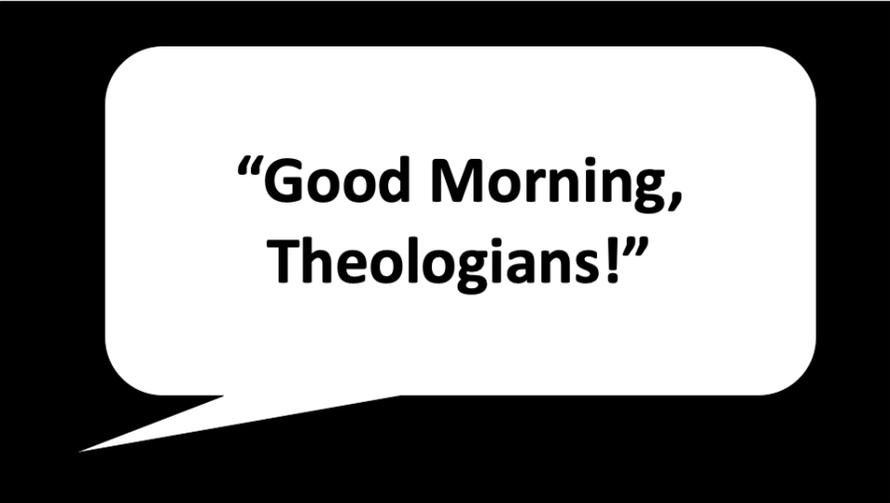


*What am I
supposed to do?*

PRACTICAL, PERSONAL, BIBLICAL ETHICS

Series Theme Slide

1



**“Good Morning,
Theologians!”**

2

READ SLIDE

- You may tilt your head a bit at that greeting . . .**
- but we all have a theology of sorts**
- we all have thoughts about God**
- and whether we have come to our conclusions by what makes sense to us OR by study the whole of God’s written revelation, the Bible**
- we all want our box of theology to close neatly.**
- I picture us wanting things neat and tidy, with everything in its place.**

TR: The greeting, Good Morning Theologians, could be followed up by another.



**“Good Morning,
Ethicists!”**

3

READ SLIDE

- We are all ethicists.**
- We all believe in wrong/right**
- The moment we think something is wrong or bad or evil, then we also have declared some things to be right or good.**
- If we believe there is good and evil, then we necessarily must posit some sort of moral code.**
- And, though atheists hate to admit it, the presence of a moral code posits the existence of a moral code or moral law Giver.**
- Even if we dislike thinking things through logically, we all wrestle with right and wrong . . .**
- AND we all want to make consistent moral choices.**

TR: So, I greet you Theologians and Ethicists. Though many of us would find the following greeting a bit more comfortable to the way we really feel.

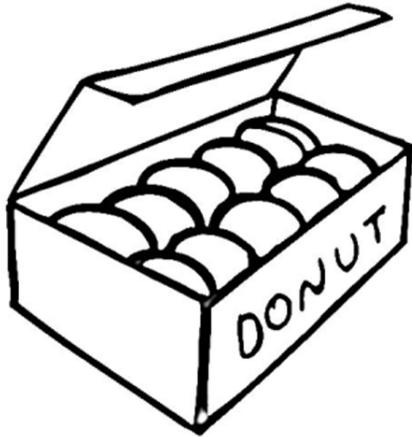
A black speech bubble with a white background containing the text "Good Morning, the Perplexed?!". The speech bubble has a tail pointing towards the bottom left.

4

READ SLIDE

- It is perplexing to go through the **CROSSWORD** we talked about a few weeks ago. At least it is challenging.
- And even if we believe God has revealed Himself in His Word, the Bible . . .
- . . . we still may find it perplexing how to apply different parts of the Bible to our lives.
- The basic Gospel message is so simple that a child can understand it and receive it.
- But if a disciple or follower of Jesus is someone who shows allegiance to Him in all areas of life . . .
- . . . we all will eventually wonder how we are supposed to treat the Mosaic Law in making our daily, practical choices.
- Should we kill people for violating the Sabbath? Should we not wear clothing of mixed materials? Is it wrong to get a tattoo?
- Can we eat bacon? That is, **SHOULD** we eat pig's meat?

