

Remember

- It is about you experiencing the gospel first. So take time to walk through this stuff ahead of time, spending time thinking through it, answering the questions for your life, being gut level honest.
- After that, pray for the group members that you and they will be transformed by the gospel.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you through the material and listen as you go.
- It is not about getting through the material or about having the right answers. Groups work best when you facilitate discussion and people feel free to participate and learn from each other. Think through questions that will facilitate discussion.
- As we are experiencing more and more of the transforming power of the gospel, our hearts will want to share it. Being on mission will be a natural overflow of the work of the gospel.

Read this before you meet

- ***Read and think on the Bible passages:*** Romans 5:18-20; Romans 6:1-4; Romans 7:7-25; Romans 8:1-4; Romans 10:1-4; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27

Think through your answers to these questions: *What is the purpose of the law? What is Jesus' relationship to the law? Can those who believe the gospel do whatever they want? What is the law of the Spirit? What is the new way that we now live under in Christ? What did God do to our hearts? What two types of righteousness are contrasted?*

- ***Read the article*** and make note of any reactions you have or questions you have that you could use to spur on group discussion. ***Think through your answers to these questions:*** *How would you summarize the way the law and the gospel work together? The author of the article talks about feeling like "you ought to be a better Christian." Where do you feel like you ought to be doing better right now? What does it feel like to live under this sense of "ought to" or "should?" What laws have you been putting yourself under this week? What laws have you been putting on others this week?*

- ***Read through Tim Keller's Gospel Grid*** and attempt to put this grid into practice through these verses: **Matthew 22:37-39, James 2:1-7, or Philippians 4:4-7.**

• ***Big idea of the material:*** Questions, like the ones listed above, may be beginning to surface in the minds of the group members. Some will want to chuck the law at this point. Some will want to hang on tighter. Through this study they will begin to see that the law is good. It embodies the character of God. God created the law in order to show us we can't live up to it; we need a savior. The point of the law is to drive us to dependency in Christ. The law has no power to save or transform us. The harder we try to live up to it, the more we fail. And the more we use the law to affirm our righteousness, "It's been six weeks since I lusted" or "I am better at holding my tongue than that person," or "At least I've become more disciplined in that area," the more we get away from the source of our righteousness, which is Christ.

The goal is Jesus. The goal is not to try harder, or to just give up in living up to the law. The goal is to walk in the Spirit focused on a relationship with Christ. We should go through each day and make each decision knowing that the whole point is Jesus. In the end, we get HIM. And we actually have Him through His love for us, shown to us in the cross. Amazingly as we do this, we end up loving God, ourselves, and others!

Connect

1. Take time to relationally connect with and engage your group members.
2. Review and ask these questions:
 - What did you **learn** last week about the gospel?
 - How did you **experience** the gospel this week? How are you seeing God transform your life?
 - What opportunities did you have to **live** the gospel with or **give** the gospel to someone this week?
 - Make sure you as a leader also share.
 - ***Note:** Some may choose to share the ways they have been minimizing sin. Some may choose how they are living as orphans. Some may share ways they are seeing supernatural victories in their lives. Some may share about ways they are being able to share this with others.*

Pray

Take a moment and have the group pray and honestly bring the specific ways they need the gospel before God and asking the Holy Spirit to speak through His Word and this study to make the gospel real in everyone's hearts. Take time also to thank God for the transformation he is bringing in group members' lives.

Transition

A lot of us go through the day with a sense that we should be better Christians. Can you share some examples of things that we feel like we are supposed to do as good Christians?

The topic of conversation this week deals with the law and the gospel. At this point in the journey, you may be wondering, "So, if the gospel is true and if I am really forgiven, then does God expect me to obey the law? What if I struggle?" These are the questions many of us have, much like the Roman believers had as Paul was explaining the gospel to them. We are going to look at passages in the Bible that answer these questions.

Scripture

Have different members of the group read all of these before you ask the questions: **Romans 5:18-20; Romans 6:1-4; Romans 7:7-25; Romans 8:1-4; Romans 10:1-4; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27.**

- *How do these passages answer the following questions:*
 - What is the purpose of the law?
 - What is Jesus' relationship to the law?
 - Can those who believe the gospel do whatever they want?
 - What is the law of the Spirit?
 - What is the new way that we now live under in Christ? What did God do to our hearts?
 - What two types of righteousness are contrasted?

