* **SURVEY**
* **Series Slide**
* 4 or 5 years ago, there was a viral video going on entitled “Shoot Christians Say”.
* It was a satire video where 2 guys said as many cliché church phrases as they could in 2 and a half minutes.
* I’ll give you some examples.
* Bless his heart
* Is he backsliding?
* I wasn’t seeing much fruit.
* How’s your heart?
* Been working on my testimony.
* Is this a secular song?
* Is he saved?
* I pray for traveling mercies.
* He brought the word!
* That was so watered down. Needs some meat.
* It was such a sweet time of fellowship.
* I’m pursuing her. But I really want to guard her heart.
* One of the best parts is when they list names of church ministiries.
  + You going to Extreme tonight?
  + You gonna be at Velocity?
  + Ignite
  + The Edge
  + The Bridge
  + Fire
  + Echo
  + Reverb
  + Elevate
  + Radiate
  + 722
  + 641
  + Orange, yellow, clear…

Omaha, Omaha, Blue 42 Set HUT!!!

The reason why that video went viral…is because it was so accurate.

If you have been around the church or other Xians very long…you are probably immune to exactly how confusing those phrases are.

…and yes, some of those names and phrases have their roots in biblical phrases…

…but even the ones that do, have been so drained of their biblical connotations, that when we say them nobody is thinking about the Scripture they reference.

As one of my former teachers said,

* + “Words don’t have meanings, they have usages.”

When all of those phrases became disconnected from their origins…they were emptied of their meanging…and just came to be used as a code test to determine insiders-from outsiders.

You know, you start to figure out who the Christians are by whether or not they understand what you mean you say you have an “unspoken” during your 2:42 group.

And after a while, doesn’t talking like that get exhausting?

Why not just say what we mean?

* + Instead of “You been in the word?”
  + Lets just say, “Have you been reading the Bible?”
  + Instead of praying for “Traveling Mercies”, just ask God to keep you from getting in a wreck or traffic or whatever you want to ask him for?
* We’ve sort of made this lexicon, this dictionary of words, that has been drained of its meanging…and has simply become a way to keep everybody believing that “you’re really growing in your walk right now”…without really letting anybody see what’s actually happening.
* But the more those outward nonsense phrases get disconnected from what’s actually going on in your head and heart…and….what the Scripture says…. …the more you start to feel the heaviness of hypocrisy…and at some point, you’re gonna break.
* **Title Slide “No Rules, Just Right: Why Love Needs Law and Law Needs Love”**
* Today, in the gospel of Mark we’re gonna see a guy that come’s to Jesus who’s about to break.
* He’s tired of playing the game. He’s tired of speaking the church-y words…and he comes to Jesus looking for help.

