

The Law of LOVE

The Law of Love translates to, "Treat others as you would like to be treated." When we operate with love, we meet each situation with the right spirit.

BY JERRY LAZARUS



Is lying ever justified?" a friend asked me. A vexing question indeed.

Consider Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, the story of Jean Valjean. While on parole, Valjean steals silverware from a sympathetic and considerate bishop who had hosted him for a night. The police catch Valjean and bring him to the bishop, saying: "Your Reverence, we found your silver on this man." To the surprise of the officer and the astonishment of Valjean, the bishop answers, "Why not? I gave it to him. I am glad to see you again, Jean. Why did you not take the candlesticks, too?" Then the bishop hands Valjean the silver candlesticks. After the police left, the bishop encourages Valjean to use the silver to start a new

life. Valjean succeeds in doing just that. He creates a new identity for himself, becomes a successful businessman, benefactor, and mayor of his town. He is known for his kindness, and his service to others is exemplary.

Did the bishop lie? In the strictest sense of the word, yes. Is it justifiable? *Les Misérables* is a fictional account, you might argue. Very well then, I will recount other stories, all true and just as telling.

I once heard a story on the radio, similar to the story of Jean Valjean. A man broke into a church building, and was caught by the police. To the dismay of the police, the pastor refused to press charges; instead he offered the thief employment! The pastor's mercy

transformed the thief, who spoke on the radio saying, "That was five years ago. I've never encountered such compassion." Working alongside the pastor, he has been helping others turn from crime.

During Nazi Germany, some benevolent people hid Jews, and lied to the authorities about it. Helping Jews was punishable by death. Official accounts indicate 700 Polish citizens lost their lives while trying to help their Jewish neighbors.

It is WWII and a group of prisoners of war in a Japanese prison camp are engaged in construction work at the campsite. At the end of one workday, the shovels are tallied, but one is missing. "Furious, the captors insist that the shovel be returned and that the culprit who hid it reveal himself." Since no one took responsibility, "the guard in charge shouts, 'All die, all die!'" and he prepares for a general execution. "Then one man steps forward and announces that he took the shovel. In a fit of rage, the head guard clubs the man to death with the butt of his rifle. The work party trudges back to camp, carrying the man's body and all the tools. When they arrive in the camp, the shovels are counted again. The first count had been in error; there never had been a missing shovel."

What do all these stories have in common? They demonstrate acts of wisdom born of love. My friend, nodding in agreement, wanted to know if there is a law behind such wisdom. Yes, there is. It is the Law of Love – "Love thy neighbor as thyself." In the above stories, the Law of Love translates to: treat others as you would like to be treated. And when we operate with love, we meet each situation with the right spirit.

Should the bishop have confirmed that indeed Valjean stole the silver? Should the prisoner of war have maintained his innocence through silence? Was it wrong for people to have protected Jews from the Nazi government? Should the pastor have pressed charges after being robbed? In 2 Corinthians

Following the spirit of the law – love, mercy, kindness, compassion – transforms a thief and an ex-convict, compels a prisoner of war to sacrifice his life so that others may live, and motivates some to risk their lives to save the persecuted.

3:6 we read: “the letter kills, but the spirit gives life.” Instead of following the letter of the law, these people chose the spirit of the law – love, mercy, kindness, compassion. Doing so transforms a thief and an ex-convict, compels a prisoner of war to sacrifice his life so that others may live, and motivates some to risk their lives to save the persecuted.

In the story of *Les Misérables*, police inspector Javert obsessively pursues Valjean, who had broken parole to start his life anew. Javert is solely focused on the Law of Justice, believing that a crime can only be atoned through punishment. On the one hand, Javert’s intense sense of duty to uphold the letter of the law confounds him, and on the other hand he is overwhelmed by Valjean’s repeated acts of mercy and

compassion. In the end, unable to reconcile the two, he commits suicide. Valjean, living the spirit of the law, finds life, but Javert, driven by the letter of the law, meets with death.

Jesus illustrates the spirit of the law in many instances. According to the Mosaic Law, the punishment for adultery was death

by stoning. Jesus asks those who are about to throw stones at a woman taken in adultery: “Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?” (John 8:1-5) Jesus finds a better way – the way of forgiveness. For her transgression, Jesus neither condemns nor condones her, but encourages her to “sin no more.” No one stones her, and she is transformed by the simple but wise act of mercy.

During the time of Jesus, violation of the Sabbath was also punished with death. The Sabbath is a day of rest, a day that is “sanctified to the Lord.” The Jewish orthodoxy had a literal understanding of this law, but Jesus had a different notion. Once “Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry,

and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, ‘Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!’ But He said to them, ‘Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?... But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless.’”

To immediately demonstrate this principle, Jesus went into the synagogue. There he saw a man with a “withered hand.” The Pharisees asked Jesus, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” He replied, “What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” Then he said to the man with the withered hand, “Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other.” (Matthew 12:1-13)

Jesus was not against the law, for he



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said, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.” (Matthew 5:17) However, he questioned the understanding and motive behind the practice of the law: “Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law?” (John 7:19) The Jewish authorities were just as confounded as Javert in the seeming contradictions. How could Jesus fulfill the law of Moses that says not to work on Sabbath, and yet heal on that day? Why did he forgive the adulterous woman while the law says she should be stoned to death? Cayce addressed the paradox: “Remember those things that have been given; that in the letter of the law you are guilty; in the spirit of the law; no!” (254-89) In the letter of the law you are “bound” and “afraid,” but in the spirit of the law you are “made free.” (257-229, 1717-1) Jesus showed the truest understanding of the law, “For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” (John 1:17) Hence, the law itself is not the problem. We must seek for the spirit and the wisdom to correctly apply it.

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My friend had a final question: “How can we be prepared for similar situations?” We can speculate endlessly on different scenarios and the how’s of them, but speculations of what might be or imagining future scenarios are futile. Such can be a drain of our energy and an unwise use of the mind. In his Epistle to Timothy, Paul warns him not to “give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification...” Instead he encourages him to “love from a pure heart, from a good conscience and from sincere faith...” (Timothy 1:4-5) Each circumstance requires a person to answer according to his own conscience. We can draw upon the counsel of Jesus on the broad principle of how to respond to situations in life. He told his disciples that after his death, they will be brought before “rulers and kings” to be questioned. He advised, “But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.” (Mark 13:11) And that is

exactly what happened. Cayce told one person that if she lived a life of loving service, “He [Christ] will show thee the way.” She need not concern herself or worry about the future, “He gives that necessary day by day; and as to whether ye shall sell or invest, whether ye shall trade or whether ye shall gather more and more, this will be shown thee.” (610-1) We are to “live and move and have our being” in God by living the truths. Cayce calls this anchoring in the Christ ideal. This will assure us of what we shall speak and what we shall do in any given circumstance.

Now to answer the question: is lying justified? This must be answered within each soul – “As to whether one meets [a situation] in the letter of the law or in mercy, in grace, becomes the choice of the entity.” (5001-1) Such choices and decisions are personal. It is the intent and purpose of the heart that counts. ☸

JERRY LAZARUS is a spiritual counselor and speaker, living in Durham, North Carolina. He has a master’s degree in religion and meditation, and leads lectures and workshops in dreams, meditation, astrology, and other spiritual topics. He is *Venture Inward’s* dream columnist.

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