TR: Today I would like to use the word picture of a donut box. I said we all want a theology and even an ethical application of that theology in our moral choices to fit in a box.



**“Folding
the
Box
Bottom”**

5

As we move toward an answer to the question of how we should apply the Mosaic Law’s stipulations to our lives . . .

- I want us to fold the box . . . that is, make the box bottom big enough to handle some of the challenging issues we face.**
- It is challenging because very few people believe we should apply the Mosaic Law to our government, though there are those who profess to be Christ-followers who hold to just that.**
- There are also some who say we should apply everything that the NT doesn’t change or do away with.**
- Some say that we only need to apply those standards that the NT specifically endorses again.**

TR: Many of you come from various church backgrounds, and whether you realize it or not, you have been taught key things that influence your answer to the question of applying the Mosaic Law.



**“Folding the
Box Bottom”**



**Issues of continuity
vs. discontinuity?**

6

There is the big issue of . . . READ SLIDE

-- How much continuity is there between the Old and New Covenants, for the most part captured in the Old and New Testaments?

-- That is, the before Jesus and after Jesus parts of the Bible.

TR: The range of answers that come from theologians to these issues seems to somewhat line up with the two huge camps of theology called . . .



**“Folding the
Box Bottom”**



**Covenant versus
Dispensational theologies?**

7

READ SLIDE

- Covenant tends to emphasize the continuity
- Dispensational tends to underline the discontinuity
- Covenant believes the Church is the fulfillment of the promises to Israel
- Some Dispensationalists tend to call covenant theology as “replacement theology”.
- Dispensationalists believe the Church age is a parenthesis between what God is doing with national Israel . . .
- . . . and after the Church is removed by the rapture, God will again deal with national Israel.

TR: If you are new to the Bible, this sounds like gibberish. But it is all an attempt to answer what we New Covenant believers are supposed to do with the OT, especially the Mosaic Law.



**“Folding the
Box Bottom”**



**Moral, Civil,
Ceremonial distinctions?**

8

The answer many of us have heard is that the Mosaic Law should be divided into . . . READ SLIDE

-- The Civil only applied to the national Israel, the Ceremonial are fulfilled through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

-- And the moral law still applies to us today . . . because God’s morals or ethics don’t change because God doesn’t change.

-- The challenge in all this is that there is evidence of both continuity and discontinuity.

-- The more obvious distinctions between the theologies seem to be moving to the fringes, at least in some circles.

-- And, while the three-fold distinction seems like something that would let our box shut neatly . . . you can’t find any evidence of such distinctions from the text of the Bible itself.

TR: So, as we deal with the hard question, I want us to make sure that .

. .



**“Folding the
Box Bottom”**



**Wanting to make the
box “big enough”**

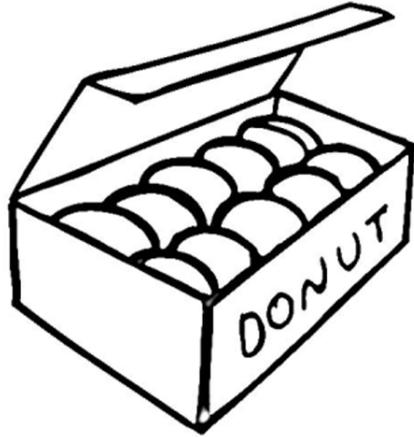
9

. . . we make our box big enough.

-- EX: Artificial Christmas Tree . . . doesn't easily fit back into its box.

-- We dare not throw out donuts or squish them into a shape never intended by the Baker, or trim off the parts that don't seem to fit our preferences.

TR: As a church that is UNDER THE WORD, we need to do our best at . . .



