

Giving to the Community

Deut 15:4-11; Matt 25:42-45

SS Lesson for 03/15/2026

Devotional Scriptures: Acts 4:32-37

OUTLINE

LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Key Verse: Deut 15:11

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

GIVING TO NEIGHBORS (DEUT 15:1-11)

Promise of blessings for releasing (1-6)

Blessing of a servant to be released in the seventh year (Exodus 21:2)

Blessing of land being released in the seventh year (Exodus 23:1)

Blessing of not being released empty-handed (Deut 15:13-14)

Blessing of liberty in the year of jubilee (Lev 25:10)

Blessing of released property in the year of jubilee (Lev 25:13)

Blessing of no delays of deserved needs (Prov 3:27-28)

Reminder of generosity (7-10)

Reminded to be generous by having regard for the weak (Ps 41:1)

Reminded to be generous by giving beyond ability (2 Cor 8:1-3)

Reminded to be generous by supplying the needs of God's people (2 Cor 9:12)

Reminded to be generous by doing good to all people as the opportunity presents itself (Gal 6:10)

Reminded to be generous by being willing to share (1 Tim 6:18)

Reminded to be generous with our resources (2 Cor 9:11)

Command of benevolence (11)

Benevolence through being kind to the poor (Prov 19:17)

Benevolence through sharing resources to please God (Isa 58:6-7)

Benevolence through supplying needs out of our abundance (2 Cor 8:14-15)

Benevolence through not forgetting to do good by sharing (Heb 13:16)

Benevolence through supporting the helpless (James 1:27)

DENYING GIVING TO THE NEEDY (MATT 25:41-45)

Not meeting needs brings God's judgment (41-43)

Judgment for stubbornness and unrepentant hearts (Rom 2:5)

Judgment when all appear before the judgment seat of God (2 Cor 5:10)

Judgment because it is destined for man to face judgment (Heb 9:27)

Judgment, because God knows how deal with the ungodly (2 Peter 2:9)

Not meeting needs because of lack of awareness (44)

Lack of awareness because of intentional sin (James 4:17)

Lack of awareness because of perceived and misplaced priorities (Luke 10:30-33)

Lack of awareness because of dismissing the cries of others (Prov 21:13)

Lack of awareness because of claimed ignorance (Prov 24:12)

Lack of awareness because of not having the love of God indwelling (1 John 3:17)

Not meeting needs is like mistreating God (45)

By withholding good from those to whom it is due (Prov 3:27-28)

By trying to avoid or get rid of those in need (Matt 14:15-16)

By not helping the helpless when given the opportunity (Matt 25:41-46)

By closing the heart to those in need (1 John 3:17)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM THOMAS CONSTABLE

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY

Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The title Deuteronomy is a combination of two Greek words meaning “second law.” Moses spoke and wrote the words in this book after the Israelites served their 40-year sentence in the wilderness (Numbers 32:13; Deuteronomy 2:7; 8:2). A new generation replaced the previous one, and that new generation needed to hear the Law of Moses for themselves. Thus Deuteronomy refers to the second giving of the law (compare the Ten Commandments in both Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5). Law codes directly shape (and are shaped by) culture. They articulate societal norms and expectations. Throughout the ancient Near East, law codes included common themes such as repayment of debts, release of enslaved people, and establishing land rights. The Law of Moses speaks to similar themes. It also calls for the release of debts, people, and land, although on a different timeline (Leviticus 25:10; Deuteronomy 15:1-2). The Law of Moses bears striking similarities to other codes of the ancient world, including the Code of Hammurabi. But the combination of political, governmental, and spiritual leadership within the Law of Moses is ultimately unique. The one true God is the spiritual leader and king. He calls his people to reflect his holiness, generosity, etc., in their lives.

Key Verse: Deut 15:11

For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land.'

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Giving to Neighbors (Deut 15:1-11)

- 1 "At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts.
- 2 And this is the form of the release: Every creditor who has lent anything to his neighbor shall release it; he shall not require it of his neighbor or his brother, because it is called the Lord's release.
- 3 Of a foreigner you may require it; but you shall give up your claim to what is owed by your brother,
- 4 except when there may be no poor among you; for the Lord will greatly bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance
- 5 only if you carefully obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe with care all these commandments which I command you today.
- 6 For the Lord your God will bless you just as He promised you; you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow; you shall reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over you.
- 7 "If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother,
- 8 but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs.
- 9 Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, 'The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand,' and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing, and he cry out to the Lord against you, and it become sin among you.
- 10 You shall surely give to him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the Lord your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand.
- 11 For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land.'

