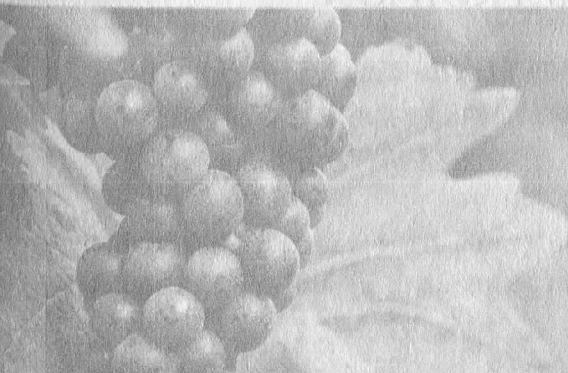


## LESSON THREE

# A NEW STANDARD

*Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath:  
to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?"*

LUKE 6:9



## REFLECTION

All of us at times feel the pressure of not measuring up to the standards we set for ourselves. When is a time in your life that you set an expectation for yourself that you couldn't meet? What did you learn through the experience about forgiving yourself and accepting God's grace?

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## SITUATION

Curfews come in many shapes and sizes. Jesus lived in a land of Sabbath curfew. The third of the Ten Commandments, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy" (Exodus 20:8), had been scrutinized and applied so closely that the spirit and purpose of God's gift of Sabbath had been lost. The controversy Jesus stirred up by honoring God on the Sabbath seems almost irrational to us, yet it shows that legalism without heart often produces harsh results. Jesus was chastised by the religious leaders for doing something on the Sabbath that they couldn't do even on their best day. They devalued the healing he offered on the Sabbath because they were more concerned with keeping up appearances than with pleasing God.

## OBSERVATION

*Read Luke 6:1–11 from the New International Version or the New King James Version.*

## NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

<sup>1</sup> One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the

kernels. <sup>2</sup> Some of the Pharisees asked, "Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

<sup>3</sup> Jesus answered them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? <sup>4</sup> He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." <sup>5</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

<sup>6</sup> On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. <sup>7</sup> The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. <sup>8</sup> But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone." So he got up and stood there.

<sup>9</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?"

<sup>10</sup> He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was completely restored. <sup>11</sup> But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

## NEW KING JAMES VERSION

<sup>1</sup> Now it happened on the second Sabbath after the first that He went through the grainfields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their hands. <sup>2</sup> And some of the Pharisees said to them, "Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?"

<sup>3</sup> But Jesus answering them said, "Have you not even read this, what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: <sup>4</sup> how he went into the house of God, took and ate the showbread, and also gave some to those with him, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat?" <sup>5</sup> And He said to them, "The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath."

<sup>6</sup> Now it happened on another Sabbath, also, that He entered the synagogue and taught. And a man was there whose right hand was

withered. <sup>7</sup> So the scribes and Pharisees watched Him closely, whether He would heal on the Sabbath, that they might find an accusation against Him. <sup>8</sup> But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man who had the withered hand, “Arise and stand here.” And he arose and stood. <sup>9</sup> Then Jesus said to them, “I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?” <sup>10</sup> And when He had looked around at them all, He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he did so, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. <sup>11</sup> But they were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

## EXPLORATION

**1.** What did the disciples do at the beginning of this passage that provided the grounds for the Pharisees to question Jesus?

**2.** How did Jesus deal with these accusations? How did he use the story of David and his men (see 1 Samuel 21:1–9) to refute the religious leaders’ claim?

**3.** What was Jesus stating about himself when he said he was Lord of the Sabbath? How would the religious leaders have interpreted this?

**4.** Why do you think the Pharisees and teachers of the law were so intent on “looking for a reason to accuse Jesus” (verse 7)?

**5.** How did Jesus respond to religious leaders’ scrutiny when it came to healing the man with the shriveled hand?

**6.** What do these stories tell you about the way in which God wants us to love others?

## INSPIRATION

Suppose you, for most of your life, have had a heart condition. Your frail pumper restricts your activities. Each morning at work when the healthy employees take the stairs, you wait for the elevator.

But then comes the transplant. A healthy heart is placed within you. After recovery, you return to work and encounter the flight of stairs—the same flight of stairs you earlier avoided. By habit, you start for the elevator. But then you remember. You aren’t the same person. You have a new heart. Within you dwells a new power.

Do you live like the old person or the new? Do you count yourself as having a new heart or old? You have a choice to make. You might say, “I can’t climb stairs; I’m too weak.” Does your choice negate the presence of a new heart? Dismiss the work of the surgeon? No. Choosing the elevator would suggest only one fact—you haven’t learned to trust your new power.

It takes time. But at some point you've got to try those stairs. You've got to test the new ticker. You've got to experiment with the new you. For if you don't, you will run out of steam.

Religious rule keeping can sap your strength. It's endless. There is always another class to attend . . . another Sabbath to obey. No prison is as endless as the prison of perfection. Her inmates find work but never find peace. How could they? They never know when they are finished.

Christ, however, gifts you with a finished work. He fulfilled the law for you. Bid farewell to the burden of religion. Gone is the fear that having done everything, you might not have done enough. You climb the stairs, not by your strength, but his. God pledges to help those who stop trying to help themselves.

"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6). God will change you from the inside out. When he is finished, he'll even let you sit at his table. (From *Next Door Savior* by Max Lucado.)

## REACTION

**7.** What lessons can you learn from Jesus' example about religious rule keeping?

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**8.** What is the real issue at stake when it comes to trying to live up to the letter of the law? How is the quest for perfection like being in an endless prison?

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**9.** What happens when we try to do God's work in our own strength?

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**10.** In what way does Jesus' response to the religious leaders inspire you to change the way you deal with your job or ministry?

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**11.** How are you tapping into the power of Jesus today? What do you need to do to let go of perfectionism and live in the freedom that Jesus provides?

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**12.** What practical steps can you take to depend more on God to help you face the challenges in your daily life?

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## LIFE LESSONS

The balance in Jesus' life between time spent with God in prayer and time spent in Scripture explains many of his responses. He based answers on God's Word, demonstrating that he had spent time thinking through ways in which the Scriptures could be used, as well as misused. The religious leaders misused Scripture. When they were only concerned about the law and keeping the Sabbath, the real purpose for the Sabbath was neglected and lost. Jesus challenges us to ask the questions, "Do I know why I'm obeying? Am I doing this for the right reasons?"