**“Putting in
ALL
the Donuts”**

10

READ SLIDE

TR: My personal journey in this quest began with a wonderful church and pastor teaching me from a dispensational perspective. But the most core difference is exposed by the question, is there one or are there two people of God?

Ephesians 2:13-14

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility . . .

ESV

11

When I read passages like this . . . READ SLIDE

TR: Verse 15

Ephesians 2:15-16

... by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself **one new man in place of the two**, so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

ESV

12

READ SLIDE

TR: It is very hard for me to come to any other conclusion than . .

•



**“Putting in
ALL
the Donuts”**



There is one people of God

13

READ SLIDE

-- I think we have to make room for this donut, if I can say that respectfully as an illustration.

-- Even as the phrase, “abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances” strongly addresses our big question today . . .

-- . . . so does the reality that now there is only one people of God.

TR: Even as I want to make room for that donut, I still think that dispensationalists handle some texts more fairly.

Romans 11:25-27

Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: **a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.** ²⁶And in this way all **Israel will be saved**, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; ²⁷"and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

ESV

14

In Romans 9-11 Paul is wrestling with God's sovereign choice of Israel.

- If God just discarded Israel, then what would prevent Him from just discarding us.**
- But the extended argument of this passage points us to the fact that the one olive tree of God's people . . .**
- whose root is Israel, has the Gentiles grafted in, but will again have Israel grated in.**

TR: I believe our donut box has to be big enough to hold the truth that . . .



**“Putting in
ALL
the Donuts”**



**God still has
something for Israel**

15

READ SLIDE

-- But the biggest donut of all, is the question whether we are “under” the Mosaic Law.

TR: The argument in the book of Hebrews directly addresses this question.

Hebrews 7:11

Now **if perfection had been attainable** through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?

ESV

16

READ SLIDE (first two lines)

-- The Mosaic Law with its priesthood could help us reach perfection.

TR: A few verses later . . .

Hebrews 7:18-19

For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness ¹⁹(for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.

ESV

17

READ SLIDE

-- The Mosaic Law is compared to a commandment that is weak and useless, at least for making people perfect.

TR: The better hope of the New Covenant allows us to draw near to God. Chapter 8 in Hebrews tells us . . .

Hebrews 8:6-7

But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is **as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better**, since it is enacted on better promises. ⁷For if that first covenant had been **faultless**, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

ESV

18

READ SLIDE

- The Mosaic covenant, the entirety of it, was not “faultless.”
- No one has ever been made right with God by keeping the Law . . . no one was perfect through the keeping of the rules.

TR: The New Covenant spoken of in the OT prophet Jeremiah has huge implications for how we look at the Mosaic Law.

Hebrews 8:13

In speaking of a new covenant, **he makes the first one obsolete.** And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

ESV

19

READ SLIDE

TR: The Good News is that we can be made perfect, through Jesus, God's promised Messiah.

Hebrews 10:12-14

But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. **¹⁴For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.**

ESV

20

READ SLIDE

-- It's passages like this that make clear that the ceremonial or sacrificial aspects of the Mosaic Law are certainly not applicable to us.

TR: But the reasoning of the author to the Hebrews goes beyond just the sacrificial system. Back in chapter 9 he said . . .

Hebrews 9:19-20

For when **every commandment of the law** had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, ²⁰saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you."

ESV

21

READ SLIDE

-- The time when Moses did this was when the whole Mosaic Covenant was enacted with the people, not just one or two of three parts.

TR: The question of whether we are under the Mosaic Law is also specifically addressed in 2 Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 3:7-8

Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, **which was being brought to an end,** ⁸will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory?

ESV

22

READ SLIDE

TR: Verse 9

2 Corinthians 3:9-11

For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory.

¹⁰Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it.

¹¹For if what was being **brought to an end** came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.

ESV

23

READ SLIDE

-- Twice repeated is the phrase “brought to an end” . . . referring to the Mosaic Law.

