and this evidence was very important if this woman was ever slandered or accused of not being a virgin at the time of marriage. And so, the example given here is that of an Israelite man who's attempting to hide his dislike of his wife in the accusation of immorality on her part prior to the wedding. And so, the parents were then to come and provide this evidence.

And it says in verse 16, *“And the father of the young woman shall say to the elders, ‘I gave my daughter to this man to marry, and he hates her;’*” So he's testifying. Notice what the real motive is here. He's telling these guys, it's not that he thinks that she's been sexually immoral, it's because he's just decided he doesn't like her. *“¹⁷ and behold, he has accused her of misconduct, saying, ‘I did not find in your daughter evidence of virginity.’ And yet this is the evidence of my daughter's virginity.’ And they shall spread the cloak before the elders of the city.”* How would you like to live in that time?

“¹⁸ Then the elders of that city shall take the man and whip him, ¹⁹ and they shall fine him a hundred shekels of silver and give them to the father of the young woman, because he has brought a bad name upon a virgin of Israel. And she shall be his wife. He may not divorce her all his days.”

This is the case where a woman is falsely accused. You might say, lucky girl, right? Yeah. She gets to stay married to this guy for all her days. But it's interesting that he has to pay a fine in addition to suffering this physical punishment, because in some cases, men would try to accuse their wives so that they could get the bride price back. When they paid the bride price to the woman's father, he would marry her for a while and realize, wow, not so great.

So, he'd accuse her falsely because if he could get away with it, he could potentially get the bride price back and be free of the woman, too. So, in this case, because he has falsely accused her, he has to pay additional money to the father because he slandered this girl.

Now, verse 20 goes on to flip the circumstances. *“But if the thing is true, (In other words, the accusation) that evidence of virginity was not found in the young woman,”* In other words, after a thorough investigation, which would be the responsibility of the elders, it was proven that the woman had engaged in some kind of sexual promiscuity before marriage.

“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 an outrageous thing in Israel by whoring in her father's house. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.”

You're going to recall that it's not exact, but there was a similar situation that was faced in the New Testament by a man named Joseph, who was betrothed to a woman named Mary, but prior to their marriage it was discovered that she was with child. I assume she began to show. And in Joseph's case, He sought to protect Mary. He wanted to separate quietly, and just break off the betrothal, so as not to slander her in any way. Well, it wouldn't have been slander if he really truly believed it, but, or he wouldn't have considered it slander, but he didn't want to do anything that was going to cause her additional pain.

Tells you the kind of guy Joseph was. Very tender-hearted man. But he had no desire to expose what he thought was her sexual indiscretion. And in fact, we know that it took a dream from the Lord to change his mind and get him to marry her anyway. But purity, here's what you have to understand when you read this passage. Purity in sexual matters of sexual fidelity was incredibly important in Israel. It's not important in our culture. But that's because we've gotten away from God's Word. But it was very important in Israel, and it was something that would distinguish God's covenant people from the nations around them.

Because remember the pagan nations were engaged usually in all kinds of sexual promiscuity and they did it in the name of worship. Pretty much every young woman would be required, for at least a time, to be a temple prostitute. And it was considered to be a good thing because this would motivate the gods to bless us in other areas of fertility related to our crops and so forth and so on. It was a horrible thing. So, God spoke to His people and said, you're going to be different. Sexual purity is to be paramount in Israel because God dwelt in their midst. And violations of sexual purity could be punished by death.

And then he goes on verse 22. *“If a man is found lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman. So you shall purge the evil from Israel.”*

This of course is a case of adultery, and it probably sounds again, outdated from the standpoint of our American way of life. But again, here's something that we forget. We forget that infidelity doesn't just undermine marriage. It undermines family. And the undermining of family undermines society, at large, as a whole. And we forget that. We think that we can do things and they're just, it's just me doing it, and I didn't hurt anybody or something like that.

A society that comes to the place of condoning infidelity will only end up condoning other acts of infidelity as well. But understand something. That infidelity is what you and I probably would more call unfaithfulness, because that's what it is. Unfaithfulness begins in the heart. Let me show you the message that Jesus preached related to this situation. It's from Matthew chapter 5.

Matthew 5:27-28 (ESV)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

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Jesus taught us that the sin begins in the heart, and it is every bit as much of a sin in the heart as it is in the flesh. And so just because a man has never touched another woman doesn't mean that he hasn't committed adultery. It's having a lustful thought toward another woman or whatever, that sort of a thing. And that's where it begins. And unfaithfulness that begins in the heart will ultimately play itself out in the flesh. And unfaithfulness breeds unfaithfulness, and again, it not only undermines the family it undermines society.

