

The Book of Leviticus, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 15: The Sabbath Year, Jubilee, Blessings, and Vows

Leviticus 25:1–27:34

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Doctrinally, this closing lesson must guard several truths at once. The Sabbath year and Jubilee rest on God's ownership of the land and the people, and Jubilee's proclamation of liberty is a genuine shadow of the gospel freedom Christ announced (Luke 4:18–19). The teacher should let students feel the beauty of that liberty without flattening it into mere social policy; it points to release from sin's bondage in Christ. Chapter 26 demands special care. Its blessings and curses are covenant-historical promises to national Israel, not a prosperity formula promising health and wealth to faithful Christians. We must not teach that obedience guarantees earthly ease, nor that hardship proves hidden sin. Rather, the chapter displays the goodness and severity of God (Romans 11:22) and the seriousness of covenant faithfulness.

On chapter 27, the teacher must be clear that we do not bind the Old Testament tithe or these specific vows on Christians as law. The Old Law, with its sacrifices, priesthood, feasts, and tithes, was a shadow nailed to the cross and fulfilled in Christ (Colossians 2:14–17; Hebrews 10:1–14). Christian giving is purposeful, generous, and cheerful, as each has purposed in his heart (1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:7), and our deepest offering is the presentation of our whole selves as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1). Avoid both legalism, which reimposes the tithe as binding law, and stinginess, which uses freedom from the tithe as an excuse to give little.

For the student's formation, this is the capstone of the whole study. Leviticus has taught the holiness of God, the gravity of sin, the necessity of atonement, the wonder of a mediating priesthood, and the call to holy living, and every thread runs to Jesus. The aim is that students leave not merely informed about ancient ritual but moved to deeper trust, fuller surrender, and grateful worship of Christ, who is their sacrifice, their High Priest, their atonement, and the One who makes them holy. A class that ends in wholehearted devotion to Jesus has understood Leviticus.

Question 1

Student Question:

The Sabbath year commanded that the land rest every seventh year, with no sowing or reaping, and God promised, "I will command my blessing upon you" (Leviticus 25:1–7, 20–22). What does this command reveal about who truly owns the land and the people, and how did resting the land train Israel to trust God rather than their own labor?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The Sabbath year extended the rhythm of rest from the week to the land itself: “in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land... thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard” (Leviticus 25:4). One year in seven, the fields went untilled and Israel lived on what grew of itself and what God supplied. The land kept Sabbath.

This was an audacious demand. To a farming people, not planting meant risking the next year’s food. The natural fear surfaces in the text itself: “What shall we eat the seventh year?” (Leviticus 25:20). God’s reply is the heart of the matter: “Then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years” (Leviticus 25:21). Obedience and trust were inseparable.

Underneath the command lies a confession of ownership. The land was not ultimately Israel’s to exploit without limit; it was God’s, given as a stewardship. Resting the land every seventh year was a yearly sermon preaching that God owns the soil and the people who farm it, and that they hold it as sojourners with Him (Leviticus 25:23).

The Sabbath year also trained the heart away from the idol of self-sufficiency. A people who never stop working easily come to believe their security rests on their own striving. By commanding rest, God pried their fingers loose from that illusion and taught them to depend on Him. The one who commands the rest also commands the blessing.

There is timeless wisdom here, even though Christians are not bound to keep the Sabbath year as law. The God who owns everything still calls us to hold our possessions loosely, to trust His provision rather than our labor, and to build rhythms of rest that confess we are not the source of our own security.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Sabbath year confessed that the land and the people belong to God (Leviticus 25:23).
- Resting the land required trusting God for provision before the need arrived (Leviticus 25:20–22).
- The command exposed and challenged the idol of self-sufficiency.
- Obedience and trust in God’s provision are inseparable.
- Christians are not bound to the Sabbath year as law but inherit its lesson of trust and stewardship.

Discussion Prompts

- What does resting the land confess about who really owns it?
- Why was the Sabbath year a test of trust as much as obedience?
- How does never stopping to rest feed the illusion of self-sufficiency?

Question 2

Student Question:

Living one year in seven without planting required Israel to trust God for daily bread before the need arrived. Where in your life are you tempted to trust your own effort and planning rather than God's provision, and what is one way you could practice deliberate trust this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question moves the Sabbath year's lesson into the student's life. Israel had to trust God for bread a full year before the harvest would have come in. We rarely face that exact test, but we face its cousin daily: the temptation to lean on our own effort, planning, and control rather than on God's provision.

