

Leviticus 19 .1-2, 15-18 (NRSV)

1 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:
2 Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.

15 You shall not render an unjust judgement; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbour. 16 You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbour: I am the Lord.
17 You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbour, or you will incur guilt yourself.
18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord.

Psalm 1 (NRSV)

1 Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers;
2 but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night.
3 They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.
4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
6 for the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Leviticus 19 .1-2, 15-18 (The Message)

1-2 God spoke to Moses: "Speak to the congregation of Israel. Tell them, Be holy because I, God, your God, am holy.

15 "Don't pervert justice. Don't show favoritism to either the poor or the great. Judge on the basis of what is right.

16 "Don't spread gossip and rumours.

"Don't just stand by when your neighbour's life is in danger. I am God.

17 "Don't secretly hate your neighbour. If you have something against him, get it out into the open; otherwise you are an accomplice in his guilt.

18 "Don't seek revenge or carry a grudge against any of your people.

"Love your neighbour as yourself. I am God.

Psalm 1 (The Message)

1
How well God must like you—
you don't hang out at Sin Saloon,
you don't slink along Dead-End Road,
you don't go to Smart-Mouth College.

2-3

Instead you thrill to God's Word,
you chew on Scripture day and night.
You're a tree replanted in Eden,
bearing fresh fruit every month,
Never dropping a leaf,
always in blossom.

4-5

You're not at all like the wicked,
who are mere windblown dust—
Without defence in court,
unfit company for innocent people.

6

God charts the road you take.
The road they take is Skid Row. Bow
before the beauty of God,
Then to your knees—everyone worship!

**1 Thessalonians 2 .1-8
(NRSV)**

1 You yourselves know, brothers and sisters, that our coming to you was not in vain, 2 but though we had already suffered and been shamefully maltreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition. 3 For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery, 4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts. 5 As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed; 6 nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others, 7 though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. 8 So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.

**1 Thessalonians 2 .1-8
(The Message)**

1-2 So, friends, it's obvious that our visit to you was no waste of time. We had just been given rough treatment in Philippi, as you know, but that didn't slow us down. We were sure of ourselves in God, and went right ahead and said our piece, presenting God's Message to you, defiant of the opposition.

3-5 God tested us thoroughly to make sure we were qualified to be trusted with this Message. Be assured that when we speak to you we're not after crowd approval—only God approval. Since we've been put through that battery of tests, you're guaranteed that both we and the Message are free of error, mixed motives, or hidden agendas. We never used words to butter you up. No one knows that better than you. And God knows we never used words as a smoke screen to take advantage of you.

6-8 Even though we had some standing as Christ's apostles, we never threw our weight around or tried to come across as important, with you or anyone else. We weren't aloof with you. We took you just as you were. We were never patronising, never condescending, but we cared for you the way a mother cares for her children. We loved you dearly. Not content to just pass on the Message, we wanted to give you our hearts. And we did.

Matthew 22 .34-46 (NRSV)

34 When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, 35 and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him.

36 'Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?' 37 He said to him, ' "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." 38 This is the greatest and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.'

41 Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question:

42 'What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?' They said to him, 'The son of David.' 43 He said to them, 'How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying,

44 "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet' "?

45 If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?' 46 No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Matthew 22 .34-46 (The Message)

34-36 When the Pharisees heard how he had bested the Sadducees, they gathered their forces for an assault. One of their religion scholars spoke for them, posing a question they hoped would show him up: "Teacher, which command in God's Law is the most important?"

37-40 Jesus said, "'Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence.' This is the most important, the first on any list. But there is a second to set alongside it: 'Love others as well as you love yourself.' These two commands are pegs; everything in God's Law and the Prophets hangs from them."

David's Son and Master

41-42 As the Pharisees were regrouping, Jesus caught them off balance with his own test question: "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said, "David's son."

43-45 Jesus replied, "Well, if the Christ is David's son, how do you explain that David, under inspiration, named Christ his 'Master'?"

God said to my Master,

"Sit here at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool."

"Now if David calls him 'Master,' how can he at the same time be his son?"

46 That stumped them, literalists that they were. Unwilling to risk losing face again in one of these public verbal exchanges, they quit asking questions for good.