

Life Hacks 2: More Things To Live By

Opener: Remember from last week that a “life hack” is a simple tip or technique that increases productivity and efficiency. Life hacks are all about eliminating life’s frustrations. What’s an example of a life hack?

Scripture and Discussion Questions. This week we look at additional laws in Exodus 21-23 that follow the 10 Commandments. Each one helped the Israelites deal with life’s challenges. Let’s look at a few of them.

1. The Death Penalty and Assault. “Anyone who strikes a person with a fatal blow is to be put to death. ¹³ However, if it is not done intentionally, but God lets it happen, they are to flee to a place I will designate. ¹⁴ But if anyone schemes and kills someone deliberately, that person is to be taken from my altar and put to death.” Exodus 21:12-14

- The question is as old as human history and as fresh as today’s headlines: Should there be a death penalty? OT law definitely provides for capital punishment, as shown here in Exodus 21. Without getting into a heated debate, what are some of the pros and cons for the death penalty?
- Given that there are legitimate reasons on both sides, why do you think God would have instituted it at that time? Does that necessarily mean that it should remain in our own time? Why or why not?

2. Property Crimes. “If a fire breaks out and spreads into thornbushes so that it burns shocks of grain or standing grain or the whole field, the one who started the fire must make restitution.” Exodus 22:6

“If anyone gives a neighbor silver or goods for safekeeping and they are stolen from the neighbor’s house, the thief, if caught, must pay back double. ⁸ But if the thief is not found, the house owner must appear before judges, and they must determine whether they have laid hands on the other person’s property. ⁹ In all cases of illegal possession of any lost property about which somebody says, ‘This is mine,’ both parties are to bring their cases before judges. The one whom they declare guilty must pay back double to the other.” Ex. 22:7-9

- The most common crime worldwide is theft. What stands out to you in these instructions? Why do people steal? How is entitlement related to theft? How could arson be considered theft?

3. Protection for the Disadvantaged. “Do not take advantage of the widow or the fatherless. ²³ If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. ²⁴ My anger will be aroused, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives will become widows and your children fatherless.” Exodus 22:22-24

²⁵ “If you lend money to one among you who is needy, do not treat it like a business deal; charge no interest. ²⁶ If you take your neighbor’s cloak as a pledge, return it by sunset, ²⁷ because that cloak is the only covering your neighbor has. . . . When they cry out to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.” Ex. 22:25-27

- When it comes to dealing with those who are disadvantaged, such as widows, orphans, and the needy, there doesn’t seem to be a legal penalty. How do these instructions define and enforce how God wants us to treat others? Why is it tempting to take advantage of the needy and how do we justify it?

4. Equal Justice. “Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd, ³ and do not show favoritism to the poor in a lawsuit.” Exodus 23:2-3

“Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits. ⁷ Have nothing to do with a false charge and do not put an innocent or honest person to death, for I will not acquit the guilty.” Exodus 23:6-7

“Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the innocent.” Exodus 23:8

- Equal justice for all is foundational to God’s law. How does following the crowd result in unequal justice?
- Special emphasis is placed on how to treat those who are poor. Why would being poor make a difference in how someone is treated in a lawsuit? What’s the standard we’re to apply to everyone?

Wrap Up: A favorite life hack is “I’d rather be hurt by the truth than blessed by a lie.” That’s one to keep in mind when reading through these chapters, because there’s so much truth that stops us in our tracks when we’re tempted to hurt or take advantage of others. Remember that the Bible doesn’t talk so much about crime—it talks about sin. That’s because when we hurt others we offend God, and that’s “sin” in a nutshell.