

This is your house. Well, none of us presume anything other than that. This is where we come to praise you, to thank you, to learn of you, and to just enjoy one another, the family of God. We thank you for your presence. We thank you, Lord, for your mercy and your grace to us each day. Accept these offerings of worship through psalm and through the word. And Father, just use us in any way throughout this coming week that you seek it to use us so that we might glorify you and you alone. In Jesus' name, amen. We have an opening word and then we will sing. I like to sing. You wouldn't like it, but I just have to sing. Our opening word is found in Romans 8, 8 through 14. That's why those who are still under control of the sinful nature never praise God. But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the spirit. If you have the spirit of God living in you. And remember that those who do not have the spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him. And Christ lives within you, even though your body will die because of sin. And just as God raised the spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, and just as God who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, and he will give life to your mortal bodies by the same spirit living in you. Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. For if you live by its direct, what it dictates you will die. But if through the power of the spirit you put to death the deeps of your sinful nature, you will live. For all who are led by the spirit of God are children of God. Father God, we're going to open your word. It is your word. We just ask that Christ, in Christ alone, be speaking. And we give you the honor of the Lord because that's what your word would have in Jesus' name. So we started out in Romans, and there was some pretty tough stuff in Romans because it's very clear that what makes you a child of God is knowing the Lord. Yes, we're all his creation, but no, we are not all children of God. And that's a hard concept for people because we know God loves everybody, and he does. I mean, that was the point of the cross, but it's whether or not we accept that. I'm going to be sharing Leviticus with you, and I have to tell you, I don't often invest myself in the Old Testament the way I do the New. I admit it. Some of it is difficult, some of it is hard to understand. I've never been Jewish, so it doesn't relate to my life in the sense of my culture. But I am a farmer's daughter, and so some of these things that they tell us at the end of Leviticus I understand. So let's start. The Lord also said that Moses did the following instructions to the entire community of Israel. He did not let anyone out. The entire community. You must be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy. Each of you must be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy. I don't know about you, but when I think of holiness, I feel like it's a standard that I don't really imagine very well. And I don't know if you read the article Pastor wrote. I texted him and I said, "So tell me, if you were talking to a non-believer about holiness, how would you describe it?" And you all got the whole article on how that's described. To be holy means to be separate. To make it as simple as I can. It means to be separate. To be set apart. Now people will approach that in different ways. You have the Amish community who absolutely believes they are holy. They are set apart. They live lifestyles that most of us cannot imagine. Friends and I went to an Amish hattas farm one night for dinner and they're just all floored by the food. One of the ladies said to me, "You know, they mash these potatoes without an electric mixer." Now, my father is plain, and so that's close to Amish, and they don't use electric mixers either. So in my brain, I went, "What? How's that impressive? Man, I grew up with that." But they believe that because they are so separate, that adds to their holiness. In our culture, one of the last things we want to do when we're growing up is not fit in. I would hazard to guess that some of us went to great lengths to fit in. I know I did. Cher was in style. I had this, so I threw it over an iron board in the morning and I owned it straight before I went to school. I know, flat irons work, but they're jet. You remember when I first came here, my hair was always straight. That's a flat iron. Because I didn't like this ever. I've given up on that. It's like, pfft, let it hang. But we try to fit in, whereas God tells His people to be holy, to be separate, to stand out. Doesn't mean we have to dress. Well, it kind of does. We should be more modest. More modestly dressed than most of the world dresses. But it's not a dictatorial thing. It's a thing that He wants us to do because we love Him. It's that simple. And it started in the Old Testament. Each of you must show great respect for your mother and father. You must always endure my Sabbath days of rest, for I am

