

## Applying the Bible

*What is the principle behind the Old Testament command?* Although we are no longer under the Old Covenant, we need to remember that the laws of the Old Covenant reflect God's character. Likewise every law is an expression of one of the two greatest commandments regarding love for God and neighbor. This is true not only of the so-called moral laws but also of every other category of law. Therefore, the principles behind these laws should still be valid, even though some specific expressions of the laws may be obsolete.

For example, consider one of Israel's charitable laws, a command that was very specific to Israel's agricultural economy:

When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the Lord your God. (Lev 19:9-10)

In one sense, this command is no longer binding. It was written for farmers within ancient Israel. As such, it is not a legal requirement for us in the same way as it was for them—even for those who own farms or vineyards.

Yet this command clearly reveals God's practical concern for the poor and the alien. That concern is described numerous times in the Old Testament (Ex 22:21-27; 23:4-9; Lev 19:9-36; Duet 14:28-29; 15:12-14 and so on). The Lord wants us to care about such people because *he* cares about them. This passage illustrates that our care should be expressed in practical, tangible ways.

For example, some friends of mine decided that they should give their old clothes away rather than selling them at a garage sale. After all, their family had already gotten good use out of the clothes. For them, selling the clothes was equivalent to “going over [their] vineyard a second time.” Although we may not feel bound to their specific application, we should seek to apply that passage in our own creative ways.

(Jack Kuhatschek, *Applying the Bible*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990, 96-97; Excerpt from Chapter Seven, *Applying Biblical Commands*, paragraph structure modified)