

Letter to a Protestant Evangelical

(Excerpt from What Jesus Meant by Garry Wills)

Thank you for doing so much to educate people regarding God's law. I have learned a great deal from you, 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 (***You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.***) clearly states it to be an abomination – end of debate. I do need some advice from you, however, regarding some other elements of God's laws and how to follow them.

1. Leviticus 25:44 states that I may possess slaves, both male and female, provided they are purchased from neighboring nations. (***As for your male and female slaves whom you may have-- you may acquire male and female slaves from the pagan nations that are around you.***) A friend of mine claims that this applies to Mexicans but not Canadians. Can you clarify? Why can't I own Canadians?
2. I would like to sell my daughter into slavery, as sanctioned in Exodus 21:7. (***And if a man sells his daughter as a female slave, she is not to go free as the male slaves do.***) In this day and age, what do you think would be a fair price for her?
3. I know that I am allowed no contact with a woman while she is in her period of menstrual uncleanness (Lev. 15:19-24). (***When a woman has a discharge, if her discharge in her body is blood, she shall continue in her menstrual impurity for seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening. Everything also on which she lies during her menstrual impurity shall be unclean, and everything on which she sits shall be unclean. And anyone who touches her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. And whoever touches any thing on which she sits shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. Whether it be on the bed or on the thing on which she is sitting, when he touches it, he shall be unclean until evening. And if a man actually lies with her, so that her menstrual impurity is on him, he shall be unclean seven days, and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean.***) The problem is: how do I tell? I have tried asking, but most women take offense.
4. When I burn a bull on the altar as a sacrifice, I know it creates a pleasing odor to the Lord (Lev. 1:9). (***Its entrails, however, and its legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall offer up in smoke all of it on the altar for a burnt offering,***

an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD.) The problem is my neighbors. They claim the odor is not pleasing to them. Should I smite them?

5. I have a neighbor who insists on working on the Sabbath. Exodus 35:2 clearly states he should be put to death. ***(For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy day, a sabbath of complete rest to the LORD; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death.)*** Am I morally obligated to kill him myself, or should I ask the police to do it?
6. A friend of mine feels that even though eating shellfish is an abomination (Lev. 11:10-12), ***(But whatever is in the seas and in the rivers, that do not have fins and scales among all the teeming life of the water, and among all the living creatures that are in the water, they are detestable things to you, and they shall be abhorrent to you; you may not eat of their flesh, and their carcasses you shall detest. Whatever in the water does not have fins and scales is abhorrent to you.)*** it is a lesser abomination than homosexuality. I don't agree. Can you settle this? Are there degrees of abomination?
7. Leviticus 21:17-20 states that I may not approach the altar of God if I have a defect in my sight. ***(Speak to Aaron, saying, 'No man of your offspring throughout their generations who has a defect shall approach to offer the bread of his God. For no one who has a defect shall approach: a blind man, or a lame man, or he who has a disfigured face, or any deformed limb, or a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, or a hunchback or a dwarf, or one who has a defect in his eye or eczema or scabs or crushed testicles.)*** I have to admit that I wear reading glasses. Does my vision have to be 20/20 or is there some wiggle room here?
8. Most of my male friends get their hair trimmed, including the hair around their temples, even though this is expressly forbidden by Leviticus 19:27. ***(You shall not round off the side-growth of your heads, nor harm the edges of your beard.)*** How should they die?
9. I know from Leviticus 11:4-8 that touching the skin of a dead pig makes me unclean, ***(Nevertheless, you are not to eat of these, among those which chew the cud, or among those which divide the hoof: the camel, for though it chews cud, it does not divide the hoof, it is unclean to you. Likewise, the rock badger, for though it chews cud, it does not divide the hoof, it is unclean to you; the rabbit also, for though it chews cud, it does not divide the hoof, it is unclean to you; and the pig, for though it divides the hoof, thus making a split hoof, it does not chew cud, it is unclean to you. You shall not eat of their flesh nor***

touch their carcasses; they are unclean to you.) but may I still play football if I wear gloves?

10. My uncle has a farm. He violates Leviticus 19:19 (***You are to keep my statutes. You shall not breed together two kinds of your cattle; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor wear a garment upon you of two kinds of material mixed together.***) 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)? (***Now the son of an Israelite woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the sons of Israel; and the Israelite woman's son and a man of Israel struggled with each other in the camp. And the son of the Israelite woman blasphemed the Name and cursed. So they brought him to Moses. . . . And they put him in custody so that the command of the LORD might be made clear to them. Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Bring the one who has cursed outside the camp, and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head; then let all the congregation stone him. And you shall speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'If anyone curses his God, then he shall bear his sin. Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. The alien as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.'"***) 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)? (***If there is a man who marries a woman and her mother, it is immorality; both he and they shall be burned with fire, that there may be no immorality in your midst.***)

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