

## The Purpose of the Ten Commandments

In recent years it has become popular in some sectors of the Church to ask the question, “What would Jesus do?” And as often happens with catchphrases, it has been taken to extremes—everything from “What would Jesus eat?” to “What kind of SUV would Jesus drive?” At first glance it might seem worthwhile to ask what Jesus would do in a particular circumstance, but the question has an inherent flaw: it opens the door to speculation. The answer becomes open-ended so that people can make up whatever “Jesus” they want to fit anything they would like to do: “What would Jesus do? I’ll tell you what He wouldn’t do. He wouldn’t condemn people because they want an abortion, and He wouldn’t go around ramming religion down people’s throats!” Or “He wouldn’t go around judging people, and telling them that they are ‘sinners!’”

The better question to ask is, “What *did* Jesus do?” This confines our answers to the safe and reliable boundaries of the Bible.

What *did* Jesus do when He confronted sinners? As we see from Scripture, He made the issue one of righteousness rather than happiness (Matthew 5:20). He used the Ten

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Commandments to show sinners the righteous standard of God (Matthew 5:17-37).<sup>1</sup>

In Mark 10:17-21, a man came running to Jesus, knelt before Him, and asked how he could obtain everlasting life. It would seem that his earnest and humble heart made him a prime candidate as a potential convert. Yet Jesus didn't give him the message of God's grace. He didn't even mention the love of God. Neither did He tell him of an abundant, wonderful new life. Instead, Jesus used the Law of God to expose the man's hidden sin. This man was a transgressor of the first of the Ten Commandments. His money was his god, and one cannot serve both God and money. Then the Scriptures reveal that it was love that motivated Jesus to speak in this way to this rich young man.

Every time we witness to someone, we should examine our motives. Do we love the sinner enough to make sure his conversion is genuine? If Jesus had accepted at face value the rich young man's profession of righteousness, He might have led him into a false conversion. Instead, Jesus used the Moral Law to reveal the man's hidden sin—his love of money above all else. Why did Jesus use the Ten Commandments? His method seems a bit archaic compared to the quick and easy modern methods of making instant converts. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones gives us the answer:

A gospel which merely says "Come to Jesus," and offers Him as a Friend, and offers a marvelous new life, without convincing of sin, is not New Testament evangelism. (The essence of evangelism is to start by preaching the Law; and it is because the Law has not been preached that we have had so much superficial evangelism.) True evangelism ... must always start by preaching the Law.

⇒ *Kirk's Commentary* ⇐

What planet is this guy from? “Evangelism must always start by preaching the Law”? Could that be true? Is it biblical? It’s what Jesus did. Keep reading to find out why. —KC

When you use the Law<sup>2</sup> to show lost sinners their true state, be prepared for them to thank you. For the first time in their lives, they will see the Christian message as expressing love and concern for their eternal welfare rather than merely proselytizing for a better lifestyle while on this earth. They will begin to understand why they should be concerned about their eternal salvation. The Law shows them that they are condemned by God. It even makes them a little fearful—and “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10).

Look at how John Wesley reconciled the use of the Law to produce the fear of God with love:

The second use [of the Law] is to bring him unto life, unto Christ that he may live. It is true, in performing both these offices, it acts the part of a severe schoolmaster. *It drives us by force, rather than draws us by love. And yet love is the spring of all.* It is the spirit of love which, by this painful means, tears away our confidence in the flesh, which leaves us no broken reed whereon to trust, and so constrains the sinner, stripped of all to cry out in the bitterness of his soul or groan in the depth of his heart, “I give up every plea beside, Lord, I am damned; but thou hast died.” (emphasis added)

Perhaps you are tempted to say that we should never condemn sinners. However, Scripture tells us that they are already condemned—“He that believes not is condemned already” (John 3:18). All the Law does is show them their true state. If you dust a table in your living room and think

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it is dust-free, try pulling back the curtains and letting in the early morning sunlight. You will more than likely see dust still sitting on the table. The sunlight didn't create the dust; it merely exposed it. When we take the time to draw back the high and heavy curtains of the Holy of Holies and let the light of God's Law shine upon the sinner's heart, the Law merely shows him his true state before God. Proverbs 6:23 tells us, "the commandment is a lamp, and the Law a light."

