

## Law, Gospel, and What?

This skit and devotion are designed to help pre-teens and teens understand the difference between Law and Gospel and why God gave us both. While it takes a humorous tone, the intention is to help students make these important distinctions and apply them to their lives.

CHARACTERS *(Can be either male or female)*

FONZO- has a skewed view of gospel

ERNA- a hard core advocate for law

ZELLA- The level headed friend

Supplies: stuffed cat

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*(ERNA is on stage and FONZO enters, carrying a stuffed kitten)*

FONZO: *(To ERNA)* Look, I got a new pet!

ERNA: Awww! What's its name?

FONZO: What?

ERNA: I said what's its name?

FONZO: What?

ERNA: *(yelling)* I said WHAT'S ITS NAME?

FONZO: I know! His name is "What?" with a question mark, because his name is a question.

ERNA: *(shakes head)* I can't believe you adopted a cat.

FONZO: Oh, I didn't adopt him, I stole him.

ERNA: *(very upset)* WHAT!?

FOZNO: *(holds up his cat)* Yes, he's right here. Isn't he cute?

ERNA: No, no. I mean, you actually STOLE a cat!? How could you!

FONZO: It was pretty easy actually, I mean no one was looking, Ms. Martinez just left her new litter out-

ERNA: No, like *morally* how could you?

FONZO: Oh. Well, I knew Ms. Martinez would forgive me, so I just did it.

ERNA: That's not how things work!! You can't just do whatever you want, banking on the fact that you'll be forgiven!!

FONZO: *(as if obvious)* Uh, yeah, I can. And clearly, I did. Life is a game to see how many "get out of jail free" cards you can get with a simple "I forgive you."

ERNA: We have serious important RULES and LAWS. They're there for a reason!

FONZO: Yeah, to be a total killjoy.

ERNA: *(furious)* WHAT!?

FONZO: *(holds up kitten)* Yeah, like I said, he's right here. Do you wanna hold him?

ERNA: No!!! I don't want to hold your stolen kitten! I want to return him to his REAL owner where he BELONGS. It's people like you that need to feel the hard-core consequences of their actions, no exceptions and no mercy!

FONZO: Wow. That was pretty harsh and mean. But you know what? I forgive you. Now doesn't that feel good to be forgiven?

ERNA: It would feel *good* if people like *you* would learn to simply follow the rules all the time like you are supposed to do.

FONZO: And what better way than through kindness and forgiveness?

ERNA: Clearly that is NOT working out for you if you just stole a WHOLE animal.

FONZO: Are you saying that I could steal just half an animal?

ERNA: No! The point is, people like YOU need to be knocked upside the head with the letter of the law and serious consequences for actions or you'll never learn!!

FONZO: And people like YOU need to feel the warmth and grace of a compassionate heart and the nice feeling of starting over with a clean slate.

ZELLA: *(enters)* Hey guys, what's up?

ERNA: *(to ZELLA)* I need you to do something for me.

ZELLA: What?

FONZO: *(holds up his cat)* What? Is right here.

ZELLA: *(confused)* Wait what?

FONZO: *(shows cat to ZELLA)* He's right here. Isn't he just the most precious?

ERNA: *(coming between FONZO and ZELLA)* Ignore him. I need you to tell HIM that people can't do whatever they want and then use forgiveness to get out of the consequences!

FONZO: Oh yeah? Well, please tell HER that using rules and laws to discipline and punish just leaves crushed souls!

ZELLA: Whoa. I think you guys took two totally different extremes. It's true rules, laws and God's commandments are all extremely important.

ERNA: *(to FONZO)* Ha!

ZELLA: But so is forgiveness, compassion, and mercy because of Jesus.

FONZO: *(to ERNA, smugly)* See?

ZELLA: God gave us His law not to stop us from having fun or keep us from doing what we want to do. God gave us His law so that we would know our broken, sinful nature goes right to our heart. His law protects us and others from our sinful selves and help guide us to live lives of faith toward God and the people around us.

ERNA: Because God's laws ARE important.

FONZO: *(to ERNA)* But not even you could follow all of God's laws perfectly. Maybe you won't take a cat, but I bet if I followed you around, I could find tons of things you do wrong every day. Wouldn't like that, now, would you?

