

To Be Or Not To Be A Legalist . . . Is There Really A Question?

I have been hearing the term “legalist” more and more as of late. Maybe I’m just getting out more, I don’t know. When a member of the Lord’s church is labeled a “legalist”, just what is being said? Should we be offended if we are labeled a “legalist”?

What, exactly, is a legalist? According to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, legalism is defined as “Strict, literal adherence to the law or to a particular code, as of religion or morality.” So, when a member of the Lord’s church is labeled a “legalist” it is being said that he strictly adheres to a literal interpretation of the Word of God.

There are many within the Lord’s church who, under the guise of “loving their neighbor” (Matt 22:37-39) are compromising what the Bible says. Since the Bible says that we are to love, then we are to lovingly accept whatever others see as the truth, whether it is Biblically based or not. For instance, in Eph 5:19 we are commanded to sing and make melody in our hearts. It is considered “legalistic” to say that instrumental music in worship is wrong because it is not authorized. Since others don’t understand that that verse only authorizes melody in the heart, then we should let them continue to worship in error.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:21 that *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”* We must know His will and follow it in order to get to heaven. Take a look at the following passage:

Joh 2:13-16

- (13) And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,*
- (14) And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:*
- (15) And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;*
- (16) And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.*

I am sure the moneychangers thought that they were doing right. Did Jesus lovingly accept what they were doing even though it was wrong? Hardly.

If strictly adhering to the Word makes me a legalist, I’ll gladly wear that label. I’ve been called worse.

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