Read the Article Together

- Discussion Questions:
 - How would you summarize the way the law and the gospel work together?
 - The author of the article talks about feeling like "you ought to be a better Christian." Where do you feel like you ought to be doing better right now?
 - What does it feel like to live under this sense of "ought to" or "should?"
 - What laws have you been putting yourself under this week? What laws have you been putting on others this week?

Exercise

- Hand out the exercise. Read the exercise together.
- Apply the grid to the passages. Have some pick Matthew 22:37-39, some pick James 2:1-7 and others pick Philippians 4:4-7. Answer the following questions:
 - What is the command?
 - Why can't you do it (be specific about your particular struggles to obey this command)?
 - How did Jesus do this perfectly (note specific examples in the gospels)?

Extra food for thought:

- *“We need to not only repent of what makes us bad. But we need to repent of anything we look to in dependency to make us good other than God.”--Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York.*
- *“The law gives you a set of directions. It describes what righteousness looks like as it bears its fruit. It describes the character of God. It describes the character that God is bringing us up to. But it doesn't have the power to get us there.”—Dave Desforge, a quote taken from the Sonship material put out by World Harvest Mission.*
- *“. . . We give the law a power that it was never meant to have. We look to it for a power to change us. . . . We tend to think that if I just know the right thing and do the right thing, that that's equivalent to transformation. . . . Only the Holy Spirit is meant to be the power for transformation in our lives and the power for change in our lives.”-- Dave Desforge, a quote taken from the Sonship material put out by World Harvest Mission.*
- *“You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?—Galatians 3:1-2*

Wrap-up

- Does anyone have any additional questions or comments about what we learned today?
- How has what you learned impacted you?
- Have a group member close in prayer.

The Law and the Gospel

WEEK FOUR ARTICLE

We have been thinking together about what it means to live all of life under the influence of the gospel. Obviously one important aspect of gospel-centered living is reading and studying the Bible. Martin Luther observed that most of the Bible's teaching can essentially be broken into two categories: law and gospel. The "gospel" category contains all the promises God makes to His people. The "law" category contains all the commands, prohibitions, and expectations God lays out for us. If we are to live according to "every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4), it is crucial that we understand how law and gospel relate to each other.

In a nutshell, here's how God designed it to work: the law drives us to the gospel, and the gospel frees us to obey the law. Realizing all that God expects of us should drive us in despair to Christ. And once we are united with Christ, the indwelling Holy Spirit causes us to delight in God's law and gives us power to obey it. Luther put it this way: "The law, rightly understood and thoroughly comprehended, does nothing more than remind us of our sin and slay us by it, and make us liable to eternal wrath... The Law is not kept by man's own power, but solely through Christ who pours the Holy Spirit into our hearts. To fulfill the law... is to do its works with pleasure and love... [which are] put into the heart by the Holy Ghost" (Luther, *Commentary on Romans*).

Romans 10:4 says, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." In other words, the end, the goal, the point of the law is to drive us to Jesus. When we really "get" what this verse is saying, we begin to see every command in Scripture as pointing us in some way toward Jesus, who fulfills that command for us and in us.

To better understand what it means that Jesus is the fulfillment of the law, read this extended excerpt from the book *Personal Revival* by Stanley Voke:

J.B. Phillips translates the fourth verse of Romans 10 by saying, 'Christ means the end of the struggle for righteousness...' There is in all of us a struggle to get and keep our own righteousness, which is why it is so hard to come to the sinner's place.

The struggle is as old as Adam and Eve who, when charged with sin in Eden, at once put the blame on one another and finally on the serpent, while at the same time they made garments of fig leaves to give themselves some sort of covering from the holy eyes of God. By the time of the New Testament, the struggle was well under way, for the whole Jewish religion was a developed attempt to achieve righteousness by works.

We are all the same... We go round and round to establish our defenses against the waves of other people's criticisms. For some of us life becomes one long struggle to be what we know all too well we are not.

One phase of this battle for our own righteousness is the struggle to reach a standard of perfection. We have seen how the plumb line of God holds us to a perfect standard and the danger is that life may become a prolonged attempt to reach it. We [live] under law instead of grace, so that instead of living in peace, we are torn with tension. Sometimes we set the standard ourselves by picturing the kind of Christian we ought to be. We follow an ideal

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image in our minds. It is as though we see the man we ought to be standing on some lofty height calling us on as we struggle vainly up the slopes, yet he never lends us a helping hand.