TR: The Apostle Paul makes clear that we are not under the Law for we . . .

Romans 7:4

Likewise, my brothers, you also have **died to the law** through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.

ESV

24

. . . died to the law because of our union with Christ in His death.

TR: A few verses later . . .

Romans 7:6

But now we are **released from the law**, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

ESV

25

. . . we see that we were released from the law.

-- In the letter to the Romans, Paul consistently uses “law” to refer to the Mosaic Law.

TR: In describing his posture of being IN HIS COMMUNITIES, the Apostle writes in 1 Corinthians . . .

1 Corinthians 9:19-20

For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. ²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law **(though not being myself under the law)** that I might win those under the law.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: Verse 21

1 Corinthians 9:21-22

To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (**not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ**) that I might win those outside the law. ²²To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.

ESV

27

READ SLIDE

TR: I hope you were able to stay with me on this donut run. We must not leave out or whittle down the sweet truth that . . .



**“Putting in
ALL
the Donuts”**



**We are not “under”
the Mosaic Law anymore**

28

READ SLIDE

TR: As the last text told us, that doesn't mean we are “lawless.”

Galatians 6:2

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ²Bear one another's burdens, **and so fulfill the law of Christ.**

ESV

29

**As Paul tells the Galatians about how we deal with those in sin . .
. READ SLIDE**

TR: We just read that the Corinthians were told the same thing . .

.



**“Putting in
ALL
the Donuts”**



**We are under the
Law of Christ**

30

READ SLIDE

-- I felt it was important to give all that as background to the question of how the Mosaic Law applies to us.

-- I over-estimated what I thought I could cover when I told you last week that I would answer numerous related practical questions.

-- My plan is to take these up again after, Lord willing, I return from vacation.

TR: But I don't want to leave you with just a hunger of donuts. Let me share with you how I've applied these considerations to the question of . . .



**One Believer's Honest Effort
– The Sabbath Question**

. . . the Sabbath.

TR: Specifically . . .

S	M	T	W	TH	F	S?
---	---	---	---	----	---	----

32

Must we “keep the Sabbath?”

READ SLIDE

TR: Anyone who has read the Gospels realizes that Jesus got into all sorts of trouble for how He viewed the Sabbath.

Mark 2:27-28

And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."

ESV

33

READ SLIDE

TR: As lord of the Sabbath Jesus had no qualms about healing on this holy day.

Mark 3:3-5

And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here." ⁴And he said to them, **"Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?"** But they were silent. ⁵And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

ESV

34

And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. --- READ SLIDE

TR: But that was Jesus. How are we supposed to look at the Sabbath?

Colossians 2:16-17

Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to **a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.** ¹⁷These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

ESV

35

**The issue is specifically address in the letter to the Colossians . . .
READ SLIDE**

TR: Verse 18

Colossians 2:18-19

Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, ¹⁹and **not holding fast to the Head**, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

ESV

36

READ SLIDE

-- The false teachers' understanding of the Sabbath, among other things, led to people being separated from Christ, the Head.

-- Strict rule-keeping in materials of food and drink and special days can make us loosen our grip on Jesus.

-- The Sabbath commandment is part of the Mosaic Law, the Old Covenant. We are no longer under the Law, and therefore the Sabbath commandment is not **BINDING** on us.

TR: Some would say that the Sabbath was ordained at creation, not the Law of Moses.

Exodus 20:11

For in six days the Lord made heaven and 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.

ESV

37

Texts like this agree . . . READ SLIDE

TR: The principle of resting was modeled for us by God Himself, though He never gets tired and He always must work to sustain creation . . .

Genesis 2:2-3

And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

ESV

38

READ SLIDE

TR: There is a sabbath-rest that seems to be bigger than just the last day of each week.

Hebrews 4:9-11

So then, **there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God,** ¹⁰for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

¹¹Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

ESV

39

In Hebrews we read . . .