**Mark 12:28-34 (NOTE: This is CSB version, we should have it in ProPresenter)**

* **28**One of the scribes approached. When he heard them debating and saw that Jesus answered them well, he asked him, “Which command is the most important of all?”
* **29**Jesus answered, “The most important is **Listen, O Israel! The Lord** **our God, the Lord** **is one.** **30Love** **the Lord your God** **with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind,** **and with all your strength.****31**The second is, **Love your neighbor** **as yourself.**There is no other command greater than these.”
* **32**Then the scribe said to him, “You are right, teacher. You have correctly said that he is one, and there is no one else except him. **33**And to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, is far more important than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices.”
* **34**When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And no one dared to question him any longer.
* **Transition:** After Jesus threw out the money-changers in the temple, The Chief Priests, Scribes, Elders, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians all came at him with questions.
* And each question was a trap. An attmept to trick Jesus into getting himself arrested and killed.
* But behind the scenes…there was this one guy. A scribe. And he watched Jesus answer some of these questions.
* But he wasn’t frustrated at Jesus’ answers like the other scribes were… he actually heard something refreshing in Jesus’ answers…
* …almost like Jesus was doing away with their version of “Christianese” and he was actually talking about something real.
* So when the room cleared out, this scribe saw his opportunity to cut through his own religious veneer and ask the first honest question Jesus has heard in 3 chapters.
* **“Which Command is the most important?”**
* When this Scribe asks Jesus this question…he’s reminding us about universal maxim that applies to every human every where at every time…
* **1) Rules: Can’t live with ‘em, can’t live without ‘em.**
  + Lets talk about this Scribe for a minute.
  + The Scribes were sort of the lawyers and ethicists of the day.
  + They were highly respected students of the Torah.
  + So we’re talking about guys that spend A LOT of time thinking about the law.
  + The rabbinic tradition counted 613 commandents, 365 “Thou shalt NOT” commands…and 248 “Thou SHALT” commands.
  + LOTS of don’t do this…but DO THAT.
  + They also divided the commands into “Heavy” commands and “Light” categories.
  + Light commands were the ones that made small demands on your life…
  + Heavy commands were the one’s that were more serious and cost you more to obey. Of course, the heaviest commands came with the heaviest penalties if you broke them…like death.
  + **V 28**
  + When this scribe asks this question, he’s not trying to trap Jesus…
  + …He’s trying to get out of a trap.
  + He feels weighed down by 613 “do’s” and “don’ts”
  + He’s watched Jesus answer these questions that seemed impossible to answer…and he’s done so with wisdom and grace and authority and clarity…
  + …and so, this Scribe…goes to Jesus thinking…maybe he can turn around the heavy burden of this law…
  + Maybe he can boil it down…maybe he can insert meaning back into all these commands I’ve been using.
  + So he asks, “Jesus, what is the most important command of all of them?”
  + Now, this is not only a relevant question to a first century Jewish Scribe.
  + We’re doing this in the 21st century ALL THE TIME.
  + You know, throwing off a bunch of rules…trying to simplify how to live.
  + You ever hear someone say, “Well, I’m not really into religion, because of all the rules, but I do think we should love God and love other people.”
  + Great. Fine.
  + But here’s the thing.
  + Why is *loving people* a rule that we cling to?
  + Why not abandon all the rules if rules are the thing that make our life miserable?
  + Why not just say, “NO MORE RULES.”
  + Here’s why:
  + As human beings, We’re in this pickle…
  + On one hand, We can’t live with the rules.
  + We want to get rid of the morality, the law…because they feel enslaving.
  + It feels like they are keeping us from something.
  + All the “Thou Shalt Not’s” feel like they’re keeping us from experiencing something good.
  + All the “thou shalts” feel like they are adding an impossible never-ending to do list to keep up with.
  + And for that reason we want the rules to go away.
  + ON THE OTHER HAND,
  + We can’t live without rules.
  + As human beings we crave a structure. A code. A purpose. A way of life.
  + We need something to keep us from oppression…to help us avoid hurting one another…So we can’t embrace a society with NO rules.
  + We can’t live in anarchy.
  + So we try and split the difference.
  + “Maybe I can find a new code.”
  + “Maybe I can find a morality doesn’t feel like its smothering me, but also one that allows me to enjoy life ….and not be so uptight.”
  + And that is the heart of this Scribes’ question.
  + “What is the most important commandment?”
  + He wants to know, “Jesus, is there a way to split the difference?”
  + Is there a way I can boil this all down?
  + I’ve been copying 613 commands down for years…you seem to be a guy who’s pretty in-tune to what God is doing in the Torah…so help me out…How do I reduce this thing down? How do I make the law of God manageable?”
