

FEATURE: Sand in the Crankcase”

PROF.: What would you think of someone who thinks he knows more about his car, than his car’s manufacturer knows?
He throws away the instruction manual. Then he puts gasoline in the tires, acid in the radiator...

VOICE: (INTERRUPTS) I would say he was ridiculous. Who would be that stupid?

PROF.: Unfortunately, lots of people. Not with their cars, but with something even more important!
Let’s talk about “sand in the crankcase.”

FORMAT: THEME AND ANNOUNCEMENT

PROF.: “***For best results,***” the manual says, “maintain your automobile in the following ways.”
In pages of printed instructions, the manufacturer of a car may say things like:
Keep the tires inflated to a specified pressure,
Use gasoline of a certain octane number,
Fill the radiator with so many liters of coolant. In winter, add a certain percentage of anti-freeze to protect the radiator from freezing up.
Some manuals provide details like how tightly to adjust the fanbelt, and how often to have a mechanic look at the alignment of the front wheels.

VOICE: And they specify very carefully what kind and ***viscosity*** of oil to use, how much of it to use, how often to change it, and what kind of oil ***filter*** to use.
After a person has worked long and hard to buy a car, he knows it’s only smart to take care of it and make it last. Even among my craziest friends, I’ve never seen anyone put, as you said a moment ago, “sand in the crankcase.”

PROF.: Not in the literal sense – with cars. But let’s talk figuratively a moment. Some people handle ***their lives*** much less carefully than they handle their cars.
God made us, and He provided a manual of how to make our lives work well. But many people disregard God’s instruction book so completely, they’re figuratively putting nails in their tires and sand in their engines.

VOICE: Help me decode some of your figurative language. Are you talking about people who ruin their bodies with, for example, alcohol?

PROF.: Alcohol is one big problem. But I'm talking about a problem that's even bigger.

We Christians are convinced the Bible is God's message to the human race. If an automotive engineer knows what kind of oil works best in the engine he designed, it makes sense that God knows what gives "best results" in our bodies and souls. So God provided an operational guide to help us know how to oil our lives instead of sabotaging them with sand.

VOICE: Some of my friends like to live "in the fast lane." They think the "you shall's" and "you shall not's" of religion were written to keep them from having fun.

PROF.: It may seem that way at first glance.

But that's like saying the manual of a car is written to make owning a car difficult and expensive. It costs more to have the oil changed, than not to have it changed. We could reject the manufacturer's recommendations, and accuse the manufacturer of participating in a conspiracy to make money for oil companies and auto mechanics.

VOICE: Ignoring the maintenance manual might save us money and inconvenience for a few months or a year. But in the long run, a car owner will be sorry if he neglects taking care of his car.

PROF.: Have you deciphered what I mean by "sand in the crankcase"?

VOICE: Yes. You're saying "sand in the crankcase" is any way of running our lives that is contrary to what our Maker commands in the Bible.

PROF.: Good! A Russian sociologist explained this idea very clearly. Dr. Mikhail Matskovsky is Director of Young Family Research at the Russian Academy of Sciences. He is also General Director of the Institute for Human Values in Moscow. He has written extensively on the need for family stability, and also of the practical applications of ultimate values.

VOICE: Are "ultimate values," standards that don't vary from place to place and time to time?

PROF.: Yes. Dr. Matskovski said, “All my scientific life has been involved with family research. I am not a Christian believer, because I had a very different rearing in my schooling and my family. But after researching the family for 20 years, I concluded that these moral problems, which are a major part of the religion of Christians, are very important for our people.

“**A relativistic conscience is very dangerous.** If a human being says, ‘Don't kill,’ there's room for lots of negotiation and many exceptions. Maybe in some circumstances you can kill: ...if it's necessary for the situation of today, you can kill.”

“The Ten Commandments tell us *never* kill, *never* steal, *never* lie. ‘Never’ is an important word. I believe that the people in our country need these internal values – they need final, absolute values. I think the Ten Commandments are a bridge between believers and non-believers. Because for all people it's very important to know about the Ten Commandments and to behave in compliance with them.”

VOICE: Dr. Mikhail Matskovsky referred to commandments that say, “You shall not kill” and “You shall not steal.” I remember another commandment says, “You shall not commit adultery.”

But there are *Ten* Commandments in the Bible. What do the other ones say?

PROF.: The commandments you and Dr. Matskovsky quoted, relate to behavior. Most of the other ones concern the *attitudes that lead to harmful behavior*. One example is “You shall not covet.” God in his wisdom knows that if we don't let an intense desire for things control us, we won't let our minds build up an urge to steal.

VOICE: That makes sense.

PROF.: Another of the Ten Commandments is “Honor your father and your mother...”

VOICE: I can see that not coveting would resist our temptation to steal. But what's the practical value of honoring your parents?

PROF.: If we love our parents, we will avoid doing things that bring them pain or shame. That will help us resist temptations to do some of the harmful behaviors that we've mentioned.

VOICE: As I think about, I realize that honoring our parents also helps to uncomplicate our lives. We don't have to live “double lives” – following one set of rules when we're with our parents, and another set when we're with our friends. And then trying to hide the behavior we know our parents would disapprove.

- PROF.: The very first commandment gives *the basic reason to obey the other commands*. God says, “I am the Lord your God, ... You shall have no other gods before me.”
A genius-level engineer designed and built us humans. That's obvious every time we take an analytical look at the design of our brains, our eyes, or our circulatory systems.
Think about the possibility that the wise God who made us, may have provided us with written instructions about how to operate our lives – to preserve us from corrosion and premature wear-out.
- VOICE: To avoid putting sand in our crankcases.
- PROF.: When God inspired the Ten Commandments in the Bible, he didn't do it to confine us and make life a dreary drudgery. To the contrary, he provided the Bible as a manual, a handbook for mankind – so people could avoid the pitfalls and potholes that ruin our lives.
- VOICE: How can I decide whether to follow what God says in the Bible, or to live “life in the fast lane”?
- PROF.: Look at where each road leads. Observe the “party animals” and playboys who were your age ten or twenty years ago: Where are they now? How satisfying and stable are their lives, their friendships, their marriages?
Ask the same questions about people who were students ten and twenty years ago, and who consistently obeyed God's commands. Your research will help you discover which lane leads where – and which lane you want to drive.
- VOICE: You're beginning to make sense.
- PROF.: The Bible says, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”
The marker on one grave says, quote, “Here lie the fragments of John Smith – who contradicted his Maker, violated the Ten Commandments, and departed this life at age 35. His mother and wife weep for him. Nobody else does. May he rest in peace.”
- VOICE: I've noticed that people who live like that, seem to burn out fast.
- PROF.: Any way of running our lives that is contrary to what God commands in the Bible, is “sand in the crankcase” of our lives.
God's Word, the Bible, is the Maker's manual that guides us how to keep the destructive abrasives out of the engines of our lives. Following it consistently will keep our lives well oiled, to run “for best results.”
- FORMAT: THEME AND ANNOUNCEMENT

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