Help students locate the specific places where trust gets squeezed out. It often hides in our finances, our calendars, our careers, and our anxieties about the future. The person who cannot stop working, cannot give generously, or cannot rest is often wrestling with the same fear Israel voiced: "What shall we eat?"

Be careful to frame trust rightly. Trusting God is not passivity or laziness; Israel still worked six years diligently. It is working faithfully while resting in the conviction that the increase comes from God, not from our frantic striving (Psalm 127:1-2).

Aim for one concrete practice of deliberate trust this week, a sabbath of rest, a planned gift that stretches faith, a worry handed over in prayer, an hour given to God instead of to work. Trust grows through specific, repeated acts of letting go.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- We are tempted to trust our own effort rather than God's provision.
- Trust hides especially in finances, calendars, and fears about the future.
- Biblical trust is diligent work resting in God's increase, not passivity (Psalm 127:1-2).
- Trust grows through specific, deliberate acts of letting go.

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you most tempted to trust your effort over God's provision?
- What fear sits underneath your difficulty in resting?
- What is one deliberate act of trust you could practice this week?

Question 3

Student Question:

The Year of Jubilee proclaimed "liberty throughout all the land," releasing slaves, forgiving debts, and returning land to its original families (Leviticus 25:8-17, 39-42). How does Jesus' announcement in the synagogue, "to preach deliverance to the captives... to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18-19), reveal that Jubilee was a shadow of the greater liberty He came to proclaim?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The Year of Jubilee is one of the most beautiful institutions in all the Law. Every fiftieth year, a trumpet sounded on the Day of Atonement and Israel was to “proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof” (Leviticus 25:10). Slaves were freed, debts released, and ancestral land returned to the families who had lost it. It was a national reset of mercy.

Jubilee guarded against permanent ruin. In a fallen world people fall into debt, lose their land, and sell themselves into servitude. Without Jubilee, poverty would calcify into a permanent underclass and wealth into untouchable dynasties. God refused to let bondage become forever. Every fiftieth year, mercy hit the reset button.

It is no accident that Jubilee was announced on the Day of Atonement. Liberty flowed out of atonement. Only a people whose sin had been covered could rightly proclaim release to one another. The trumpet of freedom sounded from the place of cleansing.

When Jesus stood up in the synagogue at Nazareth and read from Isaiah, He claimed this very theme: “to preach deliverance to the captives... to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18–19). Then He said, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” Jesus announced the true and greater Jubilee, liberty not merely from economic debt but from the bondage of sin.

Jubilee was the shadow; the gospel is the substance. Christ proclaims release to those enslaved to sin, cancels the debt we could never pay, and restores us to the inheritance we had forfeited. The trumpet of Leviticus 25 was rehearsing, century after century, the announcement Jesus would finally make in person.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Jubilee proclaimed liberty, releasing slaves, debts, and lost land every fiftieth year (Leviticus 25:10).
- It prevented permanent poverty and permanent bondage in Israel.
- Jubilee was announced on the Day of Atonement, so liberty flowed from atonement.
- Jesus claimed Jubilee’s theme as fulfilled in Himself (Luke 4:18–21).
- The gospel is the true Jubilee: release from sin, cancellation of debt, restored inheritance.

Discussion Prompts

- What did Jubilee actually release for the people of Israel?
- Why is it significant that Jubilee was proclaimed on the Day of Atonement?
- How does Jesus’ reading in Luke 4 reveal Jubilee as a shadow of the gospel?

Question 4

Student Question:

Jubilee meant no debt and no bondage could be permanent; everyone got a fresh start under God's mercy. Is there a debt of bitterness or an old bondage you have been holding onto or holding over someone else? What would it mean to let the liberty of Christ release it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question carries Jubilee's liberty into the student's relationships. The gospel Jubilee Christ proclaimed is not only freedom we receive; it is freedom we are then called to extend. Forgiven people forgive. Released debtors release others.

Many of us hold an old debt, a grudge we keep collecting on, a wound we replay, a resentment we will not cancel. Others are held by a bondage of their own, a habit, a shame, an old failure they cannot seem to escape. Jubilee speaks to both: liberty proclaimed throughout the land.

Connect this to the Lord's own teaching. We who have been forgiven an unpayable debt are called to forgive the lesser debts owed to us (Matthew 18:21-35). To refuse is to live as though our own Jubilee never happened. The liberty of Christ is meant to flow through us to others.