You may be familiar with the idea that we should befriend sinners and address their "felt needs" before speaking to them about salvation. However, it may take weeks, months, or even years before we get around to talking to them about the subject of sin. On the other hand, if we understand sin in its true light as enmity with God, and we grasp the urgency of the situation—that our unregenerate friend could die tonight and face God's righteous judgment—would we not be motivated to show our friend her depravity in relationship to the Law, and to use the Law to appeal to her conscience in order to bring her to repentance and salvation?

Let's see how a "felt needs" approach would work in a court of law with a child molester. Take for instance the man who kidnapped a seven-year-old girl from her southern California home in 2002. He sexually molested her, strangled her to death, set her little body on fire and left her in the desert. Imagine the following courtroom scenario when this man is brought to trial:

The judge says, "All the evidence is in. You are guilty. However, I don't want to deal with your guilt at the moment. I want to first address your felt needs. Are you happy? Do you have an emptiness inside?"

Such talk would be absurd. Any judge who asked such things would be thrown off the bench. The criminal is in court because he has committed a serious offense, and that is the only subject that should be addressed. Justice must be served. The

man must be punished for his terrible crime. His felt needs have nothing to do with the issue.

→ *Kirk's Commentary* ←

We may not think that sin is terrible, but God certainly does—and the only way to understand sin from His perspective is to view it through the eyes of the Law. Sin is so serious in His sight that He calls for the death sentence. Therefore, the issue we should address is the sinner's guilt. You may say, "But we can't convince him of his guilt. Only the Holy Spirit can do that!" That's true; all we need to do is shine the light of the Law on the sinner's heart. —KC

It was the wrath of the Law that showed the adulterous woman in John 8:3-11 that she was condemned. She literally found herself between a rock and a hard place. Without those heavy rocks waiting to pound her sinful flesh, she may have died in her sins and gone to Hell. I doubt if she would have fallen at the feet of Jesus without the terror of the Law having driven her there. Thank God that it awakened her and caused her to flee to the Savior.

Most people believe they are rich in virtue, but the Law shows them they are morally bankrupt. If they do not declare bankruptcy, the Law will mercilessly call for their last drop of blood.

→ *Kirk's Commentary* ←

See for yourself whether or not this is true. Ask anyone if he considers himself to be a good person. The vast majority of people will say that they are. To really get to the bottom of what sinners think of themselves, ask if they believe that they're morally bankrupt like the Bible says (Romans 3:10-12, 23; Jeremiah 17:9). Ninety-nine percent of the people you ask (especially church-goers) will emphatically answer, "No!" —KC

***What about Legalism?***

One evening when I had taken a team to Santa Monica to preach the gospel open-air, it began raining. It not only rained, but the heavens flashed with lightning. Thunder seemed to shake the earth in an unusually severe thunderstorm for southern California. As a consolation for our team, we purchased two large pizzas to snack on as we took shelter from the pelting rain under a movie theater veranda.

As most of the thirty-member team munched on pepperoni pizza, I noticed the heartwarming sight of an elderly homeless woman having a fight with a ten-inch piece of cheese. It looked like a stretched rubber band as she pulled at it with her few remaining teeth. After she had downed the large slice of pizza, I offered her another one. Surprisingly, she declined. A few minutes later, however, she was battling a second piece. The scene was truly heartwarming.

Just then, the police arrived. The theater manager had called them to remove the homeless woman from in front of the theater. There were thirty of us sheltering from the rain, yet he had singled out a poor, hungry, homeless woman. I heard the officers protesting that the woman was just sheltering from the rain, but the manager was adamant: the woman had to move on.

At that moment I remembered that my pocket was bulging with a bundle of one-dollar bills. Each Friday night I would attract a crowd by asking trivia questions and giving dollar bills to those who answered correctly. Once the crowd felt comfortable, I would transition to talking about spiritual matters and preach the gospel. As the police officers reluctantly began to move the old woman on, I stepped forward and grabbed her hand. She flinched and turned her fear-filled eyes toward mine, probably thinking that she was being handcuffed. Then she noticed that I had stuffed a wad of bills in her hand, and in a second her fear changed to joy.<sup>3</sup>

The Bible tells us in 1 Timothy 1:8 (AMP), “Now we recognize and know that the Law is good if anyone uses it lawfully [for the purpose for which it was designed].” Just as the theater manager used the local municipal law for something for which it was never designed—turning an elderly homeless woman out into the rain—so there are those who would use God’s Law for something for which it was never designed.

