

Connect timeless truths with today's news.

### THE LETTER OF THE GUN LAW

Last month in Utah, state lawmakers called officers from the Salt Lake City Police Department to explain why they had suspended one of their own officers for trying to obey a new law at the city's airport. The law states that travelers should be ticketed if they try to bring a firearm through security—unless the person brought the gun unintentionally or had forgotten it was in a carry-on bag. In that case, the person should not be ticketed (but still be disallowed from bringing the gun through). The SLCPD preferred to ticket everyone who brought a gun to the airport, no matter what, choosing a “letter of the law” reading of the legislation. The suspended officer had been disciplined by his superiors for trying to follow the intent of the law and not writing a ticket for someone who had accidentally brought a firearm to security. The lawmakers wanted to know why the police were violating what they felt was the clear intent of the new law.

### THE INTENT OF GOD'S LAW

In today's passage, some Pharisees tested whether Jesus would violate the letter of the commandment to keep the Sabbath holy. They brought a man in need of healing before Jesus on the Sabbath to see if he would heal him and thus, in their minds, violate the Sabbath by doing work. Jesus did heal the man, and then he dashed their efforts to trap him by showing God's original intent for the commandment—and by showing that even they would “work” on the Sabbath to save a child or a cow in a well. So how could he not save this son of Abraham, even on a Sabbath?

1. Why might someone prefer a letter-of-the-law interpretation over the spirit of the law?
2. What does it say that the Pharisees took for granted Jesus' miraculous healing power and concentrated instead on questions about the sabbath?
3. How can we know if we are obeying the letter of an instruction in the Bible and straying from its intent?

### Additional Resources

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