

**Man of Influence**  
*Following the Master, Leaving a Legacy*  
**Rigidity: Rules without Love**

*Luke 6:1-11*

There are some man-made religious laws that confuse people and frankly stifle the process of true spiritual growth in a relationship with God. The truth is: we are saved by God's grace through faith and we continue to develop our relationship with God in the same way, by grace through faith. Legalism focuses on God's laws more than one's relationship with God.

The dictionary defines legalism as "strict, often too strict, law or adherence to a code." Unfortunately it's all too often that many become legalistic, putting in place their own code of righteous conduct or at least attempt to maintain their relationship with God through rigid obedience to a list of predetermined, culturally entrenched rules. For the most part this legalism is a result of a misunderstanding of what is truly sacred. The misunderstanding of sacred will inevitably lead to an unhealthy spiritual life. Chuck Swindoll, author and pastor of Stonebriar Community Church in Frisco wrote about this in his book: *The Grace Awakening*.

*"Too many folks are being turned off by a twisted concept of the Christian life instead of offering a winsome and contagious, sensible, and achievable invitation of hope and cheer through the sheer power of Christ. More people than ever are projecting a grim face character of religion on demand. I find it tragic that religious killjoys have almost taken the freedom and fun out of faith. People need to know that there is more to the Christian life than deep frowns, pointing fingers, and unrealistic expectations."*

In reading Luke 6:1-11 we find two *legalistic* accounts with the same theme. What about the Sabbath? The issue facing the Jewish community in Jesus' time: was the sabbath sacred above all. That is, was keeping the sabbath an unfringeable principle to which all other issues were subordinate? Certainly the Pharisees thought so, but Jesus thought otherwise. It is noteworthy to understand that the sabbath was initiated when God "rested" from the work of creation. The sabbath is not only day that was set aside in honor of God, but it is also a God-ordained rest for the welfare of humans, who need refreshment from our persistent labors.

The point of Luke 6:1-11 is that religious rules (from God's Word) are meant to focus on— Jesus our Savior. They are not to be an end unto themselves. And religious days (e.g. the Sabbath) are meant to be a benefit to God's people. God's reprieve is for our improvement, not for our social or religious acceptance by others. So what's the cure for legalism? 1) Love God and love others! Love allows others the flexibility they need to grow in their relationship with God, even allow people to make their own mistakes without condemning and rejecting. 2) Check your motives in all things ...biblically sound? 3) Respond appropriately to others who choose to operate in a manner different than you or flat out disagree with you.

- Ever been put off by "holier than thou" Christians?
- Can you think of some positive ways to enjoy your religious liberties while maintaining reverence for God?