the Lord, your God. Nice reminder. I mean, if you're not paying attention to me, just remember I am the Lord your God. I mean, just put that out there. That's what He did with them. You're going to find in Exodus 20-12 there is a commandment that says, "Honor your father and mother that your days might be all yours." So He's not telling them in Leviticus anything different than what He's already told them. And He's not telling us anything different today. Because we've learned these commandments, I hope. And we should be honoring them as part of what makes us holy. Which means you really can't blame your parents if you're making bad mistakes. They're your mistakes. Don't put your trust in idols or make metal images of gods for yourselves. I am the Lord your God. You're going to see this a lot. God wants us to take Him seriously. He is the Lord, our God. And I know you can say, "Well, this is written to Israelites." And yes, in this case, this book is written to Israel. However, it's part of our scripture, so it's also ours. There's no denying it. We don't have to like it, but there it is. I was in a class instead of American history. So when I saw the mistake I had made, I went to change it and guess what? No room in American history. And this is in college and I assume it's because we all feel very comfortable with American history. It's an easy A, which is why I was trying to take it. So I'm stuck in this class. Now this is before I felt, well it's not before. It's while I was still running from the call of God in my life. So I sat through this class on ancient gods. In my whole life, I never expected to have a use for it. It's not, I mean, what do I care, right? So I go into seminary and we're studying Abram. And Abram comes out of the Earth to Calities, which worships ancient gods. And so as I was seeing these names, I was like, "I remember that name. I studied that." And immediately, hindsight's always good, I was like, "Okay, so this is why God put me there. I want to be there, but there it is. It wasn't one of the experiences." It tells us in the Vegas not to make idols. We all know the story of the calf. That's an idol. I think the simplest definition of an idol is anything that we put before our worship of God. Our children can be idols if they're more important than worshiping God. The grass. I know a guy that only mows his grass one way. And I don't know if that's anybody else mow his grass because he does like this checkerboard pattern. It's lovely. It's time consuming. It's his idol. He will show it to people. "This is my yard." Good. But it's become an idol for him. And if it rains all week and it's not raining something, guess where he is? Normally he's in church, but if it's the only opportunity to mow the grass, it's easy for us to make idols. And it says, "Don't put your trust in an idol or make metal images of God's for yourself because I am the Lord your God." When you sacrifice a peace offering to the Lord, offer it properly so you will be accepted by God. The sacrifice must be eaten on the same day that you offer it or the next day. Whatever is left over until the third day must be completely burned up. Now we don't make, I hope none of you make sacrifices in the sense of animals, but it's interesting if you look at this. God tells them, "Eat it the same day." He wants our relationship with Him to be fresh. So eat it the same day. And it gives instruction if you can't do it the same day through the next. But don't let it go the third day because the last thing He wants from us is a stale relationship. How many of you like stale potato chips? Don't rich it. But anyway, He doesn't want our relationship to be stale, so He wants whatever it is that we decide, whatever it is that He decides, should be a sacrifice. And here's the thing, He wants us to sacrifice our whole life. You know, we're excellent as Americans. And compartmentalizing, well this is the part of my brain that goes to work, right? This is the part of my brain that comes home to the family. This is the part of my brain that cheats on my taxes but doesn't say anything because I just deny it. You know, this is the part of my brain that lies to my family because, well, they can't handle the truth. That's a reference to a movie if you didn't catch it. You know, we compartmentalize. And we do it whether we admit to it or not. God doesn't want that for us. A sacrifice is to be made. You know, it will be contaminated and He won't accept it if we compartmentalize our sacrifice. When you harvest the crops of your land, don't harvest the grain along the edges of your fields and do not pick up the harvest when the harvesters drop. In the same with your grape crop, do not strip every glass branch of all the vines and do not pick the grapes that fall on the ground, even for the poor. And the foreigners that live among you, I am the Lord your God. Most of us, I hope, are

familiar with the story of Ruth and how she gleaned along the edges of the field. Our farmers today don't like that because they don't really believe most of the poor would go out and glean out of a field anymore. Well, most of the poor don't live in your fields anymore. You know, we find that most of our poor are in cities or so we think. But isn't it interesting how God cares? He doesn't condemn the poor and say, "I'm not going to feed you. I'm not going to care for you." He cares for them through us. And He provided this because a lot of people visited in Israel. I visited there, but I wouldn't glean anything while I was there. I did, but not through... Well, maybe through... Anyway, it's a thing that God set out so that His people wouldn't go hungry. What has He set up for us today for that? So that people don't go hungry. We all just opened from the church. I think that's a nice little ad I was very excited about. Are we concerned? You know, Jesus said we're always going to have the poor with us. And that was 2,000 years ago. We still have poor with us. And I know we try as a civilization to eradicate the homeless and the poor. But Jesus has already told us they're always going to be with us. And it's not an excuse not to care. "Well, I don't have the help, so we're always going to