

How to Read/Study the Bible

Week #6: Distinguish Law & Gospel, Sin & Grace



Review: Challenge

Venti31

Coffee and Conversation about Jesus



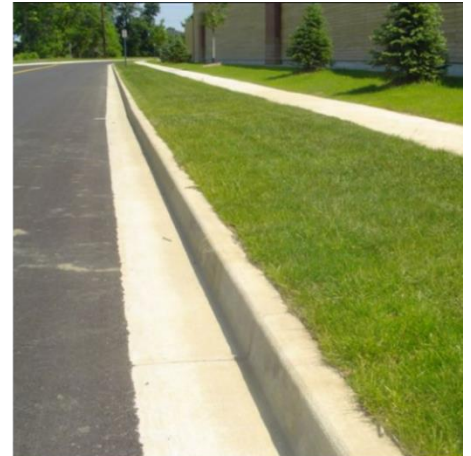
Interested in seeing Venti31 happen again. Pastor Squires would love that, too, but he needs you to do the legwork. Any takers?

Basic Distinction of Law and Gospel

Review “Law” using Confirmation worksheets.

The Purpose of the Ten Commandments—Part 1

God’s Word, Bible, has both Law and Gospel. Law includes all of God’s rules for living and His judgment for sin. Gospel means “good news” and includes all of God’s promises, especially the promise of eternal life (salvation) which comes through faith in Jesus Christ. Because we are sinful and do things against God’s Law, we cannot be saved by following the Law. We are not saved by doing good works, because our good works cannot make up for our sins. In other words, following the Ten Commandments isn’t going to get us into heaven. But the Ten Commandments and all of God’s Law has three specific uses (purposes). First of all, God’s Law works as a curb.



What do curbs on road do for cars and drivers?

How would God’s Law work like a curb on our lives?

What are some ways that our government and society’s laws match the curb of God’s Law on the behavior of people? (Name three laws or rules of society that match commandments).

The Purpose of the Ten Commandments—Part 2

While God's Law is a curb for keeping society running smoothly (whether or not people believe in God), the second way helps people to realize how we measure up to God's expectations. God's Law works as a **mirror**.

In day-to-day life, why do you use a mirror?

How might looking at God's Law be like looking at a mirror?

What will this mirror show about you?

A handy way to remember this is: S.O.S. Fill in the missing letters of the final word. Hint: the last word means "wrongdoing, evil action."

Shows Our S _ _ _

How is the confession of sins in the worship service related to God's Law working as a mirror?



The Purpose of the Ten Commandments—Part 3

Finally, God's Law works as a **guide**.

In day-to-day life, why might you use a map app or travel guide?

How can God's Law be a guide for you?

Would you be interested in using God's Law as a guide if you didn't believe in God? Why or why not?



The Ten Commandments act as a curb, mirror and guide for us as Christians. Therefore, we learn about them to see where we need the forgiveness of sins through Jesus (mirror) and to learn how to live according to God's ways (guide). Knowing this, explain why this sentence is wrong: "In Confirmation, we learn about the Ten Commandments so we'll know how to do the right things and we'll go to heaven."

ευαγγελιον (euangelion) – evangelic

The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology

noun: good news, gospel

verb: bring or announce good news, proclaim, preach

noun (person): evangelist: proclaimer of glad tidings or gospel

The Christian Gospel is that salvation is a free gift, won by Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, who atoned for the sins of the world when He died on the Cross and who rose from the dead for our justification (Gene Veith).

Pastor Ben Squires

Redeemer Radio Meditations on WOMT 1240 AM

—Monday, May 21, 2001

It is only through faith in Jesus that we have the hope of eternal life. But even such a simple message can be misheard or misused or misapplied. As the early Christian writer St.

Paul wrote in a letter to the church in Galatia, “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all.” I, too, am astonished at how quickly people turn the message of Jesus which is Gospel, meaning Good News, turn that message into something less than good news, something that isn’t as comforting.

Jesus didn’t come to show us how to save ourselves. He didn’t come to tell us that all good people go to heaven. He didn’t say that we needed to make ourselves look good enough in order to go to heaven. He didn’t say that going through the motions of going to church would get us into heaven. He didn’t say that we had to look busy when He was coming. He didn’t say that the Gospel was about getting rid of every sin from our lives. He didn’t come for any of those messages, and yet, when I hear people summarize the teachings of Jesus, those are some of the phrases they use. But those messages aren’t really good news at all. They all require things of me that I won’t do or can’t do. They all focus on *my* actions rather than on God’s. They all skip the part about the love and mercy of God. They aren’t good news, and they aren’t from Jesus.

This is the message that Jesus came to proclaim: For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that whoever believes in Him will have life after death. God has provided life after death for us all if we believe in His Son Jesus. And we even believe in Jesus because God sends His Spirit into our hearts—faith is a gift from God.



That is the Gospel, that is the Good News: to know that you are saved from everlasting death by a gift from God, the love of God, the mercy of God, through the work of Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection. It is good news, because I know that God cannot fail to keep His promise. I can surely trust in Him. It is good news, because it does not depend on me or my actions. It depends on God who will not fail me. This is Good News; this is the Gospel of Jesus; this we will always proclaim for there is no other message by which we might be saved.

