

THE LAW DOESN'T WORK

written by Stephen Nel

You'd be forgiven if you felt a little overwhelmed by the litany of corruption and wrongdoing that's crowding all the newspaper headlines at the moment. It's hard not to be completely dismayed when you see what's coming out of the procession of commissions of enquiry that are underway. And it's clear that the sins that are coming to light certainly aren't restricted to any one group of people – people from all groups and walks of life seem to be involved. What does that mean for us as Kingdom ambassadors in our particular places of work?

Do you know that it's not our laws that are the problem? We have a raft of good legislation and codes that are meant to keep our society afloat: just some examples are our constitution, the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act, the Public Finance Management Act, the Companies Act and the King IV Code on good governance. Some of these are internationally recognised as being best in class. All of them, either explicitly or by implication, stress the need to be ethical in one's behaviour. However, as was pointed out in an article I recently read, people won't be ethical unless they understand *why* they need to be ethical in the first place.

The inadequacy of the law as a way of ensuring right behaviour isn't a new issue, from the perspective of a biblical worldview. *"The law simply shows us,"* wrote Paul in Romans 3:20, *"how sinful we are."* Even technical compliance with the law doesn't always address the real issues – consider how Jesus admonished the Pharisees in Luke 11:42 for carefully observing details of tithing but neglecting justice and the love of God. He always spoke to the heart, not just to compliance. He knew that real right behaviour needs a change of heart before a change of action. And He Himself, of course, is the remedy. As Paul reminds us in Romans 8:3: *"So God did what the law could not do. He sent His own Son...and declared an end to sin's control over us by giving His Son as a sacrifice for our sins."*

We cannot lose sight of the importance of this as we go about our workplace ministry. If we merely stress the importance of obeying the plethora of laws that are already in place, important though that is, we will be neglecting the most important thing – making sure that people's hearts are changed by a real encounter with the Saviour. It is undeniably challenging to work out how we do this in secular environments, and the way that we do it may look different in each case, but our motivation should always be the same. Point to Him.

On a final note, we should remember that our hearts *are* changed and that we are a new creation in Him. Thus, we *do* understand why we must be ethical in the first place. We know that holy living is an integral part of following Jesus Christ on a daily basis and so we should be able to show the results of a changed heart as well. We should, as Christians, make sure that our workplace conduct is above reproach so that people will see our good deeds and glorify our Father in Heaven. May that be our prayer each and every day.