



## Religious Loopholes

Mark 1:15; 2:27; 3:21–22;  
6:54–56; 7:1–13; 8:31

**The Big Idea:** When we opt for loopholes and workarounds, we feel better, but people get hurt.

**The Bottom Line:** What does **love** require of you?

### Introduction:

One thing nobody had to teach us was to look for and exploit...

#### Loopholes

Loopholes are ways around the rules that technically don't break the rules.

"Mom, you said be home by 9:00. You didn't say 9:00 p.m."

When "religious" folks exploit loopholes in their religion, we call them...

#### Hypocrites

If you don't like religious hypocrites, you and Jesus have something in common.

### Review:

In this series, we have been speaking about a story that should have died in Nero's Rome, but it didn't. It is the story of Jesus of Nazareth as told by Simon Peter dictated to and recorded by John Mark. It came to us known as the Gospel of Mark. Eventually, this first-century document was included in the Bible, but Mark wasn't writing the Bible. He was simply documenting Peter's experience as an eyewitness testimony of Jesus. Peter summarizes Jesus' message this way:

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*"The time has come! The KINGDOM OF GOD is near.  
REPENT and BELIEVE the good news!"*  
-Mark 1:15

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Last week, we discovered Jesus did not get angry when he did not get his way. Jesus got angry when religion got in the way – when people used his Father’s words to hurt those his Father loved. Then, Jesus dropped the big one:

Mark 2:27; “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”

**Tension:**

God loves you more than his rules. To illustrate this, Jesus healed people on the Sabbath. This incensed the **religious** leaders of his day.

His mother and brothers said, “He is out of his mind (Mark 3:21).”

The religious leaders said, “He is possessed (Mark 3:22).”

When the news of the radical rabbi reached Jerusalem, the Pharisees sent a delegation to find out more about him.

**Truth:**

Read: Mark 7:1-13 and Mark 8:31.

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What about you?

Have you come up with your own loopholes or way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions?

Do you ever try to figure out how close you can get to sin without actually sinning?

Do you believe there is a ritual that makes you right with God (confession) that removes your responsibility to make it right with others?

Are you inclined to believe that confessing your sin to God makes things right between you and God, **regardless** of whether or not you’ve made things right with the person you sinned against?

Do you feel more guilty about missing mass or missing church than mistreating someone at work?

### **Conclusion:**

When we fall short, let's not make excuses. Let's make apologies.

If you have been playing games and hiding behind would you be willing to be done with that and be honest with God? Will you throw up your hands in surrender and follow Jesus? After all...

“The **time** has come! The KINGDOM OF GOD is **near**.  
REPENT and BELIEVE the **good** news!”  
-- Mark 1:15

### **Application:**

You are never far from God.

Will you turn in the direction of this invitation and follow?

Will you put your faith in the fact that God has sent someone on your behalf?

You are never far from God because his love is never far from you.

What does **LOVE** require of you?

### **Next Steps:**

- Memorize Mark 7:8.
- Answer this question constantly: What does love require of you?
- Repent and believe the good news.

### **Discussion questions for group this week:**

1. **What does this teach me about God?**

2. **What does this teach me about me?**

**3. How do I apply this to my life?**

**4. If I could ask a question about this it would be....**