Invite a specific act of release. A name to forgive, a grudge to lay down, a confession that unbinds an old shame. Encourage students that release is not pretending the wrong did not matter; it is choosing to let the freedom Christ gave us set someone else, or ourselves, free.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The liberty we receive in Christ is meant to flow out to others.
- Holding grudges treats our own Jubilee as if it never happened (Matthew 18:21-35).
- Both bitterness we hold and shame that holds us need the liberty of Christ.
- Forgiveness is not minimizing the wrong but releasing it in Christ's freedom.

Discussion Prompts

- Is there a debt of bitterness you have been collecting on?
- What old bondage or shame do you need the liberty of Christ to release?
- What would it look like to extend to someone the freedom you have received?

Question 5

Student Question:

God repeatedly grounds the laws of redemption and release in His own ownership: "the land is mine" and "unto me the children of Israel are servants" (Leviticus 25:23, 55). Why does God's ownership of the land and the people form the foundation for both the Sabbath year and the Jubilee, and how does that same ownership apply to believers who have been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

At the theological center of these chapters stands a single declaration: “The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me” (Leviticus 25:23). And again, of the people, “unto me the children of Israel are servants; they are my servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt” (Leviticus 25:55). God owns the land and the people.

This ownership is the foundation on which both the Sabbath year and Jubilee rest. Because the land is God’s, He can command it to rest and can require it returned to the families He assigned it. Because the people are His, redeemed from Egypt, He can forbid permanent slavery among them. Redemption establishes ownership, and ownership establishes the rules.

Israel held everything as sojourners, tenants on God’s land and servants in God’s house. This dismantles the illusion of absolute private ownership. They were stewards, not autonomous proprietors, and their use of land and people had to honor the true Owner.

The New Testament presses the same truth onto believers, now grounded in a greater redemption: “ye are not your own... For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). As Israel was redeemed from Egypt, we are redeemed by the blood of Christ, and the conclusion is the same. We belong to God.

This changes everything about how we hold our lives. If God owns us, then our bodies, our time, our money, and our plans are His, entrusted to us as stewards. We are not autonomous owners doing as we please; we are servants of a good Master, called to glorify Him with all that is His.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God’s ownership of land and people grounds both the Sabbath year and Jubilee (Leviticus 25:23, 55).
- Redemption establishes ownership; ownership establishes the obligations.
- Israel held everything as sojourners and stewards, not autonomous owners.
- Believers are bought with the blood of Christ and are not their own (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).
- God’s ownership reshapes how we hold our bodies, time, money, and plans.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does God’s ownership form the basis for the Sabbath year and Jubilee?
- What changes when we see ourselves as stewards rather than owners?
- How does being bought with a price apply God’s ownership to us?

Question 6

Student Question:

If you truly belong to God, body and possessions alike, because you were bought with the blood of Christ, what is one area of your life you have been treating as your own to do with as you please? How would surrendering it to its rightful Owner change how you live?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question makes God's ownership personal and costly. If we truly belong to God, body and spirit, bought with the blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:19–20), then nothing in our lives is exempt from His claim. The hardest part is surrendering the areas we have quietly marked "mine."

Help students name the reserved areas. It might be money managed as if God has no say, a relationship guarded from His lordship, a career pursued on purely personal terms, a body or appetite treated as no one's business but our own. We all tend to keep a few rooms locked.

The point is not grim resignation but glad surrender to a good Owner. Belonging to God is not slavery to a tyrant; it is the security of being possessed by a loving Redeemer who gave Himself for us. Surrender is the path to freedom, not its loss.

Press for one concrete area and one concrete act of surrender. Handing over the checkbook, the calendar, the relationship, or the habit to its rightful Owner. Stewardship becomes real when a specific room is finally unlocked and given to God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Belonging to God means no area of life is exempt from His claim.
- We tend to reserve certain areas as our own to control.
- Surrender to God is glad trust in a good Owner, not loss (Matthew 11:28–30).
- Real stewardship surrenders specific, concrete areas.

Discussion Prompts

- What area of your life have you been treating as your own to control?
- Why is surrender to a good Owner a path to freedom rather than loss?
- What is one concrete act of surrender you can make this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

Chapter 26 sets before Israel the blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience, escalating from rain and peace to exile and ruin (Leviticus 26:1–39). Why must we read these as covenant-historical promises to national Israel rather than a prosperity-gospel formula guaranteeing wealth and ease to faithful Christians today, and what do they rightly teach us about "the goodness and severity of God" (Romans 11:22)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapter 26 lays out the covenant's two roads. The blessings of obedience are lavish: rain in season, abundant harvest, peace in the land, victory over enemies, and most precious of all, "I will set my tabernacle among you... and I will walk among you, and will be your God" (Leviticus 26:11-12). The curses of disobedience escalate fearfully, wave upon wave, ending in the land vomiting them out into exile.