For what purpose was God’s Law designed? The following verse tells us: “The Law is not made for a righteous person, but ... for sinners” (1 Timothy 1:9). It even lists the sinners for us: the disobedient, the ungodly, murderers, fornicators, homosexuals, kidnappers, liars, etc. The Law’s main design is not for the saved, but for the unsaved. It was given as a “schoolmaster” to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3:24, KJV). It was designed primarily as an evangelistic tool. D. L. Moody said, “The Law can only chase a man to Calvary, no further.”

It is an unlawful use of the Law to use it for justification. No one will make it to Heaven by keeping the Ten Commandments. The Scriptures make that very clear: “A man is not justified by the works of the Law but by faith in Jesus Christ ... ; for by the works of the Law no flesh shall be justified” (Galatians 2:16). The Law’s rightful purpose is simply to act as a mirror to show us that we need cleansing. Those who seek to be justified by the Law are taking the mirror off the wall and trying to wash themselves with it.

Neither should the Law be used to produce legalism. We are given incredible liberty in Christ (Galatians 5:1), and there are those who would seek to steal that liberty by placing the Law



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on the backs of Christians. Obviously, Christians refrain from lawlessness. They don't lie, steal, kill, commit adultery, etc. If they fall into sin (as opposed to diving into sin), they confess and forsake it, because they know that "without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14, NIV). However, a Christian's



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motivation for holy living isn't one of legalism imposed on them by the Law. Why do they refrain from sin? To gain God's favor? No. They already have that in Christ. Instead, Christians live lives that are pleasing to God because they want to do all they can to show God gratitude for the incredible mercy they have received through the gospel. Their gratitude isn't driven by guilt—to somehow try to pay God back for the Cross. No, their motive

is pure. It's like the one leper who, when he saw that he was healed, was overwhelmed with gratitude. He turned back to Jesus and "with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet" (Luke 17:15). The motive for gratitude is love, not legalism.

Why then would any Christian stray into legalism? Why would they begin telling other believers what they can and cannot do in Christ? This happens simply because the Law hasn't been used lawfully in the first place. Let me try to explain. If the spiritual nature of the Law is used in evangelism, it will once and for all rid new believers of any thought of legalism. The Law reveals to them that there is no way they can please God outside of faith in Jesus. As they stand before the ground-shaking thunder and vivid lightning of Mount Sinai, it dawns on them that a holy Creator sees their wicked thoughts. They cringe as they begin to understand that God sees lust as adultery and hatred as murder. Guilty sinners see that they are "by nature children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3) and therefore flee to shelter



in Christ from the rain of God's indignation. They know that grace, and grace alone, saves them. In the words of the hymn, "Rock of Ages," nothing in their hands they bring, simply to the Cross they cling.

True believers are saved knowing that nothing commends them to God. After a lifetime of good works, of reading the Word, of prayer and seeking the lost, they are still saved by grace and grace alone. They are "unprofitable servants" who merely do what they should.

However, people who make a commitment to Christ without the Law may do so because they are seeking true inner peace and lasting fulfillment. They come to fill a "God-shaped vacuum" in their lives. There is no trembling. There is no fleeing from wrath. There is no fear. To them, God is a benevolent, fatherly figure, not a holy God of wrath. Without the Law, they haven't been stripped of self-righteousness. They don't truly believe that their just reward is eternal damnation. Therefore, even as professing Christians, they think they are basically good.

Because of this faulty foundation, these converts are likely to think that they are pleasing God by reading the Bible, praying, fasting, and doing good works. They are susceptible to being deceived into thinking that somehow their good works commend them to God, and they are therefore liable to stray into legalistic standards such as "do not touch, do not taste, do not handle" (Colossians 2:21).

The Law, when expounded before grace is presented, liberates from legalism those who come to Christ. However, if the Law is neglected before the message of the Cross is presented, those who profess faith in Christ are prone to go astray, falling into legalism and imposing demands on other believers, stealing from them the great liberty they have in Christ.

