

# Cut to the heart of things!

Endeavor to to present yourself approved to God, a workman with no need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

The key to understanding the Bible is to know the difference between Law and Gospel. These two will be found in every Lutheran sermon and study of Scripture, because they are opposite poles, yet they are completely dependent on each other.

The Law focuses on our works and God's expectations. The Law shows us that we have not lived up to God's expectations, and that we are, by ourselves, completely lost. The Gospel, though, focuses on God's action on our behalf, especially Jesus' death on the cross in our place, fulfilling the Law for us on all counts. The Law can never save; the Gospel is the only thing that can save.

So while it's easy enough to demonstrate how this is important for Christian doctrine (teachings), how does it play out "in the real world?" The key is understanding that Christian doctrine was specifically given to us to apply to the real world. After all, God created the real world!

The distinction between Law & Gospel applies to every relationship, whether it be a marriage, friendship, or parenting. If your child is hurting, she needs comfort (gospel). If your friend is hurting himself, he needs to be encouraged to stop the destructive behavior (law), and once the he realizes his error, he needs forgiveness (gospel).

If you remember this distinction and apply it to your relationships, you'll find that you'll know much better the right thing to say in any situation.

And if you don't, Jesus still forgives you. That's the Gospel.