* **Back to 1)**
  + Listen, after a while, you get tired of speaking Christianese…you get exhausted trying to figure out how long your shorts have to be…or who you have to vote for…or which words are ok to say and which ones aren’t…
  + …you even get tired of some of the stuff in the Bible,…and you start asking questions like “Does God really care what I do with my sex life?”
  + “Does God really care whether I’m a part of a church? If I read my Bible and listen to a few podcasts and meet up with some friends…isn’t that what he’s going for anyway?”
  + …and so…you start to say things like, “Why can’t I just love Jesus and love people?”
  + Or…you leave the church all together…but its interesting, when someone leaves Xianity…or any religion…they always end up in a different value system ith some version of morality and rules that just fit the way they want to live better.
  + Whether you are a fundamentalist Xian, a Buhddist, a Darwinian Evoluisionist, a naturalist, an atheist, or agnostic…you have searched for and found a code…a set of rules and morals that divide good from bad, right from wrong.
  + See, we can’t live with “No Rules.”
  + I suppose that’s why Outback changed their slogan…
  + Because they realized that “No Rules. Just Right.” was contradictory and impossible to live by.
  + First of all, how can you say anything is “Just Right” without rules to define it. And isn’t “No Rules. Just right actually 2 rules?” Maybe it should have been **“2 Rules, Just Right.”**
  + Second, Does anybody really want to eat at a restaurant with No Rules?
  + You come in and put your name in for a table. And you keep getting passed over so someone else who came in after you can sit down.
  + You have nothing to appeal to.
  + They can just look at you and say, “No Rules, Mate.”
  + Or the waitress when she delivers your steak, can just sneeze right on it, throw on the table and say, “No Rules, Mate”
  + Or the chef in the back. He never washes his hands. “No Rules Mate”
  + Somebody stops by your table and just grabs your Bloomin’ Onion and takes a big bite. “No Rules Mate”
  + …I picture how this ends up. You standing there like Crocodile Dundee with a Machete about to unleash some Down Under Anarchy…after which you’ll stand atop the lone upright table left in this dystopian chain steakhouse…and looking like Mad Max in District 12 you’ll say, “NO RULES, MATE”
  + See…without rules even suburban steakhouses end up like Sodom and Gomorrah.
* Every single one of us craves rules, because as human beings, as image bearers of God, we crave order, and justice, and righteousness…we instinctively know that we can’t be sneezing on each other’s steaks…and stealing bloomin’ onions…
* ….BUT…we also don’t want to end up with these rules drained of meaning…you know…the moment you are out driving at 5 in the morning and you are stopped at the stoplight and NOBODY IS COMING…but you just can’t make yourself run that pointless redlight.
* Its like the moment you say to someone “I’m praying for you.”…and you realize that you aren’t going to REALLY pray for them…and that most all the praying you’ve ever done has really felt like an empty obligation to a faith you know you wan… but can’t figure out why.
* **TRANSITION:** And that’s why Jesus’ answer to this question is SO IMPORTANT. He says…
* **2) Law needs love. Love needs law.** 
  + I know it may seem like Jesus is giving his own version of “2 Rules, Just Right” here…
  + It may seem like he’s saying, “Hey, don’t worry about all those other pesky rules. They were a waste of time. They were always empty, pointless busy work.”
  + Really, just love God and love your neighbor and that’s good enough for God.
  + But that’s not what he’s doing.
  + One reason we know that is because Jesus taught that the WHOLE LAW…the “heavy” commands and the “light” commands…they were all important.
  + **Matt 5:17-19**
  + **17“Don’t think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. 18For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matt+5%3A15-25&version=CSB#fen-CSB-23253a)**] or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished. 19Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.**
  + SO, Jesus is definitely not saying, “Forget about every other command.”
  + Instead, he’s injecting meaning BACK INTO all the law.
  + **Mark 12:29-31**
  + Jesus quotes Deuteruonty 6:5 and Leviticues 19:18
  + And when he does so, he is summarizing the heart of every, single, command.
  + That is to COMPLETELY, with every fiber of your being, LOVE GOD.
  + …and then…as a result…love people.
  + Jesus isn’t get rid of the other commands…he is showing the motivation BEHIND all the other commands.
  + LOVE.
  + Not only that.
  + By stating the command to “love God” first, he is making that primary.
  + In other words, he is saying, “If you Love God with everything that you are”… then you’ll love you’ll love people…your neighbor…too.”
  + And if you are loving God with all that you are, and consequently loving your neighbor…you find a single one of commands that is disconnected from those 2 ideas.
  + And this absolutely infuses a depth, a meaning, into every command.
  + Let’s take “Thou shalt not commit adultery.”
  + Without love, that command is pretty simple. Don’t cheat on your spouse.