Look at the function of the Law from the great classic, *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan:

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*Christian:* “It was he [the Law] who did bind my heavy burden upon me.”

*Faithful:* “Aye. Had it not been for him, we had both of us stayed in the City of Destruction.”

*Christian:* “Then he did us a favor.”

[*Faithful then shows how the Law alarms us*]: “Aye. Albeit, he did it none too gently.”

*Christian:* “Well, at least he played the part of a schoolmaster and showed us our need. It was he who drove us to the Cross.”

There are many wonderful references to the work of the Ten Commandments hidden within the pages of God’s Word. We will unveil some of these in the next chapter.

### End Notes

1. Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 7:9-13; Mark 10:11-12, Mark 10:17-22; Mark 12:29-31; Luke 10:26; Luke 16:16-17; Luke 18:18-23; John 4:18; John 5:46-47; John 7:19.

2. Throughout the book we will be using the term “the Law” to refer to the Moral Law of God or the Ten Commandments. This is consistent with how Jesus referred to “the Law” or “the Law and the prophets” in His teaching (Matthew 5:17, 7:12, 22:40, 23:23; Luke 10:26, 16:16; John 7:19-23). When the apostle Paul speaks of “the Law” in Romans 2:20-23 and 13:8-9, he quotes a number of the Ten Commandments, making it clear he is referring to the Moral Law. This is also the case with other writers of Scripture, including James (2:10-11).

3. I give away money because it gets people’s attention. Jesus referred to money in His preaching—He borrowed a coin for a sermon illustration, and even had someone retrieve one from the mouth of a fish. If the lost don’t love God, they do love money. Money is often their source of joy. It is their security. When money speaks, they listen.

## *Our Broken Backbone*

There are two reasons why the Church is filled with people whose lives don't measure up to what they profess. As we have seen, the modern gospel has degenerated into a means of happiness rather than one of righteousness. Second, we have failed to show sinners that they are lawbreakers, that they have violated the Law of a holy God.

Perhaps one of the greatest errors made by modern preachers is to assume that sinners know that they are sinners and therefore don't need to be confronted with the fact. They say that the unsaved need to realize that God loves them and can forgive them. This is just not true, either biblically or experientially. The Bible says that most people think they are good (see Proverbs 20:6), "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes ... " (Proverbs 16:2), and even the apostle Paul said that he had no idea what sin was until the Law gave him understanding about its true nature (see Romans 7:7). Despite America's mountain of sin, most think it's a tiny molehill in God's eyes, and they look forward to the reward of Heaven. Consider this article by K. Connie Kang in the *Los Angeles Times*: "Next Stop, the Pearly Gates ... or Hell?"

An overwhelming majority of Americans continue to believe that there is life after death and that Heaven and Hell exist, according to a new study. What's more, nearly two-thirds think they are Heaven-bound.

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On the other hand, only one-half of one percent said they were Hell-bound, according to a national poll by the Oxnard-based Barna Research Group, an independent marketing research firm that has tracked trends related to beliefs, values and behaviors since 1984....

The survey, released this week, found that 76 percent of Americans believe in Heaven and 71 percent in Hell—the same as a decade ago, and that 64 percent believe they’re Heaven-bound.<sup>1</sup>

They think they are going to Heaven, because they are deceived into thinking that they are morally good. They, like Paul, have no idea what sin is until the Law gives them that knowledge. When the Bible speaks of “good,” it means moral perfection in thought, word, and deed. Only God is good (Mark 10:18), and His Law is perfect (Psalm 19:7), holy, just and good (Romans 7:12). Sinners don’t know that. There is none that understands (Romans 3:11). I can’t overstate this fact—the world has no idea of the nature of sin, that it is a potent and irresistible magnet for the justice of Almighty God—that they live under the avalanche of wrath. That’s why so many will perish. They lack knowledge of God’s Law and therefore don’t see their need to repent and trust the Savior—no Law, no sin, no wrath, no repentance, no salvation. Sinners will be destroyed through a lack of knowledge of God’s Law:

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge ...  
Because you have forgotten the Law of your God ...”  
(Hosea 4:6).

