

Living with Open Hands and a Willing Heart

At the end of every seven years, God commanded Israel to release all debts (Deuteronomy 15:1). This wasn't just an economic policy—it was a spiritual lesson about generosity, trust, and compassion. God's people were to forgive debts freely, not holding onto what was owed, especially from their fellow Israelites. This teaches us something profound: We are called to live with open hands, not tight fists.

Think about it—if someone came asking for a loan in the sixth year, just before the seventh-year release, the temptation would be to refuse, knowing the debt would soon be forgiven. But God warned against this kind of selfish thinking. He wanted His people to give generously, without hesitation, trusting that He would provide. The same is true for us today. When we see someone in need, do we hesitate? Do we calculate what it might cost us? Or do we give freely, knowing that God takes care of His own? Proverbs 19:17 reminds us, *"Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will reward them for what they have done."* In other words, when we give with a generous heart, we're actually investing in God's economy—one that never fails and always returns eternal dividends.

Jesus echoed this principle, saying, *"The poor you will always have with you"* (Matthew 26:11). The reality is, there will always be those in need, and God calls us to be His hands and feet in meeting their needs. Rather than seeing the poor as a burden, we should view them as an opportunity—an opportunity to reflect God's heart of mercy.

This principle of release wasn't just about money. It extended to servants (literally slaves) as well. If a Hebrew was sold into servitude due to hardship, they were to be set free in the seventh year—not sent away empty-handed but blessed abundantly. Why? Because the Israelites were once slaves in Egypt, and God redeemed them. This reminds us that as believers, we, too, were once slaves—slaves to sin. But Jesus has set us free! And just as God commanded Israel to be generous toward their servants, we should be generous in our relationships, always remembering the grace we have received.

Yet, there was another powerful provision in this law. If a slave loved his master and didn't want to leave, he could willingly choose to stay, becoming a *bondslave for life*. A hole would be pierced through his ear, marking his lifelong devotion. This is a beautiful picture of what it means to follow Jesus. Paul described himself as a *bondservant of Christ*—a servant by choice, not force. He had been set free, yet he willingly surrendered his life to Jesus, saying, *"Lord, I love serving You. I don't want to leave. I choose to serve You forever."*

This is the heart of true discipleship. Jesus doesn't force us to follow Him, but when we truly understand His love, we willingly surrender everything. We say, *"Lord, I belong to You. I don't want to live for myself anymore. I want to serve You for life."* And here's the incredible part: When we give our lives fully to Him, we find true freedom.

So today, let's ask ourselves: Do we hold onto what we have tightly, or do we live with open hands? Do we see giving as a burden or as a privilege? And most importantly, have we made the choice to be

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a *bondslave of Christ*—not out of obligation, but out of love? Because there is no greater calling than to serve the One who first set us free.