  + But, if we understand the motivation of that command is love, then I know I can’t just fulfill it by refraining from extramarital sex. No, that command expands to be about loving my wife in every way. That command in itself becomes a summary to me…that expands in all sorts of ways. For instance…it says to me, “Talk to your wife. Listen to her. Know her intimately. Find out how she feels loved…and express yourself to her like that.”
  + And in the NT, don’t we find that. Its not simply “Don’t commit adultery.” Now its, “Husbands, lay your life down for you wives.”
  + Or “Thou shalt not steal.”
  + If love is the motivation behind this command, then this doesn’t simply mean, “Don’t take stuff that isn’t yours”…it's a command to be generous. To give to my neighbor.
  + “Thou shalt not bear false witness”. Its not just about NOT LYING. Its about telling the truth to my neighbor. Even with my life. My life and character need to reveal the character of a God that loves my my neighbor. I don’t manipulate...instead I tell the truth for their benefit.
  + In all these commands, the law NEEDS love to be fulfilled.
  + To be shot back through with deep meaning.
* **Back to 2)**
  + But, the love needs law, too.
  + Because the law defines what it means TO BE loving.
  + We don’t get a wishy-washy, malleable, definition of how to love our neighbor or God.
  + In fact, in the OT, there are very specific ways Love Neighbor.
  + Put a fence around your roof…so when folks are hanging out up there, you don’t accidentally kill them when they fall off.
  + There are also very specific laws on loving God.
  + Don’t wear clothes with mixed fibers…because you need to constantly remember that God has called you, Israel, to be a nation set apart in holiness. Different. That God has loved you and attached himself to you so that you would look different from all the oppressive and evil civilizations around you. Don’t go mixing your worship of me with the worship of all the nations false Gods….and you’re gonna remember that every time you are tempted to weave a garment and mix in different fibers.
  + Or…don’t eat animals whose hooves don’t lift them up off the ground. Because of your sin, the ground is cursed. And when you are inconveniced by not being able to eat animals that crawl around on the ground…you’ll remember how badly you need me to come and remove the curse of sin. You’ll cry out to Me and worship me.
  + See, every command…the heavy ones, the light ones…all of them have love of God and love of neighbor at their heart.
  + Love is the *motivation* for the law.
  + Law is the *definition* of what it means to love.
  + But there is a problem here.
  + Because, remember, if this scribe came looking for a way to make the law less burdernsome…less crushing…
  + He hasn’t really found it in this answere.
  + Because now, there is no obeying the law with false motives.
  + Now, the can’t just obey the law…that obedience has to be motivated by love.
  + Now, there is no exterior checkmark.
  + Now, God cares about the heart…about the deepest motivation.
  + See, before this scribe thought he could obey the laws for whatever reason he wanted to…as long as he obeyed.
  + Which, for most everybody is one of 2 reasons. See..
  + **Obedience is motivated by pride, fear, or love.**
  + We’ve talked about love, so lets talk about those other 2 motivations.
  + I might obey the commands of Jesus, but do it out of pride.
  + I want to be seen in a particular light.
  + I want people to notice that I’m a good rule keeper.
  + I want to look myself in the mirror and say, “Darn it, Trevor. You are a good person.”
  + …and that typically turns into, “…and you are so much better than the other people who lie, or sleep around.”
  + But there’s no love for God, or love for neighbor in that…at its root, that obedience is love for self.- that makes myself into a god…and ultimately, I don’t love my neighbor…I look down on them.
  + **The other false motivation for obedience is fear.**
  + I obey God because I don’t want to hell.
  + Or because I don’t want to lose my friends.
  + Or because I don’t want to upset my parents…or my children.
  + But see, without love, you are really just nurturing things that are rooted in selfishness…in evil.
  + And you know what that means?
  + It means the SECOND, that obeying the rules doesn’t satisfy your fear or your pride…you’ll just switch to another set of rules…another ethic…another system of morality.
  + You’ll lie, to protect yourself…because love of God and neighbor was NEVER at the heart of your obedience. It was always SELF.
  + You’ll cheat on your spouse when he or she “stops meeting your needs”…because love of God and neighbor was NEVER at the heart of your marriage…it was always SELF.
  + You see what’s happening here? All of sudden, a guy who has come to Jesus to get some breathing room in the law…has just had “Don’t murder” become, “Don’t hate your brother in your heart”.
  + He’s just had “Don’t commit adultery” with “You can’t even look lustfully at a woman.”
  + Jesus has just crushed the categories.
  + There is no more HEAVY LAWS and LIGHT LAWS.
  + Even the smallest LAW…is now FILLED WITH GRAVITAS. DEPTH. WEIGHT.
  + **James 2:10**
  + That’s why James writes to the early Church.. “If you somehow manage to keep 612 laws….but you break #613. You are guilty of breaking it all.”
  + **Mark 12:32-33**
  + So…why then…does this scribe seem so pleased with Jesus’ answer?