Of course other people set the standard for us too. Everyone can tell us what we ought to be. We hear sermons and read books showing us the kind of Christians we should be, which only makes us feel guilty if we are sensitive, and self-satisfied if we are not. People put us on pedestals expecting this and that of us until life becomes one long struggle to be what others demand. So we live on under law trying to keep up to standards, while behind us is God's relentless law never letting us off; never lifting us up.

Are you a Christian living under law? Living under continual condemnation because you feel all the time you ought to be a better Christian, who prays more, does more, gives more? You are chained to a moral yardstick. You live under a yoke and a burden while all the while Jesus wants to give you rest.

...The tragedy of all this is the idea that we find favor with God by reaching standards. This is precisely where we are wrong. Again Phillips' translation helps us in Romans 10:5: "The man who perfectly obeys the law shall find life in it" – which is theoretically right but impossible in practice. If we could attain God's standard we should be blessed. But we cannot, so we end up being cursed. The very law that was designed to give us life has become the means of death, not because there is anything wrong with the standard itself, but because we sinners are unable to reach it.

What a relief it is when we see Christ as the end of all this! He is the end of the struggle for righteousness since he not only fulfilled the law for us, but was cursed for us as well. He has not only attained our perfection but atoned for our imperfection. There is nothing more to struggle about, for He has done all for us and God asks nothing now but our repentance and faith.

...The only way to get rid of sin is to admit it! Why is this so hard? Surely because it means letting go of our own righteousness, which is the very thing we do not like doing. Yet how can we have Christ's perfect robe of righteousness if we insist on keeping our own? It is impossible.

Jesus is our perfect righteousness. When we come to Him we need no other. The struggle for righteousness is over and He becomes our reputation and glory. We need not fear to come to the sinner's place, for when we do, it is to cease from our own works, to stop trying to be what we are not and admit instead what we are. At that point we accept Christ's own righteousness, we are justified before God, and we enter into peace. This is God's basic blessing for us, and the only true way of peace and joy.

*Cast your deadly doing down,
Down at Jesus' feet.
Stand in Him, in Him alone,
Gloriously complete.*

This material was designed for Coram Deo Church Community small groups. Much of the content has been adapted from Sonship (© World Harvest Mission, 2006). Questions? Contact Will Walker (will@cdomaha.com) or Bob Thune (bob@cdomaha.com).

Tim Keller's Gospel Grid

WEEK FOUR EXERCISE

A “grid” is a pattern for thinking, a filter to run things through, a particular way of looking at something. Part of understanding the Bible and articulating the gospel in creative and relevant ways is being able to apply various grids to make sense of truth. The first gospel grid we gave you was the cross chart. Now add this one to your tool box: Tim Keller's Gospel Grid (borrowed from Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in NYC).

Keller says that **every passage asserts a moral imperative**, either explicitly or implicitly. For instance, a verse may tell you not to lie. You can respond to this imperative in three different ways.

- **Legalism:** You can try your very best not to lie. This is what it means to live under the law, and you will inevitably discover that you cannot *not lie*, even by your own standards.
- **License:** You can admit on the front end that you cannot obey this command, and simply dismiss it as some sort of biblical ideal that you are not actually expected to obey. This is what it means to abuse God's truth and give into sin.
- **Gospel:** This is the grid we want to learn. It goes like this:
 1. God says, “Do not lie.”
 2. I cannot obey this command because I am a sinner.
 3. Jesus did obey this perfectly (I can point to countless examples of this in his actual life as recorded in the gospels). Jesus did what I should do (but can't) as my substitute so that God can accept me.
 4. Because Jesus obeyed the law perfectly and now lives in me, and because I am accepted by God, I am now free to obey this command by his grace and power at work in me.

Applying this grid to your study of the Bible will help you believe the gospel without falling into legalism or license, and therefore empower you to experience the reality that the gospel changes everything.

Practice:

Read a passage together and apply this grid (Pick from: James 2:1-7, Philippians 4:4-7, 1 Peter 3:9)

- What is the command?
- Why can't you do it (be specific about your particular struggles to obey this command)?
- How did Jesus do this perfectly (note specific examples in the gospels)?
- How can God's Spirit in you empower you to actually obey this command (in specific situations)?

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