Let me explain what I am saying by sharing what happened to a friend of mine. His name is Danny. When he told me that he was once arrested for failing to pay parking tickets, I asked, “*Why didn’t you just pay them?*” He answered, “They were just ‘parking tickets,’ it was no big deal.”

Then he told me that the police arrived at his home at 4:00 A.M., put him in a big black bus and took him to Los Angeles County courts. As he stood before the judge, he said, “Your honor. I brought \$700 with me to pay the tickets and to cover the court costs.” The judge said, “Mr. Goodall. I’m going to save you all that money. *You are going to jail!*” Danny was terrified.

His big mistake was that he *trivialized* his crimes by thinking that they were “just” parking tickets, and so he deceived himself. Had he known the judge’s ruling (that he would go to prison), he would have immediately made things right between himself and the law.

Most of the world realizes that they have broken God’s Law—the Ten Commandments, but it’s no big deal. If you don’t believe it, ask around a little and listen closely to how they trivialize sin. Here’s a typical witnessing scenario (I have seen this hundreds of times):

“Have you ever lied?”

“Yes. But they were only white lies. They were nothing serious.”

“Have you ever stolen something?”

“Yes, but only little things, and that was in the past.”

Can you see what happens? Sin is being *trivialized*, and like Danny, the person will therefore deceive himself. He is saying that he hasn’t actually “sinned,” and the Bible warns, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8).

The truth is, if you have lied, then you are a liar. If you have stolen *anything* (the value of the item stolen is irrelevant), you are a thief.

What the sinner needs to hear is the judge’s ruling for lying and stealing. Here it is: “*All* liars will have their part in the lake

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of fire” (Revelation 21:8). All liars go to Hell. Without that understanding, he will continue in deception.

Here’s the great tragedy. Popular preachers gloss over the issue of sin, because they don’t want to offend their hearers or make them feel guilty. But more than that—*they deliberately hide the judge’s ruling from them*. They refuse to talk about Hell. Yet it is understanding the Law and hearing the Judge’s ruling that will make them want to get right with the Law. Again, until that happens, they will deceive themselves, even if they profess faith in Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

Think of the story that Jesus told of Lazarus and the Rich Man (Luke 16:19-31). Do you remember (when he was in Hell) what the rich man said to Abraham?— “Then he said, ‘I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment’” (Luke 16:27-28).

Imagine that the rich man appears in front of you and pleads with you to testify to his brethren. His clothing is smoldering. His flesh is red and blotched. His eyes are flames of fire. His voice is filled with terror. What would he want you to *testify*? Would he want you to tell them that they can have God’s best and be successful in this life? Would he want you to talk about the God-shaped hole in their hearts, or the wonderful plan He has for their lives? I don’t think so. Jesus told us what he wanted them to be told. He would want you to warn them that Hell is real. He cried, “... lest they also come to this place of torment.” There is the essence of our message.

Look at how Charles Spurgeon calls preachers, “murderers,” when they fail to warn of the reality of Hell:

“It is absolutely necessary to the preaching of the gospel of Christ that men be warned as to what will happen if they continue in their sins. Ho, ho sir surgeon, you are too delicate to tell the man that he is ill! You hope to heal the sick without their knowing it. You therefore flatter them; and what happens? They laugh at

you; they dance upon their own graves. At last they die! Your delicacy is cruelty; your flatteries are poisons; *you are a murderer*. Shall we keep men in a fool's paradise? Shall we lull them into soft slumbers from which they will awake in Hell? Are we to become helpers of their damnation by our smooth speeches? In the name of God we will not."

### *The Dilemma*

Why would America's most popular preacher appear on CNN June 20, 2005, and say the following?

KING: What if you're Jewish or Muslim, you don't accept Christ at all?

PASTOR: You know, I'm very careful about saying who would and wouldn't go to Heaven. I don't know ...

KING: If you believe, you have to believe in Christ? They're wrong, aren't they?

PASTOR: Well, I don't know if I believe they're wrong. I believe here's what the Bible teaches and from the Christian faith this is what I believe. But I just think that only God will judge a person's heart. I spent a lot of time in India with my father. I don't know all about their religion. But I know they love God. And I don't know. I've seen their sincerity. So I don't know. I know for me, and what the Bible teaches. I want to have a relationship with Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

Here is what the Scriptures say:

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me'" (John 14:6 9).

