

A Look at the *You-Can't-Legislate-Morals* Myth

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Every time someone wishes to perpetrate or justify some kind of societal moral evil, his or her watchword is, "You cannot legislate morals." This has been true of the protagonists for unlimited abortion, pornography, lax divorce/remarriage laws, legal sale of liquor, and several other issues. It has been used extensively by the liquor interests and their agents in deceiving a gullible public.

I submit to you that this statement is a myth and a lie. If "You can't legislate morals," then why is most of our legislation on the books? If the statement is true, then we should remove the laws that prohibit theft, arson, shoplifting, rape, prostitution, illegal drug use, armed robberies, grand larceny, income tax evasion, perjury, murder, and perhaps hundreds of other offenses – all of which are rooted in personal morality or lack of it.

Admittedly, a law prohibiting a practice is never going to be obeyed without exception, be it a law of man or of God. However, God must believe that there is a value in "legislating morals" or He would not have used so many pages of the Bible forbidding His people to participate in certain types of behavior. But the sophisticated moderns know more than God. They would have us believe that God did not know what He was doing when He legislated man's moral behavior through His Word.

Sensible, sober-thinking men and women still understand the value of laws relating to our moral behavior. The very fact that there is a law prohibiting legal sale of liquor in an area keeps a certain kind of "moral cloud" hovering over it in the mind of youth and adult alike. When such a prohibition is stricken from the law, that which is detrimental to all health, happiness, and prosperity and is in every way unworthy of respect is given a measure of respectability by legalization.

When a person says, "You can't legislate morals," what he really means is, "I don't want any legislation against my favorite immoralities."

[**Note:** I wrote this article for, and it was published in *The Edifier*, weekly bulletin of Pearl Street Church of Christ, Denton, TX, October 11, 1984, of which I was editor.]

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