

## SLIDE 1

# Mark 3

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## How to make sure you are not legalistic

Lazy Mountain Bible Church

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## Introduction

We are use to bosses being tough on us, and coaches being tough on us, and if we are children, parents being tough on us, but when it comes to religious leaders we expect them to be rather wimpy.

As we will see today the son of man was far from wimpy. And the folks he is most tough on, the folks he gives the least amount of slack, are those who are legalistic.

May I ask you a question? Are you legalistic? What would your friends say? What would your family say?

Today we are going to learn from Jesus how not to be legalist, in fact we are going to learn how to make sure we are not legalistic. Because nothing is less attractive and less effective than a person who is legalistic, especially a legalistic Christian.

As we will see legalism can ruin your life by blinding yourself to opportunities to live and Christ lived and love as Christ loved.

## SLIDE 2

**If your friends and family and coworkers were asked is (your name here) a legalistic person? Would you like to hear the answer they would give?**

So let's start with a question, if someone called your friends and family and promised the answers they gave would remain completely confidential, and if they were to ask your friends, family, children, spouse, coworkers, on a scale of 1-10 "Is he (meaning you), is she, legalistic?" With 10 being a strong yes, and "0" absolutely not. What rating would those who know you best give you?

While you consider that, let's read the case of some folks that Jesus rated as legalistic "10's".

Their story is found in Mark 3.

## SLIDE 3

**Mark 3:1-6 (NASB95)**

**1 He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there whose hand was withered. 2 They were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. 3 He said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and come forward!" 4 And He said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?" But they kept silent. 5 After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. 6 The Pharisees went out and immediately began conspiring with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.**

What are the dangers of being legalistic that this scripture highlights?

#### **SLIDE 4**

**When we focus on being a rule keeper, we focus on punishing the rule breaker, rather than living as God has called us to live. (v1-6)**

The start of Mark 3 is the continuation of the end of Mark 2, where Jesus is trying to free the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment from the legalists.

We remember the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment is.

#### **SLIDE 5**

**Exodus 20:8–11 (NASB95)**

**8 "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. 11 "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.**

The Pharisees spent much of their time focused on being a rule keeper. And what rule keepers find themselves focusing on is punishing rule breakers, rather than living the life God has called them to live. (usually rules they have determined are important to demonstrate "Holiness").

The 4<sup>th</sup> commandment in three words is "Honor my day." The Lord made the Sabbath holy—therefore the Sabbath should be the one day we are most like God and living like God. God's children walk in a peace that passes understanding—because they know God and know what God wants most of them. And since this is the true meaning of sabbath is to cease, to desist, to not do what you normally do, which is work, then the sabbath is a perfect day to do what is best in God's eyes. To do something different, set apart.

The Pharisees had focused on making traditional rules for what couldn't not be done, and had forgotten that the sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath. In other words, God didn't set apart a

day to make it difficult, difficult happened 6 days of the week while we work. Sabbath was a day set apart for God, and what better thing to do on the sabbath was to do what you didn't normally have time to do during the work week: Do good. Do godlike things. Love God by loving others

Our Lord thus plainly signifies that not to do an act of kindness to a sick man on the sabbath day when you are able to do it, is really to do him a wrong.<sup>1</sup>

In our Lord's judgment, then, to neglect to save, when you have it in your power to do so, is to destroy.

And what is the response to Jesus teaching?

They could not answer him. They are obstinate indeed in their infidelity, who, when they can say nothing against the truth, refuse to say anything for it.<sup>2</sup> Ver. 6.—The Pharisees and the Herodians combine together against the Lord. This was a terrible crisis in his history, or rather in the history of those unbelieving men. They are now in this dilemma: they must either accept his teaching, or they must take steps against him as a sabbath-breaker.<sup>3</sup>

Now before we come down to hard on these hard hearted Pharisees, let's get back to the question of how those we are closest to see us?

## SLIDE 6

**Three questions to ask yourself to determine your own propensity to legalism:**

- **Can we get back to first principles about a God who loves us, heals us and restores so that we can be a person who loves first, heals first, and seeks to restore first?**
- **Is keeping our interpretation of the "religious rules" what matters most to us?**
- **Are we sourly sitting on the sidelines, ever ready to criticize and plot when we are offended by new insights into the truth?**

Illustration

For the last 11 years, an anti-lawsuit group from Michigan has held "The Wacky Warning Label Contest" to show the effects of lawsuits on warning labels. In 2007, Kevin Soave, a

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<sup>1</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary: St. Mark Vol. I.* 2004 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.) (115). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

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<sup>3</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary: St. Mark Vol. I.* 2004 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.) (116). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

resident of the Detroit suburb Farmington Hills, submitted the winning label. It was found on a small tractor. It read: "Danger: Avoid Death."

