



Bible Study DAY #3

Ready to Give From the Harvest

By William Carey Wiese

Key Concept:

Having plenty of food is a gift from God. God has designed it that those who have plenty should adopt deliberate and regular practices of making provisions for those who have less. Those who are given extra are expected to use this blessing as an opportunity to serve others. It is a privilege to be able to provide for the basic needs of others. This is how God has planned it from the beginning.

Introduction:

The background of the biblical text involves the history of Israel. Israel had been held in captivity as slaves to the Egyptians, prevented from owning their own land. God assured them that the promise made to Abraham hundreds of years earlier would be fulfilled. The promise that God would bring the Israelites into their own land, a land that would be filled with bountiful resources. One of those resources was plentiful food. A total of twenty-three times God told the Israelites that the promised land would be flowing with “milk and honey” (e.g., Exodus 3:8;17). “Milk and honey” represented rich varieties of food in Old Testament times, and the fact that it would be “flowing” with such resources came to be understood as “a land of plenty.”

The books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy were two books that were written to be used as religious law (Leviticus) and national law (Deuteronomy) for the Israelites when they were dwelling in the Promised Land. God helped them to know how they should live their daily lives when they came into the Promised Land. In several places God made it clear that when they began to enjoy all the plentiful food that God had promised them, God wanted them to provide for those who had less. God was making it clear from the beginning that God was giving them plenty in order that they might share the wealth. To be able to share with others, in itself, was a blessing. The Israelites were to provide food for others to eat, just as God had provided them than enough food out of love, mercy and compassion.

The reason why I selected passages from the Old Testament is to illustrate to the campers that this has been God’s plan from the very beginning. God always wanted everyone to be able to eat – and has ensured that there are more than enough resources for this to happen. In the Morning Watch, the campers will have read how Jesus wanted everyone to be able to eat, and provided more than enough food to do so. Thus, Jesus is embodying a principle that God has emphatically set forth from the very beginning. This way, the campers can see that the Old Testament and the New Testament are tied together, and that Jesus, as God in the flesh, is the embodiment of who God is.

The vast majority of campers will fall in an income bracket that is characterized by plenty. The key is to bring out that God has provided us with plenty of food in order to give us opportunity to bless others who have less. We know that this is true because of all the times He mentions it (the verses below) and even illustrates it (the Morning Watch – Jesus feeds the 5,000).

Camp Shalom

A time and place apart

Bible Text: Leviticus 19: 9-10; Leviticus 23: 22; Deuteronomy 24: 19-22/ **Key Verse:** Leviticus 23: 22

Biblical Interpretation:

Leviticus 19: 9-10 – “do not reap to the very edges” (verse 9).

The Israelites probably could have gathered all this food for themselves, and eaten it all without thinking twice about it. We often don't either. That's why God has given us this command so that we can remember that our highest priority is not supposed to be getting all that we can for ourselves. We are to remember the well-being of others, even in a world that exalts “looking out for number one,” and accumulating as much stuff as possible.

- “poor” (verse 10). This verse highlights the poor as people who are in need of food provisions. The Bible cites many causes of poverty, from personal responsibility to societal corruption. The cause of poverty is not the point. The point is that everyone needs to eat, and God has provided enough for that to be a reality (see Deut. 15: 7-11 for a simple command about how to treat the poor that dodges issues of morals and politics).

- “alien” (verse 10 – NIV). This is kind of an awkward translation that in other versions is often translated as “sojourner” or “foreigner.” “Foreigner” probably makes the most sense. These are people who are not of the majority population, and therefore don't enjoy the benefits of being so. God recognized them as “underprivileged” persons in the land of Israel. Therefore, they need to be remembered for food provisions. The same is true for the United States. In the United States, Hispanic families, for example, are 10 percent of the population, but they are 25 percent of the families that are suffering from hunger. Whatever our politics, everyone still needs to eat, and we have been blessed with enough to share with all.

- “I am the Lord...” (verse 10). This is something said to highlight the fact that this it is God's will.

Leviticus 23: 22 – I included this verse to emphasize that God is not shy about this point. It is not just randomly mentioned one time. It is a statement repeated throughout Leviticus. The statement helps us to understand how important it is to God. It reminds the reader who exactly is making this request. For the campers, they can relate this to their parents. When a mom or dad really wants a child to do something, they will repeat it to make sure the kid got it right. It appears that God really wants us to get this right. This verse is the key verse because it summarizes the content of the other passages within one verse.

Deuteronomy 24: 19-22 – Again, this same principle is reiterated, emphasizing its importance.

- “fatherless” and “widow” (verse 19, 20, & 21). We are introduced to additional vulnerable populations. The fatherless and widow were terms for those who didn't have any economic support system. In Old Testament times, the economic support system was based on the father/ husband's income. Think of other populations in contemporary times that are void of any support system. The same principle applies to them. Those who cannot get resources as easily are to be especially remembered.

Camp Shalom

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- It would be meaningful to point out that the food the Israelites are commanded to leave behind is food they would otherwise have eaten. It is not the surplus that is going to rot anyway. When I worked at a food pantry for the homeless last year, I noticed that much of the donations were the things that people didn't want anymore. Many stores would donate the food that was starting to spoil. I think there is still some value to donating items like that, and people should be commended for having the heart to donate anything. However, this passage also challenges us to think about donating food that we would otherwise eat – food that we would miss if it were gone.

“Remember...” (verse 22). This is a call to compassion. The Israelites are called to remember that all they had was freely given to them – they wouldn't have it unless God had brought them out of Egypt. This keeps them from getting a big head or thinking they are entitled to everything they own. Ultimately, God is the reason why they had plenty of food. We can also recognize this fact, which motivates us to not hoard all our possessions, but to give out of compassion and gratitude.

Additional Bible Resources:

Exodus 16: 4-31 (13-18 for a shortened version)

Deuteronomy 8:3 (see Jesus' use of this verse in Matthew 4:1-4)

Psalm 107: 1-9

Psalm 146: 5-7

Isaiah 58: 6-10

Joel 2: 26-27

Matthew 5: 6

Matthew 6: 25-27

Matthew 25: 31-46

John 6: 35

Philippians 4: 12-13