

The Upper and Lower Laws

By

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For centuries men have wrestled with the Biblical mandates of preaching the Gospel and providing for their families. *"He that does not provide for his own house is worse than an infidel"* permeates the lower law. *"He that putteth his hand to the plow and looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God"* permeates the upper law. Making a living and preaching the Gospel have often come into conflict. In this paper we will look at the breadth and depth of each law and the ramifications for infraction. These may be called The Laws of Work.

The lower law divides into four demands made by the Word upon a man in the course of his lifetime.

(1) The first of these is the curse of work. We say curse because its inception was not until man fell. *"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground"* (Gen. 3:19a). Man may have worked prior to this indictment but he was working with blessed not cursed ground. The former had no thorns and thistles; it needed little weeding. Now man finds himself compelled to produce his own food from an inferior earth filled with weeds. The sweat factor has come. In its most simple form, the lower law is inaugurated with the necessity of a man to work for food.

The lower law has additional caveats as man decides to share his life with a woman. At the time of the nuptials it has been practice from antiquity for a man to vow to (2) keep a woman. The word keep here refers not to the keeping of one's self only unto her as much as it does the providing of a woman's needs. This age old vow infers first his protecting her from the elements with a home. It also implies a protection from invading armies, rape, pillaging, etc. But in its finer sense it refers to the meeting of her needs from finances to spiritual leadership. Thus the man takes on a second lower law in marriage to provide for the needs of another as well as his himself. With the coming of children by this union his responsibilities are automatically extended to the children. (3) "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Eph 6:4) Nurture here may include chastening. However, in its simplest form to nurture anything is to provide the elements necessary for its growth and maturity. This includes many natural as well as spiritual items; it denotes a provider.

The lower law is further expanded by the commandment, (4) "Honor thy father and mother." The concept is that a man provide for his parents even as they have provided for him. It is the ancient rule of families caring for each other. It is noted as the first commandment with promise meaning it carries an implied warning to health and longevity.

"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (1 Tim.5:8)

Note how Paul expands the concept to include the extended family with the words, *"provide not for his own."* Then he separates that company from the man's children by the phrase, *"especially for those of his own house."* He is declaring that a man may have responsibilities to those not under his roof including father and mother, sisters, brothers, etc. This includes the wife's extended family as well as those on his side because God has declared the two one should they be in the household of like faith.

Thus the lower law may be summarized as follows:

1. Man must provide for his food, clothing, and shelter.
2. A married man must provide food, clothing, shelter for himself and his wife.
3. A married man with children must extend food, clothing, shelter to his children
4. A man must protect his and his wife's extended family as they have protected them.

When the lower law is compared to the upper, one is immediately struck by the fact that the absence of the first invalidates the second. There is no upper law without the lower. *"He has denied the faith."* In short, the failure to observe the lower law has removed the individual from the faith and made their preaching of the Gospel null and void. It is important to note that he has not just left preaching the faith; he has denied THE FAITH meaning he has denied the Gospel's right to have influence in his heart. He has removed the Gospel from having access and effectiveness in his life. Such a person is not pulpit material.

Thus, a man who will not obey both laws simultaneously must chose between being an infidel by not working for his family or putting his hand to the plow, looking back and being unfit for the Kingdom of God. As neither choice is plausible, God has placed His man where he must be ever bi-vocational or reach the place that his ministry financially carries him. Few people understand that a call to the Gospel is not a freedom from work. It is the greatest avocation of a lifetime. It is what the old-timers referred to as the 'burden' of the call. It carries additional responsibilities. However, the presence of the second is not an abdication of the first. As with most things God does, the upper law never erases the lower law. In this sense it is a blessed curse in that it precious to be chosen and grievous to have to produce both simultaneously. It is this dichotomous demand that causes so many men to be called and not chose to be chosen.

Assuming that the lower laws have been met, the upper law provides for a man the greatest privilege of a lifetime. There is no higher task than to be trusted to open the sacred, old Book. The call is without repentance; God never revokes it. Thus, to answer is to lay a second tier of responsibility on a single life. Also, the responsibility shifts from the natural to the spiritual. The man must be able to handle the tasks of life and talk with God - often at the same time. Time is too short to abdicate one for the other. Though God is not work, He can and will talk to us while we work, drive, eat even bathe. The idea that one must climb on a mountain far from the world for great lapses of time is absolutely impractical, if not impossible, for the average pastor. God knows where we live; He allowed this present crowded world, and He is able to speak to us while we are in it.

The danger with the higher law is that it over time may be viewed just like any other work. It becomes vocational, not spiritual. Many men who never sin leave the pastorate in their mind many years before their retirement by viewing what they do as 'just another vocation.' The Gospel Plow is a unique job. Some of those unusual characteristics are listed below.

The man --

1. It requires absolute spirituality and he is the gatekeeper of that venue.
2. The bearer must do what is good for people not what is good to them.
3. He alone has the blueprint, the vision, for his ministry. It is his duty to publish it and write it plain.
4. He will not be compensated commensurate with his worth.
5. People will not understand him because he views from a different hill than they do.
6. It is terribly lonely.
7. Everyone will hold him at arm's length not because they dislike him but because they fear him. This is good and right. After all, he watches for their soul and he knows the souls of his people though he would never tell.
8. He carries a thousand secrets to his grave and never shares.
9. He dies earlier than other men because he has done two jobs. There is a lot of mileage that gets laid on that horse.
10. He loves what he is doing and lives above the daily rise and fall of his people's problems.
11. He hears and he cares and he prays but he does not collapse with their struggles lest there be no one to pull them out.
12. He prays and cries in secret and it is good that people do not hear his prayers because they would not understand.
13. He wrestles with spiritual giants of darkness for his people and rejoices when they emerge victorious and never tells them he broke the curse.
14. He stands alone sometimes between sickness and death, poverty and ruin or faith and despair and prays till he feels ready to drop and keeps on praying.
15. He comes to the brink of quitting a thousand times and always tells God he won't because it is the deepest thing working in him.

His wife -

1. His wife must bear the reality that she is not first in his life. He has an obsession --the ministry and he has a mistress - the church. And if she would live with him the best she can hope for is number three.
2. She does it willingly because God has given her a special man, one that can change their world.
3. She carries with him all the burdens she can and has the good sense to know when he is wrestling with the giants and she must get out of the way.
4. She does not expect him to do for her any spiritual task she can do for herself. She knows other men fight with neighbors; he fights with legends.
5. She knows his relationship must be first in person with God and she trusts him enough to tell her all he can.
6. She knows that there is a room reserved in his life that she cannot enter and she, unlike the schoolgirl, doesn't try to enter.
7. She prays for him especially when it seems he is failing.
8. She has seen superman in jockey shorts and she never tells his secrets.
9. When he fails she prays and makes sure no one will ever know.
10. She guards his ministry from wolves, negative opinion, prying saints and most of all, the world. She does nothing to touch the anointing.
11. She places her ministry second because she knows if she promotes the man of God there will be more than enough for her to do.
12. She does research for him, writes for him, makes calls for him and does visitation and never gets nor expects credit.
13. She tells him when his sermons are good and says nothing when they are not effective because she knows he is already feeling like a failure and replaying every word.
14. She mothers him when it must be because even superman needs a Lois once in a while.
15. She lays him into the earth and walks away alone because most pastors' wives spend the last twelve years alone and she thanks God for every moment she had with this strange, wonderful man.