ERNA: Well...

ZELLA: Exactly. The law is impossible for us to follow on our own, no matter how hard we try. It shows us how much we need a savior! If we didn't have forgiveness because of Jesus' death and resurrection, we'd be crushed by all the ways we don't measure up to God's standards. God has wiped our slate clean in Jesus, and in repentance, we can always return to that clean slate through faith in Him.

FONZO: Nothing better than a clean slate.

ERNA: Okay...I guess I see how the law helps us see our need for a savior. But you shouldn't take advantage of God's grace.

ZELLA: Yes, we sometimes call that cheap grace. We can't just throw out God's rules. Jesus didn't die on the cross for you to sin all you want with a halfhearted "I'm sorry" knowing He'll

forgive you. Forgiveness is not a pass to sin more. Instead it gives us freedom to fight against sin, knowing Jesus has taken away your sin in His death. If you take away God's rules, you take away the reason for Jesus' cross.

FONZO: *(looks down)* Oh.

ERNA: Maybe we both kinda had it wrong.

FONZO: *(soberly)* Yeah. I think I should go return What?

ZELLA: What?

FONZO: Exactly. What? Isn't really mine. And I should apologize to Ms. Martinez, too. This time for real, though, like I mean it. Not just to get out of trouble.

ERNA: I'm proud of you.

FONZO: Yeah. You know I don't have enough money really for a cat, but I COULD buy a goldfish. Is *(makes yodeling noises)* a good name for a girl goldfish or maybe *(makes siren sounds)* for a boy?

ZELLA: ...Like those are the names?

FONZO: Obviously.

ERNA: I think we have to get you one of those name dictionaries.

### Devotion

*'What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." '*

Romans 7:7

*'What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. '*

Romans 6:1-4

*'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. '*

2 Corinthians 5:17

Do you tend to be more like Fonzo or like Erna? There are times when each of us leans too far one way or the other. Maybe you are tempted to just continue doing things that you know are wrong and figure you will ask for forgiveness later. Or maybe you walk around looking down on other people who break God's law. Sometimes it is easier to be self-righteous, condemning other people's sins, rather than thinking about our own. It's a hard balance! Law and Gospel are both completely necessary; we can't have one without the other.

Read Romans 6:14. It is impossible for us to follow all of God's laws perfectly. Sometimes we feel like Fonzo, and just give up trying. We just do what we want, especially when it just feels like the law is there to block us from what we want or make our lives harder. Being a human in a sinful world can be difficult, but these God's laws are there for a reason. Rather than a barrier, God gave us them to show us where we have done wrong so we can repent and then guide us to live better, fuller lives.

Read Romans 7:7. The law is there to help show us our sin and our broken condition. It is a gift from God. Because we can't measure up to His laws, Christ is always there to forgive. In Christ, because of His perfect life and death in our place, we have a clean slate. Whenever we ask for forgiveness, God is gracious to us because of Jesus and forgives us all our sins. No matter how many times we mess up, we still live under the Baptismal umbrella of God's forgiveness. That doesn't mean we should take advantage of God's mercy as a license to sin. 'Shall we sin that grace may much more abound? By no means!'

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. Jesus died for us so that we could be forgiven and through faith have eternal life. In Baptism, the Holy Spirit makes us new creations in Christ, sons and daughters of God who desire to do God's will and keep His commandments. We want to follow God's law, not just to better ourselves, but to also honor Christ and be a reflection of Christ to those around us.

### Discussion Questions

What are current temptations and laws that are hard to follow in your generation today?

Why does it seem more appealing to break God's law even though we know it's not good for us?

What does it mean to *truly* repent?

When have you leaned to hard on the law for yourself or someone else? How did that leave you feeling?

What does being a reflection of Christ by being forgiven and following His commandments as "New Creations" look like to you?

### Prayer

*Dear heavenly Father, thank you for giving me your law, even though I don't always like following it or find it difficult at times; I know they are there to protect me. Help me to follow them to the best of my ability. Thank you for forgiving me unconditionally and for giving me the strength and integrity to stay on my path of repentance. In your name, Amen.*

