

Conversation Starters

- When was the last time you had to do something that you didn't want to?
- What was it? Did someone tell you to do it?

Discuss

The first five books of the Bible record God's instruction to and covenant with his people, known as God's law. It was meant to show us how to live, covering all aspects of human life. A group of people known as the Pharisees missed the point of the law and made it all about external laws and legalism.

- What or who do you look to for how to live (for how you work, relate to others, etc.)?
- What do you think of when you hear "God's law"?
- When you think about obeying God's law, do you tend to think more about how you appear to others around you more than you think about how God sees you? Why?

Jesus was often accused of breaking that law, but Jesus declared that he was actually the fulfillment of them and that he came to accomplish their purpose. That purpose was to restore us to a living relationship with God.

"Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose." (Matthew 5:17)

- How does this declaration by Jesus change your thinking about God's law?
- Who do you say Jesus is?
- How would you describe what a life in Christ looks like?

Although the Pharisees messed up how they thought about the law by taking it beyond its intent, we can also mess this up by not taking it seriously at all. God desires to have a relationship with us. When we choose to go against his desires we are really not showing love toward him. But when we choose to follow, then that is when we truly live.

"So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God's laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven." (Matthew 5:19)

- Have you ever found yourself dismissing God's law in some capacity?
- How would you describe your relationship with God?
- What steps can you take to grow in your relationship with God?

Next Steps

Spend some time thinking about the various areas in your life (relationships, work, leisure activities). What would it look like to follow God's instruction in each of these areas? Consider taking the following classes for some more help as you look at how this could look:

Exploring the Bible - <https://mecklenburg.org/event/855439-2018-10-15-exploring-the-bible/>

Made for More - <https://mecklenburg.org/event/860442-2018-12-03-made-for-more/>

Further Reflection

"Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God's law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God's laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. But I warn you—unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!" (Matthew 5:17-20)

Now Jesus turned to address his disciples, along with the crowd that had gathered with them. "The religion scholars and Pharisees are competent teachers in God's Law. You won't go wrong in following their teachings on Moses. But be careful about following them. They talk a good line, but they don't live it. They don't take it into their hearts and live it out in their behavior. It's all spit-and-polish veneer. Instead of giving you God's Law as food and drink by which you can banquet on God, they package it in bundles of rules, loading you down like pack animals. They seem to take pleasure in watching you stagger under these loads, and wouldn't think of lifting a finger to help. (Matthew 23:1-4 The Message)

Pray

God, you know more than we can ever know and are wiser than we will ever be. Admitting that is not always easy, and neither is following your instructions on how to live. But thank you for them because when we remember who you are and your love for us, we can trust your Word. Help us to obey them and to do it the right way – in response to love for you and for others around us.