

It's not about Legalism

We are a savage tribe. Often hiding behind our rules to make us as a sort of spiritual hall pass. We live in a world where poverty is the dominant issue and we, the rich Christian nations, are more concerned about sports, tax breaks, and oil prices. In a larger sense our prayers are feeble attempt to affirm our existence rather than to exert the power of God in the world around us.

For instance, the key word throughout the book of Leviticus is not legalism. It's not obeying the rules. Hands down, it's holiness. Legalism is box-checking, and barely getting by. Holiness is a statement of relationship where we say, "Lord, I am so in love with you that I want to become like you! I want to run as fast as I can into your presence and I will remove all obstacles to get into relationship with You. I want to take what would seem absurd and obtuse to the world and hold it up to Your presence. We no longer burn the fat of animals. We don't remove the kidneys and livers of goats in worship. (Thanks be to God!) But we are called to do things much more radical: To present our bodies, the very life we live, as living sacrifices. We are called to perform gratuitous acts of grace. It has been estimated that there are between 500 and 600 Levitical laws in the Torah. Jesus narrowed it down to two. Love God with everything you've got and love others as much as you love yourself. (Jesus laws are fewer but much more difficult to keep.)

For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have appointed it to you to make atonement on the altar for your lives, since it is the lifeblood that makes atonement.

Leviticus 17:11 HCSB

God from the very beginning has been about the business of redemption. Even in the complicated and labyrinthine book of Leviticus we see glimpses of the redeeming grace. We see instructions of sacrifice that ultimately down the path to the Sacrifice of Christ for our sins. All the instructions on sacrifice with elaborate details point to the cross of Jesus Christ.

Christ followers have to relentlessly ask if we are just checking off boxes, justifying our existence or truly falling in love with God. Is that what my life is about? Is that what the Church is about? Far too often it is not. Often the church doesn't have time to deal with the pain of the world because we are too busy trading pain with each other. There is so much power playing in our religious organizations. It's sick. We make rules about who can do what in the church. We (including me) are so easily distracted away from the great Commission and we forget that we are called to share Christ not America with the rest of the world.

This love of Christ and our walk to the cross is not complicated but it *is* hard. We need the wisdom of Forrest Gump: *"I'm not a smart man but i know what love is."*

Amen, Forrest. Amen...

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to be awestruck by the grace of Christ. No, it only takes a believer.

It doesn't take a physician to tell you that life is distinctly tied to the blood that flows through the body of a man.

And it doesn't take a theologian to say, "Jesus loves me. This I know."

It's all there in Leviticus Life, grace, blood and forgiveness.

Lord Jesus, God's only Son, I cease my self-congratulatory posture when I stop and think of all You are and evermore will be. I am amazed by Your power. I'm overwhelmed that I'm a part of this rich panorama of life. My soul craves to know how I fit into your story. I shutter to think of the times I denied your presence through my self-centered actions. I have often shuffled sideways to avoid You without realizing the absurdity of my actions. Hold me in your hands because it's true. I am weak but You are strong.