be here." That's not what was being said. And it's not what's being said here. It's a very agrarian society. We don't relate well to that. Not a lot of farmers these days. People have sold their farmland to build houses. And I think we pay for that in the grocery store. It wasn't supposed to be that way. It wasn't supposed to be that way. It's the same with your grape crop. Don't strip everything. Grapes were essential to the Israelites. I mean, I like a good grape. I like frozen grapes. They're a great snack. But I don't make wine out of them. I don't even make grape juice. I just go to the store and bite. But in this culture, in this time, they were essential to their lives. And so he gives the instruction. Now, verse 11. I mean, people say I can be blunt, but look at verse 11. It says, "Do not steal." I think that's pretty straightforward. And again, one of the Ten Commandments. But why? If you can get away with it, why not? I don't know how many of you shoplifted as kids. I did. I felt so guilty. I gave what I stole to my mother-in-law for Christmas one year. I did not use my guilt, but at least it wasn't in my house and I wasn't looking at it anymore. We do weird things as people. OK, don't do not steal. That's one of our ten things. And there's a reason. And I always used to tell the teenagers, if you don't steal, you don't end up in jail. Pretty basic. Pretty basic. So that's for our protection. Do not deceive or cheat one another. We would never do that. So we'll just sit down. Don't bring shame on the name of your God by losing it to swear falsely. I am the Lord. I swear to God, this is what happened. And then what follows may or may not be true. But we like to just kind of throw that name out there because it gives it some authority. It gives it what I need it to be in the perception of the other person. And only we know whether it's true or not. But God knows we are prone to this all the way back in Leviticus. It's why it's in the Ten Commandments in Exodus. And you will find it throughout the New Testament as well. And actually, Ephesians gives us the solution, the remedy, the way to escape being a thief. Or the way to escape having to swear falsely. And if you read Ephesians 4.28, it talks about work. Now there's a dirty four-letter word these days. Work. You know, I used to teach a marriage class and I was told the students that there is a four-letter word and it's not L-O-V-E, it's W-O-R-K. It takes work. If you don't want to fall into a life that needs distilling, get a job. Any job. We're so used to having someone else care for us. And I am the first one to admit the economy's not good, you might have to get two jobs, but it will keep you from stealing. And God doesn't want us to steal. We're to be holy like He's holy. And it sounds simple and it sounds easy, but you all live in this society. Is it? It's not. Do not deceive or cheat one another. Do not bring shame on the name of your God by using it to swear falsely. I am the Lord. Do not defraud or rob your neighbor. Do not make your hired workers wait until the next day to receive their pay. Now, this is definitely a different culture. I mean, I'm glad you, but I'm pretty sure the job I used to have, I got paid every two weeks. And boy was that fun going from a job that paid every week to every two weeks and trying to figure out how to pay bills. Because the money didn't come in on the same schedule. But it says if someone is working for you, pay them. It's not rocket science. But apparently in this culture it was. And I think in our culture it was. Or it is. Do not insult the deaf or cause the blind to stumble. You must feed your God. I am the Lord. I find that interesting. Don't insult the deaf. And in the New King James it says don't curse them. Cursing was a curse for, not cursing as old book and you swear, but

cursing, putting a curse on someone was a real thing in this time frame. And God says don't curse the deaf. First off, they can't hear it. So they can't respond. They can't do anything about it because they didn't hear it. Now you wouldn't think that would have to be said out loud. But there it is. Don't do it. He's trying to instill in his people compassion. Compassion is not a natural gift for most of us. We are raised in a me first culture. Me first. My family first. And the concept of that in itself is not wrong. It's carrying it to the point where that's all that matters. The Lord wants us to be compassionate. He is compassionate. And we are to be holy like he is holy. We are to be reflections of his image. He's compassionate. He cares about those who are, as we call it today, disabled or challenged. And he tells us to be kind to them. Now you wouldn't think we have to be told. And yet he tells us. Don't cause the blind to stumble. See in my brain I can't even picture somebody doing that. What kind of a human being would trip up somebody who's blind? What does that take? And yet the Lord felt the need to say, "This is how I want you to be because you say you follow me." And Jesus teaches all of this in the New Testament. What Jesus teaches is not new. At least not to the Jewish people. Do not twist justice in legal matters. By favoring the poor or being partial to the rich and the powerful, always judge people fairly. Oh my. Thou shalt not judge. Always judge people fairly. These are the kind of things that make people say, "Well, God talks out of both sides of his mouth." But he doesn't. He expects us to, if you allow me to, judge people the way he does with compassion, with love, with understanding. You know that whole thing of walk