Verse 23, *“If there is a betrothed virgin, and a man meets 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 for help though she was in the city, and the man because he violated his neighbor's wife. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. ²⁵ “But if in the open country a man meets a young woman who is betrothed, and the man seizes her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die.”* Notice here that it is a capital offense for this man to rape this woman.

And he says in verse 26. *“But you shall do nothing to the young woman; she has committed no offense punishable by death. For this case is like that of a*

man attacking and murdering his neighbor, ²⁷ because he met her in the open country, and though the betrothed young woman cried for help there was no one to rescue her.” It is assumed that that's what happened.

Verse 28. *“If a man meets a virgin who is not betrothed, (to another man. Because betrothal was considered just like marriage) and seizes her and lies with her, and they are found, ²⁹ then the man who lay with her shall give to the father of the young woman fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife, because he has violated her. He may not divorce her all his days.”*

And again, I want to just bring out here. In the case here of a woman who is not engaged to be married, the penalty is, for the man, a large fine, followed by a marriage that he cannot undo for life. And I know that again, you're probably thinking, wow, that penalty appears to cause more damage to the woman than it does to the man because she's got to live with this guy who raped her. But I believe it's reasonable at this point to interject that the marriage would have to be agreeable to the woman, and it would have to be agreeable to her parents. I'm certain that they would have to agree to it. And this would only be if the woman wanted to marry this man.

And the last verse of the chapter says this, ³⁰ *“A man shall not take his father's wife, so that he does not uncover his father's nakedness.”*

A euphemism there. The final reference here to sexual purity that's given in this chapter covers a man taking his stepmother. The man's father is presumed to have passed away, leaving a wife, or leaving his wife a widow. And sometimes men were married to women who are significantly younger.

In fact, we think that Joseph may have been significantly older than Mary. We don't know for sure, but we think that he may have been older. And it was not uncommon, so perhaps the woman being significantly younger than her husband, one of the sons of the man who has died, looks at his stepmother, and maybe she's even closer to his age than his father's, and he decides that he wants her and so forth.

He desires her, but God forbade that kind of a connection. And I want you to notice that the grounds of this command are that it would stain the father's memory and it would show disrespect. He says it in a rather interesting way. You shall uncover your father's nakedness, but that was a means of showing disrespect for your father. And what you can see from this chapter as we look at the summary of this chapter is that there are several aspects of healthy family

life that God is speaking about here in this passage. He's talking about respect. Respect for property. Respect for what belongs to others.

Respect for the marriage covenant. Honoring the marriage covenant. Faithfulness, purity. These are the things that stand out in this chapter. But these are the very things that are most under attack in our culture today and in our society. In fact, we've let go of all of them. We've let go of respect. We've let go of honor. We've let go of faithfulness. We've let go of purity. And the family unit is almost gone in our society. Thankfully, within the church, we see some good remnants of strength that remain, but it's dying. It's a dying sort of a thing.

The family unit has been so weakened, that whereas families used to take care of one another, now that burden falls to society at large, which was never meant to take care of families individually. You know, we've now come to the welfare state, which now has risen up to say, we need to take care of people. Why do they have to take care of people? Because the family won't do it. One of the most heartbreaking things for me to hear is people who have no family to count on none, zero.

Now talk to people, say, well, do you have any parents around here? No. Or they've got nothing. What about siblings? No, I don't talk to them anymore. Families are so destroyed. So destroyed. People don't have anybody to turn to. And yet it's interesting that what we see in the Bible over and over again is this reliance on family. Let me just end by showing you some quick passages from 1 Timothy and then we'll close.

1 Timothy 5:4 (NIV)

...if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparent, for this is pleasing to God.

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What's the message here? Take care of your family. Take care of your family. 1 Timothy 5:16.

1 Timothy 5:16 (NIV)

If any woman who is a believer has widows in her family, she should help them and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need.

If any woman who is a believer has widows in her family, she should help them and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need.

What's the message here? Families. Take care of families. 1 Timothy 5:8. Here's the strong statement.

1 Timothy 5:8 (NIV)

If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Why? Because unbelievers even do that. So, the idea here from the Scripture is very clear. We have a responsibility to take care of our family, and we have a responsibility to take care of one another in the family of God. We are a family in the family of God, too.

We can't say, well, you're not my blood relative. Doesn't matter. By the blood of Christ, we're related. We are family here in the family of God. And the Bible, that's why the Bible says, do good to all men, especially to those who are in the family of God.

We need to preserve the idea of family because people, it is family that preserves society. When family is lost, society is lost.