Carrienne, Jacob, and Robby Turin of Greensburg, Pennsylvania, won second place—and a \$250 prize—for a label they found on an iron-on T-shirt transfer that warns: "Do not iron while wearing shirt."

Richard Goodnow of Lancaster, Massachusetts, earned the \$100 third-place prize for a label on a baby stroller that featured a small storage pouch that warns: "Do not put child in bag."

*Ron Vample, "'Avoid Death' is wacky warning winner," USA Today (12-13-07)*

## **SLIDE 7**

### **How to make sure you are not legalistic**

When we turn our faith, our Christianity, in to follow warning labels, our faith becomes as ridiculous as these labels, as these Pharisees had turned their faith into? Would you rather follow Christ, and his "dos". Or people and their don'ts? He says here is what you need to know. Do love God, and do love your neighbor, no matter what the legalists say.

When our children were young, my husband and I decided we wouldn't watch R-rated movies. We wouldn't allow our children to watch them, so we decided that to watch them ourselves would be confusing to them. We made this decision in good conscience and never regretted it. I found, however, that it made me feel judgmental toward other parents who watched R-rated movies. I began to feel they weren't fully committed to Christ because they watched things I'd decided not to watch.

Even as I write this, I realize how ridiculous it is to judge someone's relationship with God by what rating of movies he or she watches, but it was so subtle at the time. Since it was a sacrificial commitment for me, I instinctively evaluated other people's spiritual dedication when they talked about the latest movie they'd watched. As I made this judgment, I never thought about my own sin or all the things that person was doing right. Instead, I focused on this one thing I thought they were doing wrong.

The ability to see sin in others and ignore it in your own heart is one of the distinguishing characteristics of a Pharisee, and being a Pharisee is so easy. It's great to make rules to guide our own behavior, but when we extend those rules to everyone around us, we're in danger of becoming pharisaical.

*JoHannah Reardon, Sycamore, Illinois; source: newsletter introduction from ChristianBibleStudies.com*

Now what do you do, when it finally dawns on you, that as a Christian you are not primarily called to be a rule keeper, and to be a watchmen for when others break the rules?

What do you do when the light of Jesus comes on, and you say, “Hey, I get it now. My role is to live like Christ lived, and love the Christ loved?”

Get ready to get misunderstood. Because when you give up policing others faith, and evaluating how well they are living up to your religious rules, you will find that:

#### **SLIDE 8**

**Christ gives ordinary people the authority to do extraordinary service (v13-19) when the commit to being with him.**

Here is what you find when you give up legalism. The message of your life is going to be so fresh and some attractive, some people are going to want to hear more, while others are going to want to silence you.

#### **SLIDE 9**

Let's read:

**Mark 3:13–19 (NASB95)**

**13 And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. 14 And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach, 15 and to have authority to cast out the demons. 16 And He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter), 17 and James, the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means, “Sons of Thunder”); 18 and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot; 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him.**

When it came to choosing his starting lineup, Jesus did not choose the professional rule keepers. He did choose anyone who had theological training, political position, or a college education.

What is with that? If you are going on a 3 year campaign to turn the world upside down, why wouldn't you choose the best the best and brightest as viewed by society?

First, remember, he did not read their curriculum vitae, he did not consult Monster Jobs dot com, he did not sort through resumes. He met with the Lord first in order to pick his team. In the account in Luke we read:

#### **SLIDE 10**

**Luke 6:12–13 (NASB95)**

**12 It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. 13 And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles:**

What did Jesus see in these men? What did God the father reveal to him about these men that qualified him to be Jesus closest confidants? His closest companions for 3 years?

We don't find out the answer to that question until three years later, after Jesus had died and risen from the dead. It is found in Acts:

### **SLIDE 11**

**Acts 4:13 (NIV)**

**13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.**

You see if you want to avoid being a Pharisee, if you want to avoid having your friends and family give you a score of 10 as a legalist, here is what you need to do. Take note. These men had "been with Jesus."

### **SLIDE 12**

**How to make sure you are not legalistic? Be with Jesus**

The number one cure for legalism is to be with Jesus. Spend time with him. Get to know him. Know his words.

The number one way for Bible church people to become Pharisees, to become legalistic, to view their lives as rule keeping referees for others is to forget to be with Jesus.

This is what qualified the disciples for extraordinary privilege of being a disciple. They choose, above all, to be with Jesus. What will you choose?