  + Why doesn’t he, like the rich young ruler, when Jesus said, “Give your money away.”…why doesn’t he walk away sad?
  + Why doesn’t he, like most of the other Scribes and Pharisees and Sadduceess…why doesn’t he walk away ANGRY…ready to kill Jesus?
  + Why this response? “You’re right! Those are the most important commands! Better tha all the burnt offerings and sacrifices!
  + Well, its because of that last phrase.
  + Better than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices.
* **TRANSITION:** The reason that this Scribe finds hope in Jesus’ answer is because, in Jesus, he has just found the antidote to all his pride and fear. In Jesus, he’s found the love that motivates obedience.
* **3) Jesus replaces pride & fear with love & power to obey.**
  + You know, all those cliché Xian phrases… when we actually learn what some of them mean…when we understand what God means by “A sweet time of fellowship” or “Guard your heart” or “Salvation” or “Bearing Fruit”…
  + …you begin to value those phrases….instead of use them to hide behind.
  + Same with the law.
  + When this Scribe ACTUALLY understands…or at least, starts to get close to understanding what the law is for…
  + …what was heavy and bitter.
  + Starts to become light…and sweet.
  + See, what made heavy commands…heavy…in the eyes of the Scribes, was what it cost someone to follow that command…and what the penalty was for breaking it.
  + **V 33**
  + So when this Scribe says, “Jesus, what you have said about loving God and Loving neighbor…that’s more important that all the laws that inform me about burn offering and sacrifices.”
  + See, those were all ceremonial laws of worship.
  + Laws that told you how God would pardon your sin…or at least overlook it for a year.
  + You had to bring something that cost you a lot.
  + Slaughter an animal, burn some of your crop.
  + You had to see the blood…and remember…that your breaking of the law…that sin…brings forth death.
  + And at least…for this year…when you brought your sacrifice…an animal could die in your place.
  + **V 34**
  + But notice, Jesus says to the man, “You aren’t far from the Kingdom of God.”
  + Because this man was beginning to understand something.
  + He was understanding that God was replacing the sacrificial system.
  + That somehow, love was going bring a permanent substitute.
  + Somehow, love was going fulfill all this law for him.
  + Somehow, love was going to make it possible to obey God and serve neighbor…no longer for the sake of pride and fear…but for LOVE.
  + …and somehow, love was going to supply the power it took to do it.
* **Back to 3)**
  + That’s exactly what Jesus would do.
  + IN his life, Jesus would perfectly obey the law…for us.
  + He would fulfill it.
  + Then on the cross, in his sacrificial death, Jesus was dying for us.
  + He was taking the penalty for our law breaking.
  + See, when you look at the law…if your honest…eventually, it eliminates your pride. Because you find that you can’t keep it.
  + Especially to Jesus’ standard.
  + You can’t possibly do everything out of love.
  + And so, you find yourself a failure. Pride gone.
  + But then, Seeing Jesus live the life you should have…for you…and dying the death you should have…for you..
  + …it eliminates fear.
  + Because now you know that the price of your disobedience has been paid, once and for all. No more sacrifice required to satisfy the law.
  + And you see, on the cross, that Jesus’ motivation was love.
  + He took the heavy penalty of the law….for you…because he loves you.
  + And seeing that love…that is our new motivation to obey Jesus.
  + Now, we don’t have to obey to be proud of ourselves…the God of the universe sees us and loves us. Once you are loved and accepted by God…there is nothing left to prove to yourself or to anyone else.
  + And now that the penalty of sin…because it was paid once and for all on the cross… you don't have be afraid anymore. God’s not “gonna getcha”. Now, he’s going to receive you with open arms.
  + And then, to top it all off, Jesus leaves us with his Spirit.
  + His Holy Spirit…that on one hand constantly whispers to you that you are a loved child…nothing left to prove, nothing to fear…nothing left to earn, nothing to lose.
  + And on the other hand, the Spirit is pushing you to obey Jesus’ commands, to love God, and Love your neighbor…telling you that you have the power of God in you…and now…even the commands that feel the heaviest…like they’ll cost you too much…actually, in the grand scheme of things…they don’t cost much at all.
  + Because the most important thing, the love of God…you can’t lose.
  + You have everything you need for life and godliness. You are lacking in nothing.
  + **The gospel says “I’m more evil than I realized.” Pride destroyed.**
  + When you say that, like the Scribe, you’re almost there.
  + Keep going and know that **, “Because of Jesus, dying on the cross, and resurrecting, I can know that I’m more loved and accepted than I’ll ever be able to fully grasp”**
  + **Fear obliterated.**
  + **And all that’s left is love.**
  + …and That's why Jesus can say this.
  + **Matt 11:28-30**
  + **28“Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.29Take up my yoke and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”**

In the sincerest, deepest meaning of the phrase…

**…doesn’t that just bless your heart?**