

Living Out the Law in Love

Introduction:

Alright, guys, today we're diving into Matthew 5 and what Jesus had to say about the law. But before we get into that, we need to understand something super important—how the Jewish people viewed their history and their identity.

There are two big events that shaped them:

1. **The Exodus** – This is when God freed them from slavery in Egypt and gave them the law at Mount Sinai. It was a whole new identity—they became a nation set apart, called to live differently.
2. **Babylonian Captivity** – This was a game-changer. The Israelites kept messing up, and God allowed Babylon to take them into exile. It was painful. It was humiliating. But out of that, they became determined to never let it happen again. This is where things like synagogues and Pharisees started—systems to help them follow the rules perfectly.

By the time Jesus came, the Pharisees had become super strict about the rules because they thought, "If we keep the law perfectly, we won't go back into captivity!" They weren't bad people; they were just missing the bigger picture.

Jesus and the Law (Matthew 5:17-20)

Now let's get to what Jesus says in Matthew 5:

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished." – Matthew 5:17-18

Jesus isn't canceling the law—He's **fulfilling** it. The Pharisees thought righteousness was about checking boxes: "Do this, don't do that." But Jesus says it's about **how we live it out**.

Back then, when a student answered a rabbi correctly, the rabbi would say, "You have fulfilled the Torah!" If they got it wrong, they'd say, "You have abolished the Torah!" Jesus is using this same language. He's saying, "I'm showing you the **right way** to live out God's law."

The Problem: Cherry-Picking the Rules

The Pharisees had a habit of picking and choosing which parts of the law they liked and ignoring the rest. Sound familiar? We do the same thing today.

- We love "**God is love**," but we ignore "**love your enemies**."
- We like "**Judge not**," but we ignore "**Go and sin no more**."

Jesus is telling us that God's law isn't a buffet where we pick what we like. It's a complete picture of how life was designed to work.

Why Does God Give Us Rules?

Let's be real—sometimes rules feel like a drag. But have you ever thought about why they exist?

Take stealing. What's the big deal? If I want your stuff, why can't I just take it? Well, because God is generous. Stealing goes against His nature.

What about adultery? Our culture says, "Do whatever feels right." But God is love, and stepping outside of marriage **betrays** that love.

The law isn't about control—it's about **reflecting God's nature**. God's character shapes the way the world is supposed to work. And if we want to be part of His kingdom, our job isn't just to believe the right things—it's to **live in a way that reflects who He is**.

The Real Problem: Christians Not Acting Like Jesus

Here's the hard truth: The biggest problem isn't that the world isn't following Jesus—it's that **Christians aren't acting like Jesus**.

When Jesus went to His hometown of Nazareth, He couldn't do many miracles there. Why? **Because of their lack of faith**. Not the faith of non-believers. The faith of God's people!

We spend so much time trying to fix **other people**, pointing fingers at their sin, but what about us? Are we actually living out love, grace, and truth?

Jesus didn't compromise. He didn't say, "Do whatever you want." But He also didn't shut people out. He spent time with tax collectors, sinners—people society rejected. Who are the "tax collectors" in your life? Who are the people you struggle to love?

Living Out the Law in Love

So, what do we do with all this? How do we live in the kingdom of God today?

1. **Stop just knowing the truth—live it out.** Your faith isn't just about what you believe; it's about how you treat people.
2. **Let love be the foundation.** Jesus said the greatest commandments are to **love God** and **love people**. If we don't get those two right, nothing else matters (Matthew 22:37-40).
3. **Hold people to truth, but do it with love.** Jesus never compromised the truth, but He also never turned people away. We don't have to affirm sin, but we do have to be **inclusive** in how we love.

Implications

1. **God's laws are a gift that open up the fullest life possible.**
 - Jesus said, *"I came that you may have life, and have it to the full."* (John 10:10)
 - God isn't trying to restrict you—He's trying to **set you free**. The world says freedom is "doing whatever you want." But real freedom is living in a way that brings **peace, joy, and purpose**.
2. **The law teaches us who God is and what He's like.**
 - If we really understand the heart behind God's rules, it should change **how we talk to people and how we treat them**.
 - When we're interacting with others, especially people who don't believe like us, **do we sound like Jesus?** Do we reflect God's character in our conversations?
3. **Are you willing to renew your covenant with God?**
 - When we first say "yes" to Jesus, we have expectations. But then we realize following Him is **harder** than we thought.
 - We all hit moments where we say, *"Wait... I didn't know it meant loving my annoying neighbor. I didn't know it meant forgiving people who hurt me."*
 - Those moments aren't failures. They're opportunities to say, **"God, I'm renewing my commitment to You."**

Closing Challenge

What if we stopped trying to call the world back to the rules and instead started changing **ourselves** first?

Imagine if every Christian lived like Jesus—what would that do to our schools, our families, our communities?

The world doesn't need more Pharisees. It needs more people who reflect Jesus.

Let's be those people.

Let's pray. 🙏