Promise of blessings for releasing (1-6)

Blessing of a servant to be released in the seventh year (Exodus 21:2)

- 2 "If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he shall go free, without paying anything.

Blessing of land being released in the seventh year (Exodus 23:1)

11 but during the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what they leave. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove.

Blessing of not being released empty-handed (Deut 15:13-14)

13 And when you release him, do not send him away empty-handed. 14 Supply him liberally from your flock, your threshing floor and your winepress. Give to him as the Lord your God has blessed you.

Blessing of liberty in the year of jubilee (Lev 25:10)

10 Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each one of you is to return to his family property and each to his own clan.

Blessing of released property in the year of jubilee (Lev 25:13)

13 "In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to his own property.

Blessing of no delays of deserved needs (Prov 3:27-28)

27 Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act. 28 Do not say to your neighbor, "Come back later; I'll give it tomorrow", when you now have it with you.

Reminder of generosity (7-10)

Reminded to be generous by having regard for the weak (Ps 41:1)

1 Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the Lord delivers him in times of trouble.

Reminded to be generous by giving beyond ability (2 Cor 8:1-3)

1 And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own,

Reminded to be generous by supplying the needs of God's people (2 Cor 9:12)

12 This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.

Reminded to be generous by doing good to all people as the opportunity presents itself (Gal 6:10)

10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Reminded to be generous by being willing to share (1 Tim 6:18)

18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

Reminded to be generous with our resources (2 Cor 9:11)

11 You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

Command of benevolence (11)

Benevolence through being kind to the poor (Prov 19:17)

17 He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward him for what he has done.

Benevolence through sharing resources to please God (Isa 58:6-7)

6 "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter, when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?"

Benevolence through supplying needs out of our abundance (2 Cor 8:14-15)

14 At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, 15 as it is written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little."

Benevolence through not forgetting to do good by sharing (Heb 13:16)

16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Benevolence through supporting the helpless (James 1:27)

27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Denying Giving to the Needy (Matt 25:41-45)

41 "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:

42 for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink;

43 I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'

44 "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?'

45 Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'

Not meeting needs brings God's judgment (41-43)

Judgment for stubbornness and unrepentant hearts (Rom 2:5)

5 But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.

Judgment when all appear before the judgment seat of God (2 Cor 5:10)

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Judgment because it is destined for man to face judgment (Heb 9:27)

27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

Judgment, because God knows how deal with the ungodly (2 Peter 2:9)

9 if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.

Not meeting needs because of lack of awareness (44)

Lack of awareness because of intentional sin (James 4:17)

17 Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

Lack of awareness because of perceived and misplaced priorities (Luke 10:30-33)

30 In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.

Lack of awareness because of dismissing the cries of others (Prov 21:13)

13 If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered.

Lack of awareness because of claimed ignorance (Prov 24:12)

12 If you say, "But we knew nothing about this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done?

Lack of awareness because of not having the love of God indwelling (1 John 3:17)

17 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?

Not meeting needs is like mistreating God (45)

By withholding good from those to whom it is due (Prov 3:27-28)

27 Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act. 28 Do not say to your neighbor, "Come back later; I'll give it tomorrow", when you now have it with you.

By trying to avoid or get rid of those in need (Matt 14:15-16)

15 As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food." 16 Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

By not helping the helpless when given the opportunity (Matt 25:41-46)

41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' 44 "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' 45 "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' 46 "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

By closing the heart to those in need (1 John 3:17)

17 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Thomas Constable

Verses 1-11

"It is appropriate to deal with the law of release at this point, since it is best interpreted as an extension of the agrarian principles of the fallow year for the land, rather than a slave release law, linked in some way to the Hebrew slave release laws of Exodus 21:1-7 and Deuteronomy 15:12-18." [Note: Christopher Wright, "What Happened Every Seven Years in Israel?" *Evangelical Quarterly* 56:3 (July 1984):132.]