Can You Distinguish Law and Gospel? Using the statements provided to your table, divide them into 3 categories: Law, Gospel, Untrue. (see last page of this study guide)

Example #1 - Ephesians 2:1-10

As a group, mark up the following verses:

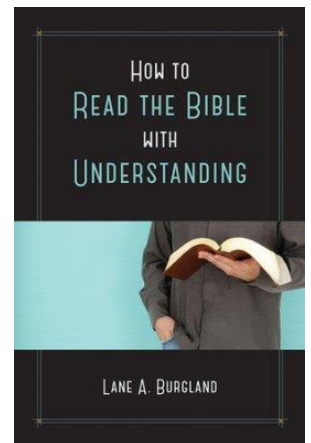
--LAW: Highlight in *any color but yellow*

--GOSPEL: Highlight in YELLOW

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Resource

How to Read the Bible with Understanding (2nd edition)
Lane A. Burgland (CPH, 2016)



Example #2 - Romans 12

As a group, work on these questions in reference to Romans 12.

1. How would you describe Romans 12:9-21 — Law or Gospel?
And if Law, what use (curb, mirror, or guide)?
2. How would you describe the use of the Law in Romans 12:1-2—curb, mirror, or guide?
3. Where is the Gospel in Romans 12:1-2?

Discerning Ears

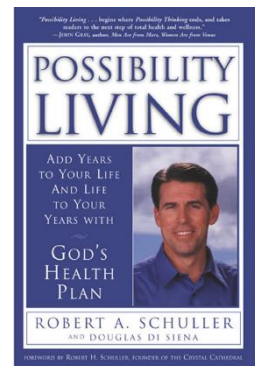
With many people writing Christian books, preachers on TV and the radio, and Christian music, etc., etc., it is important to have "discerning ears" to realize when people are mixing Law and Gospel. Use the following example and work together as a group to notice the problem with what is being taught:

From an interview with Robert A. Schuler about his book, Possibility Living: God's Health Plan:

Robert is the son of Robert H. Schuler, the pastor/televangelist of the Crystal Cathedral, and is now a pastor, motivational speaker, and business consultant with Robert Schuler Ministries.

Q: In the book you talk about asking God to remove our sins.
Some people may not be clear what that means.

Dr. Robert A. Schuller: So, the first "action" step is where you list all of your sins and anything that has ever caused you any shame or embarrassment, anything in your life that you wish hadn't happened - anything you could change such as the way you treated people, etc. Then you move on to sharing that inventory with another person, a pastor, a counselor, a close friend. From there you grow spiritually in the Lord where you prepare yourself mentally and spiritually by reading the bible and understanding more about God to where you are able to express your concerns to God. Then you humbly ask God to remove the shortcomings - and He does! His word and promise is that He will do.



Where is there a confusion of Law & Gospel in this answer?

Bible Disciples

Life-long learners, following God's Word in our daily lives

4. How might this principle of interpretation help you when trying to decide what a passage in the Bible means—especially when it includes commandments and instructions?
5. As you consider how Christians teach in books, on television, on the radio, and in music, how would this principle of interpretation help you if you start to feel as if you are “not a good enough Christian”?

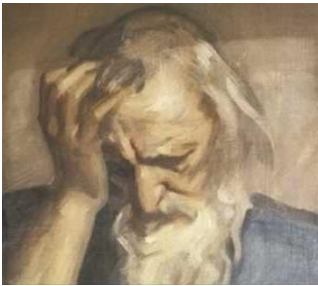
If someone's words lead you to think that you're a “lesser Christian,”
what might the actual problem be?

6. Do you have friends or family members who say they are Christians but may confuse or mix Law and Gospel? How would you help them using this principle?

COMING NEXT WEEK!

October 30-December 18

THE LORD HIDES & THE LORD REMEMBERS: ZEPHANIAH & ZECHARIAH



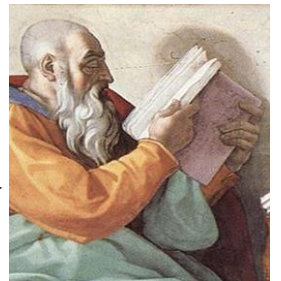
These two Old Testament prophets speak God's Word in the books but also with their names.

Zephaniah was called by God to tell His people that they had fallen away from the faith, and his name shows God's reaction: “The Lord hides.”

- How does a prophet preach such an unpopular message?
- Is there hope in Zephaniah's message?

Zechariah's name means the opposite: the Lord remembers.

- How does Zechariah's message of hope compare to Zephaniah's?
- Does Zechariah still have to preach a difficult message?



Law, Gospel or Untrue?

- L G U God helps those who help themselves.
- L G U If you follow all of the commandments, then God will save you.
- L G U God gives us eternal life as gift to us.
- L G U Jesus Christ died to forgive all of our sins.
- L G U God loves all people even though we are sinful.
- L G U The way to heaven is by doing good things.
- L G U God rescued us from the power of the devil.
- L G U God created faith in our hearts through Baptism.
- L G U You shall not murder.
- L G U You shall have no other gods before Me.
- L G U I have the hope of eternal life based on Jesus Christ alone.
- L G U A child of God will follow God's instructions.
- L G U Do not fear! God loves you.
- L G U God washes away your sins.
- L G U Nothing can separate you from the love of God.
- L G U God will only bless you if you send out emails about Him.
- L G U You shall not steal.
- L G U Love the Lord with all of your heart, mind and soul.
- L G U Our sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ.
- L G U If we admit our sins, God is faithful and will forgive us.
- L G U Love your neighbor as yourself.
- L G U For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
- L G U The Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts.
- L G U Jesus gives us the comfort of forgiveness.
- L G U Jesus came to seek and save the lost.
- L G U Share your possessions with others.
- L G U Honor your father and your mother.
- L G U Jesus died for us even while we were still sinners.
- L G U When God looks at us, He sees the holiness of Jesus, not our sinfulness.
- L G U We are freed from the guilt of sin because of Jesus.