

Aaron Wilson managed a Christian bookstore for over ten years before getting a job with a publishing company. In that time he prayed with customers and he found resources for them; but his best trait was being a good listener. While listening to his customers he also shared a few laughs with them. Here are 6 of the most interesting questions Aaron heard as a Christian bookstore manager:

1. “DO YOU SELL PLASTIC FLIES?” This children’s leader was teaching the story of the Exodus of the Hebrew slaves. Aaron says, “I checked our plague section, but we were clean out of pestilence.”
2. “DO YOU PROVIDE MAMMOGRAMS?” Alas, this customer was really trying to determine if we “monogrammed” Bibles.
3. “CAN YOU HELP ME FIND THE MOVIE, ‘THE SHINING?’” This customer was actually looking for the drama titled, “The Shunning.” Instead of requesting a film about an Amish girl betrothed to the town bishop, this customer asked for a psychological thriller about a homicidal maniac hunting down his family in a vacant hotel. Turns out a vowel can make a big difference.
4. “DO YOU HAVE A CLERGY SHIRT FOR A SIZE 38” NECK?” 38 inches is the circumference of a large pizza. Determining the Jolly Green Giant wasn’t guest preaching at this man’s church, we landed on the fact this customer actually needed an 18” collar.
5. “WHERE ARE YOUR BOOKS CONTAINING ACTUAL PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE CHARACTERS IN THE BIBLE?” Well. If you squint hard enough at Leonardo’s picture of The Last Supper, you can make out a tiny convertible parked in the background.
6. “CAN I RETURN THIS BIBLE? IT HAS AN EXTRA BOOK IN IT CALLED ‘OBADIAH.’” After showing this kind lady that Obadiah was indeed in all of our Bibles, she decided to check out this Old Testament book she had never heard of. As in most settings, because he listened well, Aaron learned an awful lot and even found a reason to share a laugh now and then.

The opening words of Psalm 19 and its closing words are no doubt the most familiar lines of the Psalm. They’re more inspirational than comical. However, verses 7-10 contain the heart of this Psalm’s message: *“The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous. They are more precious than gold, yes, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb”* (19:7-10).

More to be desired than gold? Sweeter than honey? God’s mercy is sweet, but can we say the same about his laws? We don’t usually love laws. Laws keep us from doing things that we want to do. How could the Psalm writer say that God’s laws are sweeter than honey? It certainly was not that God’s laws were easy to keep. There were 613 Old Testament laws, and the rabbis multiplied them into thousands more. These laws prescribed:

- What to eat
- When to work

- How to deal with neighbors, friends and enemies
- How to worship the Lord God
- Even how many steps you could take on the Sabbath.

People could try to keep God's laws, but they could never succeed completely. So how could the Psalmist love God's laws? Some people think that the Psalmist could love God's laws because they made life "simple." If the Bible tells us every move to make, we don't have to think. We become like children again. If we follow the rules, the rule-maker bears all the responsibility.

Others think that the Psalm writer saw God's laws as an exciting "study." He could say "I love God's laws" much as we might say "I love history." Still others think that the Psalm writer saw God's laws as a "challenge." Sort of like playing the lottery. They beat us most of the time, but they let us win just often enough to keep us coming back. But the Psalm writer plainly told us why he loved God's laws. He said:

- God's law is perfect. It refreshes our souls.
- God's law is trustworthy. It makes simple people wise.
- God's law is right. It gives joy to our hearts.
- God's law is radiant. It enlightens our eyes.
- God's law is pure. It endures forever.
- God's law is firm, and righteous altogether.

God's laws are trustworthy. They serve as faithful guides. They will not lead us astray. That isn't always true of human laws. Human laws are imperfect, because humans are imperfect. But the Psalm writer assures us that God's laws are trustworthy. His laws will be as faithful to us as we are to them. This is clear with regard to God's physical laws. We cannot break God's physical laws. For instance, we cannot break the law of gravity. If we ignore the law of gravity, we will not break the law. We will more likely break our bodies.

So it is with God's spiritual laws. They are trustworthy. We can make our lives better by observing God's spiritual laws, and we can make our lives worse by not observing them. It's that simple! We cannot break God's spiritual laws. If we ignore them, we will only break ourselves.

God's laws are like the railing on a bridge. The railing serves as a guard; it protects us. No drivers resent the railing of a bridge for taking away our freedom. God's laws also serve as a guard railing. They protect us against injury. God's laws are trustworthy, and were given for our benefit.

However, the New Testament tells us that we are now in a new relationship to the law. People in the Old Testament tried to follow the law, not just because it was trustworthy, but also to obtain salvation. The law was not adequate for this purpose, because nobody could follow it perfectly.

In Galatians, Paul speaks of the Old Testament law in this way: "*So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith*" (3:24). Jesus has done for us what the law could not do. He has given us the salvation that we could not earn ourselves. We receive salvation by God's grace.

But this same Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount: *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them”* (Matthew 5:17).

Thank God that we no longer have to follow every Old Testament law. But thank God that the Scriptures still provide us with the faithful and forceful guidance that they have always provided.

- The Scriptures teach us how to treat each other.
- The Scriptures teach us about sexual matters.
- They teach us about money.
- They teach us about power.
- They teach how to live in families and communities.
- They teach us how to raise our children.
- They teach us how to worship God.

Robert Fulghum wrote a best-selling book some time ago that was titled, *All I Really Need to Know, I Learned in Kindergarten*. But realistically we didn't learn everything that we need to know in kindergarten. At least I hope not. We're still learning. God has revealed himself through the Scriptures, so that we might drink at the fountain of his eternal wisdom.

*“The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous”* (vv. 7-9).

But please, oh please, don't miss the bottom line message of verse 11. In that verse David lays out his rationale for paying attention to God's law, statutes, precepts, commands and decrees.

He says, *“By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward”* (19:7-11).

Aaron Wilson who was a store manager for ten years in a Christian bookstore carefully listened to his customers say some unexpected and startling things. If we think that we've already heard everything that God has to say to us through the Scriptures, then we aren't doing nearly enough listening.

Along with David, let us say to the Lord today, “I'm listening.”

Because we have a lot to learn. Amen.

(Much of the material of this sermon came from a sermon by Richard Niell Donovan.)