a mile in one's shoes? There but for the grace of God go I. When we see someone who is struggling, when we see someone who we don't know their story and we immediately assume, we need to remember that there but for the grace of God go I. It could be me. And maybe it was and we forget it. But God reminds us, "Don't do that." It's interesting. Don't spread slammers, gossip, God, back that, back that, pardon me, that's not an image. Don't, do not spread slanderous gossip among your people. I'm not sure there is any other kind of gossip that isn't slanderous in some form. And I love, I love people that will start out by saying, "I need you to pray for." And then give you every nasty reason why. And we don't think that's the standard. God already knows their circumstance. And yes we should pray for them but don't make it into a gossip session. And honestly I know most of us don't consider ourselves to be gossip's. But if we listen to what we say, we might be. We might be. Does what we say hurt another person's reputation? Well you don't know what they did to me. No I don't. And I don't need to know. You know, keep silent, let the Lord defend you. Don't gossip. When we verbally bring others down, it's mostly because we need to have ourselves lifted up and that is not a characteristic of the Lord. Before we open our mouths, and I'm just as bad at this as anybody, ask ourselves, "Does what I'm about to say glorify God?" "Does what I'm about to say glorify God?" Do not stand idly by when your neighbor's life is threatened, "I am the Lord, but I can't get involved." Meaning that our go to? "Well I can't get involved in that." I don't think there's a person in this room if their neighbor's house was burning down that they wouldn't run into help, or call for help, or do what they could to help. I don't believe there's a person sitting here. But what if you don't like your neighbor? What if they're not nice people? What if they think they mean to you? Will you still run in? Leviticus tells us we're supposed to. Don't stand idly by when your neighbor's life is threatened. And he reminds us, "I am the Lord." He's not saying these things because he wants to throw his weight around. He's saying these things because he wants us to be the very best replica of him that we can be. He wants to set a bar and a standard for us. He wants us to understand who he is and be a reflection of him so that people who aren't watching, and people aren't watching, your children are watching, your grandchildren are watching, your neighbors are watching, your coworkers are watching. And I know, you know, I have family, I have coworkers that I'm still in touch with. There are people in my life that I have to remind myself they're watching. So if I lose my temper, which I've been known to do, then I have to go and ask them for forgiveness and apologize because I'm supposed to be a reflection of the Lord, not a reflection of myself. But here's the cool thing. God is so patient and so kind and so loving with us that he understands we're going to make a mess from time to time. But he's there. He's there. The power of his Holy Spirit there isn't a mess that we can't ask forgiveness for. Does that mean we'll be forgiven? Not necessarily by the person. Depends

on the situation. But the Lord still tells us. You made a mess. Apologize because you're to be reflecting the Lord God. Not society. Not your pastor. Not your saintly grandma. The Lord your God. Do not nurse hatred in your heart for any of your relatives. You don't know my relatives. And that's what we think. Well, if you just knew my family, you know, my family is perfect. No, they're not. You know, but don't nurse. And I think it's interesting. Don't nurse it. In other words, don't keep playing this over in your brain. It's not good for you. Make up your mind that you're going to do your best to love them the way God loves them. And he died for them. So we can at least be kind. Even if they drive us up a wall in three and a half seconds flat. I had a sister-in-law that the family's consensus was don't ever ask her how she ends. Because she would tell you. And it was never good. She was hiding the contract. So whatever and there's a generational thing, but whatever was on Marcus Welby the night before, Dr. Welby, that's what she had the next time you saw her. So if you said, hey, how you doing? Then you had a 20 minute dissertation coming your way. It would have been easy. We just got to the point where we're like, just don't ask her how she's doing. That's what you do. Right? Don't be unkind. Just don't ask her how she's doing. Because all she did was play over in her own mind, all the things that she felt was against her. Don't we do that? Don't we replay conversations that we had that were less than kind, even from our own end, but mostly from the other? We just replay it. No one warns against it. Do not nurse hatred in your heart for any of your relatives. Now, I like this next verse. I don't mind confrontation. I don't go looking for it. But he says, confront people directly so you will not be held guilty for their sin. It's been my experience that in South Central Pennsylvania, we don't really like to be confronted directly. The question is, can we confront one another in love? Not go in like we have a sword to scattle with, but with a heart of compassion and to be able to say, you know, this hurt me. What you said hurt me. Because they might not know. We do have fools in the china shop, people who don't communicate well, who might say one thing but mean another. But we hear the other thing and we're