

Dr. Laura?

The following letter has been circulated around the Internet and is allegedly a copy of one sent to Dr. Laura. I think it is an excellent starting point for discussion of the finer points of Torah submissiveness, although the author is clearly not trying to properly apply anything. I do not know if it is legitimate, or how Dr. Laura answered it. I have seen one or two responses to it, and I offer my own answer after each question.

Dear Dr. Laura:

Thank you for doing so much to educate people regarding God's Law. I have learned a great deal from your radio show, and I try to share that knowledge with as many people as I can. When someone tries to defend the homosexual lifestyle, for example, I simply remind them that Leviticus 18:22 clearly states it to be an abomination. End of debate. I do need some advice from you, however, regarding some of the specific Bible laws and how to follow them.

Dear Joe Christian,

It warms my heart that you really want to please your Father by trying to apply His Word in your life. I am not necessarily your "elder," but there are a few things I can think of that you need to add in to the equation to help you in your quest for a "just balance" (Prov. 11:1,2).

*A false balance is an abomination to the LORD, But a just weight is His delight.
When pride comes, then comes dishonor, But with the humble is wisdom.*

a) When I burn a bull on the altar as a sacrifice, I know it creates a pleasing odor for the Lord (Lev. 1:9). The problem is my neighbors. They claim the odor is not pleasing to them. Should I smite them?

For bull barbecues, the verse you cited (Lev. 1:9) is talking about a priest of the Aaronic persuasion offering the bull, and on the altar. Unless you are an Aaronic priest, and unless you are using a specific altar prescribed by God, I recommend that you cease and desist immediately. Remember the "strange fire" of Nadab and Abihu in Lev. 10 - although they were Aaron's sons they offered "strange fire" and ended up toast. The fire is supposed to consume the sacrifice, not the sacrifice-r. Apparently sacrifices will resume in the Millennial Kingdom, but I'm sure it will be according to specific directions given by The King (not Elvis). As far as the neighbor's complaint (why would anyone object to a barbecue?), there is no sanction for "smiting" them yourself (Ex. 21:14).

"If, however, a man acts presumptuously toward his neighbor, so as to kill him craftily, you are to take him even from My altar, that he may die.

Or refer to Lev. 19:15-17

'You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly. 'You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people, and you are not to act against the life of your neighbor; I am the LORD. 'You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him.

Exodus 18:15-27 prescribes the manner of resolving disputes (verses 25 & 26):

Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. They judged the people at all times; the difficult dispute they would bring to Moses, but every minor dispute they themselves would judge.

And, the injunction to "love your neighbors as yourself" (Lev. 19:18) is of particular comfort, especially if you are the neighbor.

'You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.

So if you want to persist, I suggest practicing your broken-field running.

b) I would like to sell my daughter into slavery, as sanctioned in Exodus 21:7. In this day and age, what do you think would be a fair price for her? She's 18 and starting University. Will the slave buyer continue to pay for her education by law?

There is no requirement anywhere in the Word for selling your daughter, only provisions for IF you do. You might have a little trouble convincing her to participate, and she might want to haul your butt before the elders. Again, adding in other relevant parts of the Word might help you with your decision (you can be sold also, sucker). Exodus 21:8-11 finishes describing the requirements, and particularly verse 10 says this is like marriage.

8 *"If she is displeasing in the eyes of her master who designated her for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He does not have authority to sell her to a foreign people because of his unfairness to her.*

9 *"If he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters.*

10 *"If he takes to himself another woman, he may not reduce her food, her clothing, or her conjugal rights.*

11 *"If he will not do these three things for her, then she shall go out for nothing, without payment of money.*

I know many women today would probably feel that their marriage is similar to slavery and would be glad to be treated THIS good.

c) I know that I am allowed no contact with a woman while she is in her period of menstrual uncleanness (Lev. 15:19-24). The problem is, how do I tell? I have tried asking, but most women take offense.

When considering whether to "lie" (pun intended) with a woman during her cycle you would do well to remember that you are supposed to be married to her first (Ex. 20:14).

"You shall not commit adultery."

This would solve the problem of "knowing" (another pun, I can't resist). Of course, if you persist in attempting to "know" a woman without being married to her several other laws come in to play, not the least of which is whether she should consider you "pork" and not have anything to do with YOU. Besides, these Laws are regarding ritual purity, and why would you have a problem with taking care of it by bathing? (The command only mentions being unclean till evening and being "baptized" or bathing.)

d) Lev. 25:44 states that I may indeed possess slaves, both male and female, provided they are purchased from neighboring nations. A friend of mine claims that this applies to Mexicans, but not Canadians. Can you clarify?....Why can't I own Canadians?

As for Lev. 25:44, again I point out that you "may" acquire slaves if you choose, of the "pagan" nations that surround you. Nowadays we call them "employees" (and I am sure quite a few of them think they are "slaves"). If you can convince a Canadian to sell himself to you (within the boundaries of all the other Laws), by all means go ahead. However, I remind you again that YOU could be considered a neighbor of HIS, and he might end up purchasing you instead. Cheap.

e) I have a neighbor who insists on working on the Sabbath. Exodus 35:2 clearly states he should be put to death. Am I morally obligated to kill him myself, or should this be a neighborhood improvement project?

