CHRISTIAN LIFE SERIES IV:
GOD-STYLE LAW-KEEPING

Understand and obey the spirit of the Law, not just the letter of the Law.

KEY POINTS

- Laws are made for the benefit of humanity. Without them, we could not live together in society. People would be free to steal, kill, lie and cheat with impunity, with no fear of negative consequences.
- Because of our base human nature, many try to circumvent the intent of various laws by finding loopholes, or ways to do what we want to do to our own advantage, without penalty.
- This is Man-style law-keeping. But let us look at the other side: God-style Law-keeping. Here we act in accordance with the *spirit* of the Law and not simply in self-interest nor for the purpose of hurting others. This is God's design and reasoning for giving us the Law in the first place. Thank God for His Law!
- In our main text from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives six examples of God-style Law-keeping; new understanding of the laws concerning murder, adultery, divorce, false vows, revenge, and love.
- He starts with the "big one": murder. There is nothing worse than depriving a person of life. We have no way of reversing that act. God has the power to give life. Man does not.
- Then Jesus proceeds to link murder with anger! The kind of anger that causes one person to demean another, to verbally abuse them and destroy their self-esteem (see Matt. 5:22-24).
- Next in line is adultery (Matt. 5:27-30), which is sinning against God, yourself and the one you are committing adultery with (Psalm 51:4; 1 Corinthians 6:18). Here is what Jesus says about adultery:
- It is a *heart* act, whether or not it ever becomes a *flesh* act. It is better to pluck out an eye to avoid sight temptation and cut off a hand to avoid immoral touching, rather than to commit adultery and earn a place in hell.
- And then there is divorce—the scourge of modern marriages (Matt. 5:31-32). Divorce was never a part of God's plan for humanity. Divorce laws came into being through Moses (19:8) because hard-hearted people refused to live in love and violated their marriage vows. God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16).
- So how do we obey the 'spirit' of the divorce law? By shunning it completely!
- Now, the Lord's advice regarding elaborate vows and oaths is simple: Don't make them. He is not at all interested in the fancy things we may say or vow—especially if we say it to impress others.
- He is much more interested in us speaking simply and in a straightforward manner. Our 'yes' should mean 'yes' and our 'no' should mean 'no'.

KEY SCRIPTURE:
Matthew 5:17-48, 23:23, 27-28; Luke 14:1-6

- Number five on this list is an all-time world favourite: "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" (Matt. 5:38).
- This is totally fair and even, as far as human wisdom is concerned. And exactly the opposite of what Jesus teaches.
- Don't fight fire with fire. Turn the other cheek. Give your cloak along with your shirt. In fact, go the extra mile, which leads us to the sixth example:
- Love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!
- This makes us children of God. And who wouldn't want to be a child of God? Let us fulfill the Law—God's way.
- As sanctified saints, we obey the Law because we want to please God and be as He is. We obey from the place of our heart's desire to honour Him, not from a place of fearful, servile obligation.
- Our prayer and resolve needs to be very simple and clear:
  "Lord, I want to please You in everything I do. I want to obey You and live a Christian life You will be proud of. I want to obey Your laws and commandments, knowing they are good for me and for all of Your people. Help me to obey Your Law from my heart—in spirit and not just in the letter of the Law."

REFLECTION TOOLS

1. Examine the six examples of human-style versus God-style Law-keeping found in Matthew 5. Based on what you have heard of, or witnessed, which style is more prevalent in human interactions? What have been some of the consequences?
2. How can we apply the principles of Matthew 5:17-48 to our lives in the instances when we commit wrongdoing?
3. Go to God in prayer. Ask for His help in obeying His laws from a place of sincerity.

Prayer Time
Lord, help me to move beyond fear-filled obedience and into obedience that is based on love of Your Word, Your will and Your ways.

L.G. ice-Breaker: What methods do you use to calm yourself down when you become angry? How effective are these strategies?

WEEK OF SUNDAY, AUGUST 5, 2018

NOTES

Meditate as you read through/listen to this week's message. If it helps, use symbols for your notes.

(Reminds me/Confirms) (New idea) (Think about)

(Do this) (Speaks to my heart) (Must share)

PRAYER NEEDS/THANKSGIVINGS