"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides

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in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:9).

“But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils” (1 Corinthians 10:20).

Why would such a gentle and loving man of God deny this fundamental truth? I believe it’s because of what he preaches. His message is one of success in life. He is a popular preacher because that is a popular message. Who doesn’t want God’s best for their lives?

But that message puts him into the dilemma of unreasonableness when it comes to the exclusiveness of Jesus Christ. If the Law isn’t preached to show the perfect righteousness that God requires, then there is a chance that people from other religions can make it to Heaven. They are sincere. They devotedly fast and pray. They crawl up steps of great temples on their knees until blood flows from their knees. They will hold up their right hand in sacrifice to the gods for years, until it withers from lack of use. They sacrifice their time, their money, and their own lives in the service of God. Sometimes they even sacrifice their children by casting them into a holy river. Surely a loving and merciful God sees their sincere heart. He *couldn’t* send them to Hell. That makes sense. Jesus can’t be the *only* way to Heaven. That would exclude millions who have never been born again. To say that He is the only way to God, despite what Scripture says, is the epitome of narrow-minded bigotry. No, that wouldn’t be a popular thing to say.

But when the absolute holiness of an eternal and unbending Moral Law is thundered from pulpits, and the lightning of God’s wrath widens our eyes to our true state, showing sin to be exceedingly sinful, then only God Himself could provide a worthy sacrifice for sin. The Law shows that we are deeply *in*



*debt* to Eternal Justice. It reveals that the entire human race is not just guilty before a holy Creator, but that we are desperately wicked criminals with a multitude of sins, standing exposed before the Judgment Bar of the God of the Universe.

In the light of the Law, we begin to see that we cannot bribe Almighty God to simply dismiss our case because we become pious. The Law helps us to understand that the sincere religious devotee who sacrifices his right hand to the gods is like a man who has been found guilty of the grisly crime of viciously raping and then slitting the throats of a number of innocent teenage girls. The judge is about to pronounce the death sentence. But before he does, he allows the man to speak. He looks the judge in the eye and says, “I am guilty of the crimes, but on the way into the courts, I deliberately slammed my thumb in the door. Therefore you must let me go because I have suffered for my crimes.”

Such a thought is repulsive. In the light of such terrible crimes, to think that any judge would pervert justice and let him go is disgusting.

In Hebrews 10:22, the Scriptures speak of being provoked by “an evil conscience.” Guilt drives us to try and cover our sins. Immoral Hollywood stars often become pious as they grow older. They sacrificially give money and their time to charities. They had a few “indiscretions” in their youth, and now (in their eyes) they are evening the scales. But the Bible tells us, “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord” (Proverbs 15:8). The ungodly are deceived because they lack knowledge of God’s Law. They have never seen the Judge’s ruling in the light of that Law. Without the Law, they could never be bad enough to deserve Hell. So, they go about to establish their own righteousness, because they are ignorant



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of God's righteousness (see Romans 10:3).

Look at what an internationally known and respected evangelist believes. (This is from a newspaper article.):

Over the years [he] has softened his message. Where he once sounded strident about sin and repentance, he now talks of "emptiness, loneliness, lostness" and concentrates on the "good news" of Jesus and forgiveness. He changed his approach after talking to psychologists on several continents. .... They say the vast majority of their patients suffer from "unresolved guilt."

"When I get up to speak, I am convinced that everyone in front of me feels a burden of guilt, even when they deny that there is such a thing as guilt," [he] said. "I prefer to tell them the good news, which is what the gospel really means."<sup>4</sup>

He and many others wrongly surmise that the world understands the biblical concept of sin. This is a huge and tragic mistake. Again, not even the Apostle Paul understood sin, until he was confronted with the Law.

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" (Romans 7:7, italics added).