Sorry, but you are NOT morally obligated to kill your neighbor if he violates Sabbath (Lev. 19:15-17, 33; quoted above for bull barbecues). Since you have not personally been given the right to try capital cases, this is best left to higher authorities. And I don't mean a lynch mob of your neighbors, either. God's grace doesn't give us the right to execute His people at our whim in our backyards. The adulterous woman in John 8 was in a similar situation, and I bet that what Jesus wrote on the ground were the provisions in the Law requiring 1) witnesses (Deut. 17:6-7; 19:15-19); 2) both parties (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22); and 3) elders (Ex. 18:15-27; quoted above for bull barbecues); so their mockery of a trial would be not be sanctioned by Him.

f) A friend of mine feels that even though eating shellfish is an abomination (Lev. 11:10), it is a lesser abomination than homosexuality. I don't agree. Can you settle this?

Whether or not one command is "greater" or "lesser" is not for us to decide (Mat. 5:19).

“Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

He gave them all and expects all to be followed. Jesus pointed out that the religious leaders should have done BOTH tithing of produce AND included the weightier matters of mercy and justice (Mat. 23:23).

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.

Case settled. As far as the shellfish, Mr. Christian, once again you are wrong and your friend is right. Do you even look up the references you are quoting? What version do you use anyway? Leviticus 11:10 only says that shellfish are “abhorrent” to you (NASB). Abhorrent just means to avoid them, they are “not food” (verses 1 & 13). Good grief, it is clear from the text that there is “food” and there is “not food.” Do you think we should go around just sticking any old thing in our mouths? There is a big difference between food and a perverted sexual practice. And God is very specific about the immorality. Some people are so lacking in understanding that He has to patiently spell out the difference between something they can put in their mouth because it’s healthy and something they can’t because it’s not.

g) Lev. 21:20 states that I may not approach the altar of God if I have a defect in my sight. I have to admit that I wear reading glasses. Does my vision have to be 20/20, or is there some wiggle room here? Would contact lenses help?

The vision issue mentioned in Lev. 21:20 applies to Aaron and his descendants, not to everyone. Unless he is your great-great-great-etc. grand daddy this ain't for you. And if it were you, we would have to talk about the absence of the Temple and the Sacrifice offered once for all. And since it is God Himself who made you, perhaps He had a purpose other than allowing you to go within the veil, and you should humbly submit to His will in this area. Or pray a lot and ask Him to heal you (unless you fit into Prov. 28:9):

He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, Even his prayer is an abomination.

h) Most of my male friends get their hair trimmed, including the hair around their temples, even though this is expressly forbidden by Lev.19:27. How should they die?

Joe, you really need to lighten up. I'm sorry, but I can't see in the Word where the death penalty should be incurred because of trimming hair in the manner you describe. Perhaps you could look up your reference and help me clarify this.

i) I know from Lev. 11:6-8 that touching the skin of a dead pig makes me unclean, but may I still play football if I wear gloves?

If you had read the text you quoted for pigskin, you would have noticed that Lev. 11:8 says that you are not to "*eat of their flesh, nor touch their carcasses.*" It seems the Word has answered you here. A football is not a carcass, and I think that even if you ate one it would only be considered "unclean" (not to mention painful when it came out).

j) My uncle has a farm. He violates Lev. 19:19 by planting two different crops in the same field, as does his wife by wearing garments made of two different kinds of thread (cotton/polyester blend). He also tends to curse and blaspheme a lot. Is it really necessary that we go to all the trouble of getting the whole town together to stone them? (Lev.24:10-16) Couldn't we just burn them to death at a private family affair like we do with people who sleep with their in-laws? (Lev. 20:14)

As for your last item, I think we have already established that you cannot arbitrarily take The Law into your own hands. If this person is part of the assembly, then bring him to the elders to see what should be done. Leviticus 19:19 does not appear to include the death penalty for this sort of behavior. But make sure you have your facts in order, and do not do anything that "seems right in your own eyes" (Num. 15:39,40)

"It shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, so as to do them and not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you played the harlot, so that you may remember to do all My commandments and be holy to your God.

See also Deut. 12:8.

"You shall not do at all what we are doing here today, every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes;

I know you have studied these things extensively, so I am confident you can help. Thank you again for reminding us that God's word is eternal and unchanging.

Your devoted disciple and adoring fan.

It seems, Joe, that you are quite the legalist, picking and choosing from selected texts that appear to give you permission to express the wickedness in your heart. This has also been a problem with others for a long time, most notably for the "hypocrites" dealt with by Jesus. I suggest you re-read large sections of the Word, putting your objections and those of your friends in context and examining your heart to see if you are trying to follow these things with "joy and a glad heart" (Deut. 28:47).

"Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things;

Otherwise, you may be visited with consequences for *"holding to a form of godliness, but denying the power of it"* (II Tim. 3:5).

With Regards,
Not Dr. Laura
(Bruce Bertram)