TR: So, my conclusion to the specific question . . .



40

Must we “keep the Sabbath?”

READ SLIDE

- [must] – no, because we are not under the Mosaic Law
- The question is what is wise, since there is much we can learn about God and His ways from the Mosaic Law.
- As I have said before, we must not make absolute what the Bible clearly doesn't.
- And, we must remember that there is a difference between what we may deem as unwise and what is sinful.
- It is not sinful to work on the Sabbath, but neither is it wise to make this a regular pattern in our lives.

TR: A couple of quotes from OT scholar, Bruce Waltke, are instructive . . .

“A person who feels inclined to work seven days a week should examine what god he or she worships . . . But it is important to remind ourselves again that Sabbath is no longer a requirement.”

Bruce Waltke

READ SLIDE

TR: Dr. Waltke also said . . .

“The Sabbath . . . is a reminder that God does not value humans by their ability to produce. We are not machines. We have worth apart from what we produce. It is a difficult lesson.”

Bruce Waltke

READ SLIDE

**-- I recommend that young pastors guard a sabbath day.
-- But, not treat it legalistically.**

**-- We may not follow the “Blue Laws” that kept most stores closed on Sundays in the days of our grandparents.
-- But it is helpful to make Sundays special.**

TR: Some may ask, “Why do you say “Sundays?” Wasn’t the Sabbath held from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday?



**Should we worship on
Saturdays?**

43

That leads to the corollary question . . . READ SLIDE

TR: Clearly the early church made Sundays special, as seen in these texts . . .

Acts 20:7

On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.

ESV

44

READ SLIDE

TR: In Paul's instructions for putting together a special offering to help the poor in Jerusalem, he writes . . .

1 Corinthians 16:2

On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.

ESV

45

READ SLIDE

TR: The Apostle John's revelation from Jesus also came on the first day of the week . . .

Revelation 1:10

I was in the Spirit **on the Lord's day,**
and I heard behind me a loud voice
like a trumpet . . .

ESV

46

READ SLIDE

- It seemed that the early church consistently gathered on the Lord's day, in celebration of the His resurrection.
- But other passages in Acts make it clear that they also gathered for worship on other days of the week, even suggesting daily gatherings.

TR: The example seems to be that we do not have to keep Saturdays as "the Sabbath." Because we are not under the Mosaic Law, we don't have to keep any day special in order to be right with God.

Exodus 31:14

You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it **shall be put to death**. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

ESV

47

We certainly don't follow the Mosaic Law, when it declared everyone in Israel who profaned the Sabbath should be put to death.

-- In summary, I think we are free to gather on any day, though the traditional day modeled for us but never demanded of us has been the Lord's Day, Sundays.

-- It is not wrong to be a "Seventh Day" kind of worshipper . . . unless one believes that somehow this action is helping them be right with God and that to violate it is to break fellowship with God.

TR: As I mentioned, I will return to this challenge of how to learn from the Mosaic Law's wisdom even though we are not "under" the Law when I return from vacation. Until then, I remind you as

Wayne Grudem does in his useful book, Christian Ethics^{4.7}.



A Journey of Humility

48

**. . . that we must remember we are on a journey of humility.
-- As the logo of our church portrays . . . we must remember that
we are UNDER the Word.**

**TR: But these matters are challenging. It is hard to get the box
right and not cut off any donuts of truth, or not mash some in by
crushing out of them the meaning the author intended.**

Philippians 1:9-10

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ . . .

ESV

49

May these texts guide our prayers . . . READ SLIDE

TR: And with Paul, we pray for ourselves as he prayed for the Colossians . . .

Colossians 1:9-10

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

ESV

50

READ SLIDE

TR: If we proceed in a journey of humility, we can be trained for the kingdom of God, as Jesus said . . .

Matthew 13:52

And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure **what is new and what is old.**"

ESV

51

READ SLIDE

-- May the Lord grant us wisdom in handling rightly His Word.