Look at these telling words from a pastor of pastors—a deeply respected man of God from Dallas, whose theological feet I am not worthy to wash. Speaking of the work of the Holy Spirit, he said:

He convicts the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. I find myself comforted to hear that. I don't have to moralize when I am in a mob of unsaved

people. I don't have to wave flags to talk to them about how unrighteous they are. *They know they are unrighteous* ... It reminds me of that moment Nathan stood before David who had committed adultery with Bathsheba. He was cornered when she became pregnant, so he manipulated the death of Uriah, her husband, and then he **lied about it**. He lived a lie for a year, until Nathan came and stood before him, and after a brief parable regarding taking someone else's little ewe lamb ... he looks at David and says, "*You* are the man!" David without hesitation says, "I have sinned ... guilty as charged." That's the way it is when the Spirit works ... He is like the prosecuting attorney: These are the facts; here is the evidence; there is the guilty.

I want to take the *panic* out of evangelists. I don't want to take the *passion*. I want to remove the panic. Our responsibility is to communicate the Lord Jesus—to present the righteousness of God, to tell everybody I meet, as often as I can, the Lord Jesus died for them ... that there is hope beyond the grave—that there is forgiveness and cleansing and a relationship with God through faith in His Son, if they will only believe. *I don't have to convince them that they are lost* ... that is God's job. I just tell them about the bridge, and I say, "Get on it ... get on it." (italics added).

Can you see what he is saying? He is saying that we don't need to be like Nathan. He says that that is what the Holy Spirit does. We don't need to do what Jesus did, or what Paul did and open up the Law, or speak of judgment—"And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled ..." (Acts 24:25). He says that sinners already know that they are lost. They already know that they are unrighteous. All we need do is tell them the good news. How I wish that

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was true—because I battle fear every time I open my mouth to “warn every man.” But I know that to be a true and faithful witness, I must preach the whole counsel of God.

### *The Confrontational Aspect*

It was just before Christmas 2005. I glanced through a doorway at a large truck that had pulled outside our ministry. I had been expecting a shipment of books and thought that this may be it.

As I looked at the truck, I noticed two women sitting on the steps of our building. One of them called out, “Is this a Christian ministry?” I said that it was and asked if they were Christians. One of them said that she was. The other said that she belonged to a certain denomination. I sat down with them and asked the church-goer (Trish) what she thought happened to people after they die. She said that she believed in Heaven and in Hell. I asked where she would go when she died. Predictably, she said “Heaven.”

I said, “There’s an easy way to make sure of that. It’s a four question test—do you want to do it. It’s real easy?”

She said that she did. I began with the question, “Do you consider yourself to be a good person?”

“Yes.”

“Have you ever told a lie?”

“Yes.”

“What does that make you?”

“A liar.”

At this point I was delighted that she was being honest with me and not trying to justify herself.

“Have you ever stolen something?”

“Yes.”

“What does that make you?”

“A thief.”

“Have you ever used God’s name in vain?”

“Yes.”

“That’s called blasphemy, and it’s a very serious sin—to use God’s Name as a cuss word.” (At this point, I could see from her facial expression that she was convicted by God’s Law). “Jesus said, ‘Whoever looks with lust, has committed adultery in the heart.’ Have you ever looked with lust?”

“Yes.”

“Listen to this, Trish. By your own admission, you are a lying, thieving, blasphemous adulterer at heart. And you have to face God on Judgment Day. If God judges you by the Ten Commandments on the Day of Judgment, do you think you will be innocent or guilty?”

“Guilty.”

“Will you go to Heaven or to Hell?”

“Hell.”

“Does that concern you?”

“Yes!”

“It should *terrify* you. Do you know what God did for you so that you wouldn’t have to go to Hell?”

“No.”

“He sent His Son—Jesus Christ—to suffer and die for you. He paid your fine in His life’s blood, so that you could leave the courtroom. What you must do is repent and trust Him.” I could see from her facial expression that she was deeply moved by the gospel, so I said, “Do you want to pray now and yield your life to Christ—surrender yourself to God?”

“I’ve never prayed with anyone before.”

“That’s okay. You could pray quietly, and then I could pray for you.”

“Okay.”

“I don’t want to push you into it, but if you are ready to surrender to God, I would love to pray with you. Do you want to leave it until another time?”

“No. I want to pray.”

## The Way of the Master

She then bowed her head and began to pray. I waited for about 30 seconds and then prayed for her, and then gave her a copy of a booklet called, *Save Yourself Some Pain*, which gives principles of Christian growth.