just done with them. We're very complex beings. But what the Lord expects of us is not complex. Don't nurse hatred in your heart for any of your relatives and confront people directly so you will not be held accountable for their sin. Magic gives us instruction. Go one on one. That doesn't work. Take someone with you. There are instructions on how to deal with someone who you feel or I feel has wronged me. Because in the end, I might not be the case. Oh, somebody should have gone like this. Do not seek revenge or barregred against a fellow Israelite, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord. What did Jesus say? It was one of the best commandments. To love your neighbor as yourself. Wow. Two thousand years later, there's still tellers. God's still trying to get it through to us. Love your neighbor as yourself. Now if you don't like yourself, it might have an issue, but you know, we can talk about that later. You must obey all my decrees. Interesting he doesn't say, "These are suggestions that I'd like you to follow." He says you must obey all my decrees. That puts everything in a whole different light, doesn't it? Because, well, I am the Lord your God. Do not make two different kinds of animals. Now here's where the farmer's daughter comes in. We never bred turkeys and chickens. We didn't want to, well, I don't even know what you'd call it. You know, chickens for chickens, turkeys for chickens. That's what you did. Don't intermix different kinds of animals. Don't plant your field with two different kinds of seed. And we do that. How many times have you been to a corn field where there's pumpkin patch growing? They've decided that pumpkin patches keep the weeds out the corn, so they're going to grow both together. We just grew corn in the corn field as a kid. Believe me, I know because I picked it by hand, but it wasn't for the cows. Do not wear clothing woven of two different kinds of thread. Isn't that odd? Part of that, I believe, is because the culture of that day. Raising sheep for wool and making material was a way that the Jews made money. They sold it. And it was pure. So weaving two different things together just wasn't in their concept. So how many of these things are for people that lived years and years and years ago? And how many of them are for us? My guess is that the compassionate things are for us now. I'm just trying to check to see how long they've actually been. I told them this morning, my teenagers used to, I told them to do this if I went too long, and they did. They were happy to do it. They said, "Back to you and I." They loved me. At least that's the way I'm interpreting it. Just all of this kind of thing. You know, in verse 19 when it

says, "You must avail, Lord, increase," we find that in Matthew. We find that in Romans. And in Luke, Jesus expands, don't have hatred towards your family. He says, "Love your enemies." Love your enemies. Most of us don't have enemies. I hope most of us don't have enemies. There might be people that make us feel like they're our enemies, but I don't believe we actually have what we consider God's purpose. That's what I want to say. Yeshua loves you. Jesus loves you. One of my favorite songs. Yes, Jesus loves me. It's a reminder. He wrote this, inspired to this Friday to be more correct for us because he loves us. That simple. Because we're valuable to him. We are valuable enough that he went to the cross to take my sins, take your sins. He didn't have to do that. He didn't have to do that. He took the sins of people, some of whom were not nice. And then eventually they came to know who he was and what he did, and they came to love him and worship him. That's why we have this book, so that we can learn who he is and who he wants us to be. It's pretty simple. And yet it's one of the most complex things in the world. But it is gift. And we have to say yes to it. And not just mentally, consent. That is not what he's expecting. He wants our being. He wants us to believe that that's an active verb which takes part of all of us, all of me, all of you. Believing. It's not just what I know in my brain. We're back to the history class. That's what's in your brain. We're math if you like math. I don't understand why you... Sorry, Jeff. I have a friend that's a math professor and I told him one time I hate math and he goes, "You don't hate it, you just don't understand it." And I said, "Look, I'm like 45 years old, I'm pretty sure I hate it." But he held firm. "You just don't understand it." That's true, I don't. I don't understand either. But I don't hate it. It's all that makes me uncomfortable. But I don't hate it. I strive, like Paul said, I run the race. I strive toward it. I'm not a good runner. I tried hurdles once, not my thing. I got over it the first time. Life is like that for us. Leviticus is telling us we can. We can, through the power of our God, because he is the Lord, we can have compassion on people. We can be kind. We can share what God has given us through the power of the Lord. We can do the things we don't like doing necessarily through the power of the Holy Spirit. I think that's cool. I hope you think that's cool. I know, I know, I know there's somebody sitting in this room that had, God did something for him this weekend and he never saw it coming. But it was a blessing. Because he cares for us. Well, he does have an expectation. Like our... If we had good earthly parents, they would have been like God is to us. Expectations. Even needed? Well, let's try again. The power of the Holy Spirit allows us to live a life filled with Christ. Amen.