

STUDY 24

Deuteronomy 14:23

And you shall eat before the Lord your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always.

Read the context: Deuteronomy 14:22-15:23

The Fear of the Lord doesn't just reach into our pocketbook; it governs our pocketbook. Notice, though, what the tithe was for. What were they to do with the tithe they had laid aside for the year (14:22-26)? Is this how you always pictured tithe money being used? Read verse 26 again. What is the repeated phrase? This is the kind of God we serve! "Whatever your heart desires." Eat before the Lord and rejoice! Essentially, the tithe was God's ordained savings plan so that three times a year (Exodus 23:14-17) the people would take family vacations, come together for fellowship as a nation, and have a time of feasting and rejoicing centered around God and His goodness to them.

But the tithe was not just for themselves. Who else was it to be for (14:27-29)? The Levites were set apart by God to do the work of the ministry (Numbers 3:5-9; Deut. 10:8). They were located in cities throughout Israel in order to teach the people the laws and ways of God and to judge disputes among the people (Num. 35). The Levites were to help the people follow God and make God central to their lives. The people were to acknowledge the important work the Levites did among them, and that acknowledgement was to be expressed in financial support.

Look at the following verses and find the repeated word that is in all of them: Deut. 14:24, 29; 15:4, 6, 10, 14, 18. The blessing of God reveals the generous nature of God, and that generosity was to influence and mark His people; it was to express itself through them to others. God's blessing, received with a humble, grateful heart, is not just to be enjoyed and consumed by ourselves, but to be passed on to others in need. From the context of each of those verses, write down the ones those blessed by God were to be concerned about and extend generosity to. (15:2, 7, 12)

We have seen from several Fear of the Lord verses that God is deeply concerned for the poor. Our attitude toward the poor matters a great deal to Him. What three things does God warn us about in 15:7, 9, 10, 18? God knows our propensities and the evil within our hearts. When we see these kinds of responses welling up from our hearts, we must recognize them for what they are: evil, wicked, greedy, selfish, stingy. And by the grace of God we must give those thoughts the boot!

Rather, what is the attitude of mind and heart that God wants us to have according to 15:8, 11, 14? These verses and these commands so clearly reveal the heart of God! Write down the characteristics of God toward you that these verses convey. Conversely, write down the

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characteristics these and the ones in the paragraph above show that God is not. Make it personal: i.e. God is not put out or bothered or irritated when He has to give to me or meet my needs, etc.

A generous, open-hearted, willing, kind, caring God: this is the God we serve. Take a few moments to thank and worship Him.

What was the blessing of God contingent on according to 15:5-6, 10, 18? And what were the people to remember as the backdrop for their willing generosity (15:15)? Let us also remember where we have come from, what God has rescued us from. Take some time to write down the ways God has been generous to you. Pray for God to give you this same heart of generosity and compassion toward others, especially to those who you think don't deserve it; for isn't that what God has done for us? (Remember Romans 5:6-11.)

Write what you learn about God from this lesson.

Write in your own words how the fear of the Lord affects your finances.

Consider setting aside money each month to save up for a family vacation to be spiritually, physically, emotionally recharged – recalibrated to a godly focus. Perhaps find a good family camp to attend, where you can relax, have fun, and be encouraged spiritually.

What are some things from this lesson that you need to put on a prayer list for yourself and your family? (i.e. "Lord, work in me a willingly generous heart.") These are things we need to keep always before us, continually praying over, for our lives have a way of reverting back to weeds.

Add to your Fear of the Lord list what you have learned from this verse study.