We must read these rightly. They are covenant-historical promises made to national Israel under the Old Covenant, tied to that nation's life in that land. They are not a prosperity-gospel formula promising that faithful Christians will be healthy and wealthy, nor that every hardship proves hidden sin. The New Testament never makes such a promise; indeed it promises that the godly will suffer (2 Timothy 3:12; John 16:33).

To turn chapter 26 into a personal wealth formula is to misread it badly. Job's friends made exactly that error, assuming suffering proved sin and prosperity proved righteousness, and God rebuked them. Christians live under a new covenant whose blessings are chiefly spiritual and eternal in Christ (Ephesians 1:3), and whose path often runs through the cross before the crown.

Yet the chapter teaches enduring truth about God's character. It shows "the goodness and severity of God" (Romans 11:22). God is genuinely good, delighting to bless and to dwell with His people, and He is genuinely severe, not winking at persistent rebellion. Both are real, and a sentimental religion that keeps only the goodness has lost the God of the Bible.

The chapter also reveals that the worst curse and the best blessing are relational. The deepest blessing was God dwelling among them; the deepest curse was His face set against them. What we should most desire and most fear is not material fortune but the presence or absence of God Himself, a presence now ours in Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The blessings and curses are covenant promises to national Israel, not a prosperity formula for Christians.
- Obedience does not guarantee earthly wealth, nor does hardship prove hidden sin (2 Timothy 3:12; John 16:33).
- The chapter reveals the goodness and severity of God (Romans 11:22).
- God delights to bless and dwell with His people, yet will not ignore persistent rebellion.
- The greatest blessing and worst curse are relational: God's presence or His absence.

Discussion Prompts

- Why must we not read chapter 26 as a personal prosperity formula?
- What does the chapter teach about the goodness and severity of God?
- Why is God's presence the truest blessing and His absence the truest loss?

Question 8

Student Question:

Even in the warnings of judgment, God promises that if His people confess their sin and humble their hearts, He will remember His covenant (Leviticus 26:40–42). When God allows hard consequences into your life, do you tend to harden or to humble yourself? What would genuine confession and turning look like for you right now?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Even within the dark warnings of chapter 26, God leaves a lighted door. “If they shall confess their iniquity... and that they have walked contrary unto me... then will I remember my covenant” (Leviticus 26:40–42). Judgment was never God’s last word; it was meant to drive His people to humble, confessing return.

This question turns that truth on the student. When hard consequences come, whether from our own sin or simply from a fallen world, we face a fork: harden or humble. Pharaoh hardened. David, when confronted, humbled himself and confessed (Psalm 51). The same affliction can soften one heart and harden another.

Help students see confession rightly. It is not vague regret that we got caught or that life is hard. It is specific acknowledgment of sin, agreeing with God about it, and turning from it. “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13).

Encourage honesty about our default reaction. Many of us instinctively defend, blame, or grit our teeth rather than humble ourselves before God. Invite each student to consider what genuine confession and turning would look like for one specific area right now, and to take the humbling step toward the God who waits to show mercy.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God’s discipline aims at humble, confessing return, not mere punishment (Leviticus 26:40–42).
- Hardship can either harden or humble the heart.
- True confession is specific acknowledgment and turning from sin (Proverbs 28:13).
- God stands ready to show mercy to the humble and confessing.

Discussion Prompts

- When consequences come, do you tend to harden or to humble yourself?
- What is the difference between vague regret and true confession?
- What would genuine confession and turning look like for you right now?

Question 9

Student Question:

Leviticus closes with vows, dedications, and the tithe, persons and possessions devoted as holy to the Lord (Leviticus 27:1–34). While we do not bind the Old Testament tithe or these vows on Christians as law, how does this final call to wholehearted consecration point us to the New Testament’s teaching on generous, purposeful, cheerful giving (1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:7) and to the offering of our whole selves to God (Romans 12:1)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Leviticus ends, fittingly, with consecration. Chapter 27 governs vows and dedications, the voluntary devoting of persons, animals, houses, and fields wholly to the Lord, and it sets apart the tithe as “holy unto the LORD” (Leviticus 27:30). A book that opened with sacrifice closes with people giving themselves and their possessions to God.