"At the end of every seven years" is an idiom meaning "during the seventh year." [Note: Deere, p. 290.] There is some debate among interpreters whether God wanted the Israelites to terminate debts permanently [Note: Thompson, pp. 186-87; Payne, p. 93; Schultz, p. 56; A. D. H. Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, p. 247; Deere, p. 290; Miller, p. 135; Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, p. 242; Kalland, p. 104; and Kline, "Deuteronomy," p. 175.] or only suspend them for a year, as the following quotation argues.

"The present passage is a further exposition of the Sabbath year release recorded in Exodus 23:10 and Leviticus 25:2-7. The premise of the exposition offered here is that if the land was left unused in the Sabbath year, the landowner would not have money to pay his debts. To alleviate this hardship on the landowner, the debts were to be released for one year during this time. The sense of the word release is not 'to cancel,' as may be suggested in some English translations (e.g., NIV), but rather 'to postpone.' The debt was postponed for a year.

This provision was not intended for the 'foreigner' (Deuteronomy 15:3); it applied only to those who lived permanently in the land. The 'foreigner' was one who stayed only temporarily in the land. Such a one was not a 'sojourner,' that is, a non-Israelite who had come to live permanently in the land." [Note: Sailhamer, pp. 449-50. Cf. Driver, p. 175; Keil and Delitzsch, 3:369-70; and Craigie, The Book . . . , p. 236.]

I tend to favor the complete cancellation view.

God values each person equally as an individual. This perspective comes out clearly in this section. God instructed His people to show concern for the welfare of every individual regardless of his or her economic or social position (Deuteronomy 15:7; cf. Proverbs 11:24).

"Elsewhere in the ancient Near East men were treated in terms of their status in the community rather than as individuals." [Note: Thompson, p. 185.]

The apparent contradiction between Deuteronomy 15:4; Deuteronomy 15:11 is explainable as follows. The statement that "there shall be no poor among you" (Deuteronomy 15:4) rests on the condition that the Israelites would be completely obedient to God (Deuteronomy 15:5). The promise of blessing for obedience appears four times in this chapter (Deuteronomy 15:4; Deuteronomy 15:6; Deuteronomy 15:10; Deuteronomy 15:18). The statement that "the poor will never cease to be in the land" (Deuteronomy 15:11) expresses what would really exist since Israel would not be completely obedient. It also represents what would exist among Israel's neighbor nations even if Israel was completely obedient.

"In Deuteronomy, poverty did not just happen. It was the result of conscious decisions that people made to ignore the divine will for Israel as expressed in the covenant." [Note: Leslie J. Hoppe, "Deuteronomy and the Poor," The Bible Today 24:6 (November 1986):371.]

". . . poverty among Yahweh's vassals was a disgrace . . ." [Note: Merrill, "A Theology . . .," p. 80.]

(Adapted from URL:<https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/eng/dcc/deuteronomy-15.html>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

God calls his people to pay particular attention to orphans, widows, the poor, the needy, and foreigners. He gives similar-sounding laws as those prescribed in the nations around Israel (consider the Code of Hammurabi) but adds a significant layer of generosity to his commands. God wants his people to see and comprehend needs and then be moved by compassion into action. He wants us to serve one another as though we are serving him. Jesus radically teaches that compassion for the poor and needy is one way to recognize true disciples. Our God is full of incredible generosity. We reflect his glory and charitable nature when we give. Benevolence helps us remember that our abundance and blessing come from the Lord. As God's children, we need not worry about lack or loss. Our heavenly Father provides for our needs. Therefore, if it is within our means to help another person, we are to do so. The help Jesus calls us toward is not difficult or complicated. It is simple and reflects his heart, compassion, grace, and love. We are to be openhanded. God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7). He does not consider the gifts and blessings he bestows as something that harms or bankrupts him. Instead, God blesses his children because he loves them. He desires his people to reflect his nature. God calls us to live with open hearts. Jesus asks us to see and serve others as if we are seeing and serving him. This requires new eyes of compassion. There is no room for prejudice, racism, judgment, or favoritism among the people of God. Jesus does not want his people to have an "everyone for themselves" mentality. He calls his people to vibrantly compassionate community life. The poor, needy, hungry, thirsty, migrant, homeless, shirtless, sick, and imprisoned all deserve our loving kindness, care, and attention. Although society might reject these people, God sees them as children created in his image. The care we extend impacts the inheritance we receive. God calls us to live with open eyes.