

The Purpose and Power of the Law

None are Good

The Bible forewarns that most men will proclaim their own goodness.¹ In fact, Proverbs 16:2 states “All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes.” And Proverbs 21:2 reiterates that “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the hearts.”

Every evangelist laboring for souls has discovered this fact. If this is the case, then how can we reach all these self-righteous sinners? If they don't think they need a Savior, then how can we lead them to Jesus? The solution is simple. We reach them the same way Jesus did. In Luke 16 Jesus rebuked the self-righteous religious leaders with these words: “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”² Jesus then explained to them that by divorcing their wives, they were committing adultery in God's eyes.³ They were guilty of breaking the 7th commandment.

As we study the gospels we see that Jesus used the law to expose sin.⁴ He explained the spirit of the law and the rigorous demands of the law. His listener's now fully understood the severity of their sins against God and their desperate need for the Savior. This is how we must witness also if we're to see godly sorrow producing repentance leading to eternal salvation.⁵ If your not sure how, visit our website for biblical resources that teach and use this approach.

The Law leads to Christ

Before being saved I attended a Catholic church for many years. During this time I thought the commandments were the means to be saved. I imagined that if I could avoid what the Church called mortal sin, I stood a good chance of entering heaven. However, after reading through the Bible I discovered that no one can keep the law perfectly accept God.

So what is the purpose of God's Holy commandments? Well let's allow God's Word to speak for itself: Romans 3:19-20 explains “That whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” Romans 7:7 reiterates: “What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, ‘You shall not covet.’” And finally Galatians 3:24 makes clear that the laws ultimate purpose is to lead

¹ Proverbs 20:6

² Luke 16:15

³ Luke 16:18

⁴ Matthew 5:17-48; Mark 10:17-27; Luke 10:25-37; etc.

⁵ 2 Corinthians 7:10

us to Jesus: “Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”

In summary, 1 Timothy 1:8 tells us that the law is good if one uses it lawfully. Therefore, may we purpose to use the law lawfully to expose sin, stop the sinners excuses, and lead them to Jesus Christ.

The Good Test

We call it The Good Test. It is the biblical way to share with those who think they are good. Begin by asking anyone if they consider themselves to be a good, moral person. If they say yes, and almost all do, then they are likely trusting in their own righteousness.

Then ask, “Do you think you’ve obeyed the Ten Commandments?” Regardless of how they reply, ask them if they’ve ever told a lie – even a small lie. Once they confess, ask them what that makes them. If they respond a sinner, then respond, “If I murder someone I would be a murderer, If I lie I would be a what?” Stay with them until they confess to being a liar in God’s eyes. Then ask, “Have you ever looked at someone with lust?” And explain that the Lord sees lust as adultery in the heart. Remind them that God sees their thoughts as well as their actions. Then ask, “Have you ever used your Creator’s name in vain?” Explain that this is blasphemy and God hates it. Finally state, “By your own admission you are a liar, an adulterer, and a blasphemer at heart and we’ve only looked at three of the Ten Commandments.

Jesus did this in His Sermon on the Mount and so most we if we want to see the self-righteous repent.

Once you’ve explained that lust is adultery, hatred is murder, and using God’s name lightly is blasphemy, then ask “Do you know what the penalty is for breaking God’s commandments?” Many will say hell. Explain to them that the wages of sin is death: Both physical death and spiritual death – which is eternal separation from God in the lake of fire.

Now ask, “If you were to die today and stand before God for judgment, would you be pronounced guilty of breaking His holy law? If they acknowledge their guilt and appear concerned, then ask them, “Do you know what God has done for us, so that adulterers, murders, and blasphemers could be forgiven?” If they are truly convicted over their sin, it is amazing to watch the lights go on at this point. Many people will remember that Jesus died for us and begin to appreciate the gospel. They are now ready to hear the good news that God became a man and lived the perfect life fulfilling the law. In His great love for us He willingly died in our place to pay the full penalty for our sins. All who turn from their sins and place their faith in Jesus will be forgiven. Salvation is by faith alone, in Christ alone. This is truly good news that they will be grateful to hear.

Even if they won’t let you share the full gospel, remember, a convicting seed now may lead to a repentant heart in the future.