This doesn't happen every time I share the gospel with people. Most of the time I see evident conviction, but they are in the category of "awakened," but not "alarmed." But although their lack of concern concerns me, I'm not overly concerned because I know that when I share the gospel biblically, I am working with the Holy Spirit. He's the One who brings conviction of sin, and He will do so in His perfect timing.



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we have something  
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So, is there biblical justification for the way I witnessed to Trish? I think so. It is based solidly on Scripture, with a little Comfort here and there. By that I mean, I have carved out a way of sharing my faith with which I feel comfortable. However, the backbone of the presentation is based

on how Paul presented the gospel. Before we look at Romans, chapter two, let me address your concerns that perhaps what I am doing is too confrontational. Admittedly, it is. But there is a reason for this.

Imagine you have gone to a restaurant to talk personal business with a friend. You find somewhere quiet and you begin your conversation. After a few minutes, someone you don't know comes up to your table and says, "May I take your order?" Do you say, "*Excuse me!* I was talking about something personal with my friend, *and you just walked up and butted in.* You are very rude. Now go away!" That doesn't happen. The waiter knows it doesn't happen, and the reason it doesn't happen is because he knows that he has something that you want. *Food.*

As Christians, we have something that the world wants. Every single sane person on this earth has a will to live. Something deep within them cries out, “Oh. I don’t want to die!” They have a God-given fear of death, and we have found everlasting life. They just don’t understand that yet. They think we are “religious.” We have what they want, and like the waiter who knows that he has what the customer wants, that’s the basis for our boldness.

Imagine now a new waiter. His manager says, “John. See those businessmen—the ones with suits and ties—deeply emerged in conversation? Go up and butt in and take their order.” John cringes and says, “I can’t do it ...” His manager calls, “Jose! Come here for a moment. You have done this a million times. Take John over to that table with you and show him what to do.”

With John right behind him, Jose boldly walks up to the table and says, “May I take your order?” The businessmen immediately stop their conversation, and say, “Certainly. I would like this, this and this. Thank you.” John’s eyes widen. He says to himself, “Jose was bold. He was confrontational, but it worked. Those men weren’t offended!” And that knowledge becomes his confidence. He know he has what the customer wants.

Let me now put you with an experienced waiter for a moment—the Apostle Paul. Let’s see if he’s bold. Let’s see if he’s confrontational, or if he carefully shapes his words so as not to offend his hearers. Does he avoid words like, “Law,” “wrath,” “judgment,” and “sin”? I will italicize them to make my point, as Paul addresses his hearers, in Romans, chapter three:

And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, *that you will escape the judgment of God?* Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? *But in accordance with your*

## *The Way of the Master*

*hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who “will render to each one according to his deeds”:* eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek ...”* (Romans 2:3-10).

Then in verse 12, the Apostle warns that God will judge humanity by the Moral Law. He tells them that the work of the Law is written on the human heart, and that it concurs with the conscience (verse 15). Then he begins to use the Law evangelistically, personalizing each Commandment to his hearers:

You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? (Eighth Commandment). You who say, “Do not commit adultery,” do you commit adultery? (Seventh Commandment). You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? (Second Commandment). You who make your boast in the Law, do you dishonor God through breaking the Law? For “The name of God is blasphemed (reference to the Third Commandment) among the Gentiles because of you,” as it is written. (verse 21-24).

Paul used the Law to bring “the knowledge of sin.” He was bold. He was confrontational. He *personalized* sin. Then he said, “Be followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:3).

So while you may not want to use the approach and the wording that I feel comfortable using, you should make sure



you follow Paul's example of how to witness biblically, because he was merely following the way of the Master.

Charles Spurgeon warned, "Only by imitating the spirit and the manner of the Lord Jesus shall we become wise to win souls."

### End Notes

1. K. Connie Kang, "Next Stop, the Pearly Gates," *Los Angeles Times*, October 24, 2003.
2. I am not advocating what is commonly called "Hell-fire preaching." I think that does great damage to the cause of the gospel. We will look closely at that issue further on in this book.
3. <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0506/20/lkl.01.html>.
4. *South Florida Sun Sentinel*, March 18, 2003.