We must be clear about how this applies. The Old Testament tithe and these specific vows were part of the Law given to Israel, a system of shadows fulfilled and set aside in Christ (Colossians 2:14–17; Hebrews 10:1–14). We do not bind the tithe or these vows on Christians as binding law. The cross changed the covenant.

But the heart of chapter 27, wholehearted consecration, carries straight into the New Testament. Christian giving is not a legal percentage extracted under compulsion; it is purposeful, generous, and joyful: “upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him” (1 Corinthians 16:2), and “every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

If anything, the New Testament standard is higher in spirit than the tithe, not lower. Freedom from a fixed percentage is no license for stinginess; it is a call to give thoughtfully, sacrificially, and gladly, as those who have been given everything in Christ. The question is not the minimum required but the love that wants to give.

Deepest of all, chapter 27’s consecration points to the offering of our whole selves: “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1). The vows of Leviticus devoted fields and houses; the gospel asks for us. Our money follows our hearts, and our hearts belong to the One who redeemed us.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Chapter 27 devotes persons and possessions as holy to the Lord, ending Leviticus on consecration.
- The Old Testament tithe and these vows are not bound on Christians as law (Colossians 2:14–17; Hebrews 10:1–14).
- Christian giving is purposeful, generous, and cheerful (1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:7).
- Freedom from the tithe is a call to greater-hearted giving, not stinginess.

- The deepest offering is presenting our whole selves to God (Romans 12:1).

Discussion Prompts

- Why do we not bind the Old Testament tithe on Christians as law?
- How does New Testament giving differ in spirit from a fixed legal percentage?
- How does consecrating possessions point to offering our whole selves (Romans 12:1)?

Question 10

Student Question:

As we close the entire book of Leviticus, look back across the sacrifices for sin, the priesthood that stood between God and man, the Day of Atonement that cleansed the people, the call to “be ye holy; for I am holy,” and now the liberty of Jubilee and the consecration of vows. In what one specific way has this study of Leviticus deepened your grasp of Jesus as your sacrifice, your High Priest, your atonement, and the One who makes you holy, and how do you want that to change the way you walk with Him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the capstone of the entire study, so the teacher should slow down and let students survey the whole landscape of Leviticus before fixing their eyes on Christ. The book began with sacrifices for sin, the offerings laid on the altar because sin must be answered with blood (Leviticus 1–7; Hebrews 9:22). Every one of those altars pointed to the cross.

It gave us the priesthood, Aaron and his sons standing between a holy God and a sinful people, offering and interceding (Leviticus 8–10). All of it foreshadowed Jesus, our great High Priest, who needs no successor and offers no further sacrifice, because He offered Himself (Hebrews 4:14–16; 7:23–28). The mediator we needed has come.

It gave us the Day of Atonement, the one day the high priest entered the holiest place with blood to cleanse the people (Leviticus 16). And it gave us the great refrain, “ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy” (Leviticus 19:2; 11:44–45). Christ entered once for all by His own blood (Hebrews 9:11–12) and now makes His people holy, sanctifying us by His sacrifice (Hebrews 10:10, 14).

And these final chapters added the liberty of Jubilee and the consecration of vows, the freedom Christ proclaims and the whole-life surrender He calls forth. Leviticus, in the end, is not a dusty rulebook. It is a long, patient pointing finger, and the One it points to is Jesus, our sacrifice, our High Priest, our atonement, and the One who makes us holy.

Let the question land personally. Invite each student to name one specific way this study has deepened their grasp of Christ in one of those roles, and how that will change their walk with

Him. The right end of Leviticus is not merely understanding the shadows but worshiping the substance, giving ourselves wholly to the Lord who gave Himself wholly for us.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Leviticus' sacrifices point to the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews 9:22; 10:10–14).
- The Aaronic priesthood foreshadows Jesus, our great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14–16; 7:23–28).
- The Day of Atonement is fulfilled in Christ entering once for all by His own blood (Leviticus 16; Hebrews 9:11–12).
- The call to holiness is met in Christ, who sanctifies His people (Leviticus 19:2; Hebrews 10:10, 14).
- Jubilee's liberty and the vows' consecration call us to gospel freedom and whole-life surrender.
- The whole book points to Jesus and calls for wholehearted worship of Him.

Discussion Prompts

- Which role of Christ, sacrifice, High Priest, atonement, or sanctifier, has grown clearest to you?
- How does seeing these shadows fulfilled in Jesus change the way you read Leviticus?
- What is one specific way you want this study to change how you walk with Christ?