Law and Grace: An unfortunate dialectic

A sermon given at Carlton-Kogarah Baptist Church, Carlton, NSW

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**Salutation**

Shalom to all of you here today in Carlton, and those who will watch/ listen/ and read along with us on the Internet in this information-shared world. Thanks to Pastor Steve for letting me come and thank you each of you for listening along with us today as we unpack a very fundamental and very confused topic this morning, that of the unfortunate dialectic: Law vs. Grace. As we consider this may I ask you to think a bit outside what you already believe, what you already know, what you already think, and let’s see things from another angle or two. Being challenged is a good thing, right? So let’s begin.

We have already read the Scriptures in Leviticus 19 and Romans 6. For those online, those are able to be read at the bottom of this manuscript.

**Introduction: How many gods are there?**

Of course every year in synagogue when I grew up, we read Leviticus, and then more particularly when I was a child, the first book I ever learned, that is, studied with a learned man, was Leviticus. If you get that right, if you get holiness right, everything else will be right.

So let’s turn there first.

For many, who only carry a pocket New Testament, this will be difficult. Consider what that carrying says to people.  By choosing only a portion of Bible, and not the entire 66 books, you are saying this is the good bit, or the important bit, or the bit I think matters more today. And sometimes a Gospel of John or a portion of Bible is all you are pondering at a time or season and that’s excellent. But carrying a Bible is a big signal to you and to those around you that the whole volume matters and has weight.  OK, my pet peeve is out.

So now we turn to Leviticus and if my guess is right, and if you are a marker in the Bible, you will have very little by way of marks in the 27 chapters. This is not an indictment, but rather an indicator of something I call bi-theistic evaluation. Here’s what I mean.

Many well-meaning Christian people could be labeled *bi-theists*. A monotheist is a believer in one God, and a bi-theist believes in two gods. You would normally tell me that no Christian is a bi-theist, and I would agree, that no Christian can be, based on dozens of biblical texts where he is the One and only God, who does not share his glory with another and that all other gods are not the real God.

But by practice and convictions, many Christians have a notion that the God of the Older Testament is fundamentally different than the God of the Newer Testament. Jesus, they would argue, is not the same as the God of the Older Testament. In the OT, he was old. He was seated probably because he was tired. He had gray hair. He was crotchety, like an old man in a nursing home. He was judgmental and angry. But they say, in the NT, God is nicer, and younger. He’s out healing and performing miracles. He has flowing dark hair and is adored by young adults and children.  But if you believe this two-god theory, you are a bi-theist and as a result will have a more negative evaluation of the Old Testament.

So if that’s you, and you are now turning to Leviticus, let’s see if we can glean from this text a mechanism of reading and understanding God, and this big issue of Law vs. Grace.

**Definition of terms**

Before I touch our text, let me define these two terms, which will help us throughout this talk. Both law and grace, as I understand them, are systems. I’m not using the term ‘law’ to mean a commandment. And that may be the difficulty for some of us. The word ‘law’ is used 164 times in the NT, 77 of those in Romans alone, 32 in Galatians; and law is used 199 times in the OT.  But listen, law is not the same in every case. That’s where the confusion comes.

Sometimes the word means ‘commandment’ and means an individual action required or prohibited.  James identified law with freedom as in “the law of liberty”(James 1.25, 2.12). King David cried out “How I love thy law!”(119.97, 159) Paul the apostle said, “The law is good.” (1 Timothy 1.8).  So I understand confusion about the matter. To most, and throughout the record of Scripture, and certainly in our passage in Romans, Law sounds like some compliance, and then it becomes a system of compliance. So that is my definition: *Law is the system by which I gain God’s approval on the basis of my good works.* And then grace must be different. *Grace then is the system by which I gain God’s approval on the basis of what God did in Messiah Yeshua*.  Both are systems. One more small difference in language. Mercy is not getting what you deserve. Grace is getting what you don’t deserve. So mercy keeps you from hell and grace gives you heaven. Understanding those, let’s look at our texts.

**Older Testament reading: Leviticus 19**

***Checklist religion***

In this foundational chapter of the Older Testament, God commands Israel many things: to be holy (.2), to fear mother and father (.3), not to make idols (.4), to burn leftover peace offerings (.6), to leave the corners of the field when harvesting (.9-10), not to steal or lie (.11), etc. Many of you older folks will quote the no tattoo rule (.28) when speaking with your teenage children. Other rules include not cutting the corners of your beard (.27), not eating raw meat with blood (.26), keeping your daughter out of the sex trade (.29), keeping the Sabbath (.30), avoiding reading horoscopes (.31), honoring old and foreign people (.32-34), keeping honest measurements and scales (.35-36), not eating fruit before its time (.23-25), and not wearing wool and linen at the same time (.19). Talk about power clashing.

So those of you who like to outline are frustrated just now. There seems to be no rhyme or reason for these laws, often superscripted with the term “Various Laws” as a header in your Bible, or at least no reason for their order. And although I’m an outliner from way back when, and like to keep things in such order, the text neither warrants nor needs such.

Inside the text is the most famous verse of the OT, and quoted by Yeshua: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” It’s in verse 18. I remember that as my Hebrew teacher when I was 7 taught us, that 1918 was the year World War 1 ended and that’s the address of this text. If we can learn this lesson, to love everyone, then war will not happen anymore. Harsh lesson that we keep needing to learn, and keep forgetting, you know?

So if you had an interpretation of this passage as laws that are law, and thus a system of compliance such that you would gain God’s favor, and if you had been taught that all this OT stuff is old and not to be kept anymore since we now have Jesus as our God and savior, what do you do with the laws of Leviticus 19? Do you now send your daughter out to be a harlot? Do you steal and lie? Do you read horoscopes and make old people stand while you sit on the bus? Obviously the simplistic and binary approach: Old=bad; New=good just doesn’t work.

In fact law is something so beyond your capacity to accomplish it, that it’s sad how many try to do so. There are two consequences to checklist religion, and I’m not limiting myself to Jewish or Christian religions. If you are successful at keeping the fragments of religion you maintain, you might feel smug or even proud. If you fail to succeed at your religion’s checklists, then you feel condemned. Neither pride nor condemnation is God’s desired result.  Checklist religion always fails.

***Poor man in your midst***

Look at the text in verse 9. We see that we should harvest our fields and then leave something for the poor. This is a law. Nowadays, how would a poor person come to find provision in the company of God’s people? Let’s say a poor person from Brighton-le-sands came to hear about a big local church and that they care about poor people. He rocks up to the church and finds a receptionist. He presents his case. She is sympathetic to him and rings the pastor. The PA of the pastor hears the call and the poor man presents himself to the PA.  Then the PA sends the poor man to the pastor in charge of food distribution or such. Now, the 3rd time in an hour, the poor man has to tell his story. Compare that with the biblical method of providing. In the Bible no one has to hear the story. No one is shamed. No one is embarrassed. No one feels owing and no one feels robbed or used or questions motives. It’s gracious isn’t it? So when you think of law vs grace as OT vs NT, you miss the point.

***Dr Laura Schlessinger,  Aaron Sorkin, and Kevin Rudd on homosexuality***

Same with the issue of sexuality, which our text intimates in relation to slave women and marriage. Obviously if you are familiar with the 10 Commandments (Exodus 20) you will recognize that many of these various laws of Leviticus 19 are informed by and an expansion of those commandments. Idolatry, stealing, adultery, Sabbath-keeping and others are expanded here. But what about sexuality? You may have heard Steve mention Dr Laura, the US talk-show presenter, who is well-known in the US as a fast-talking, ethic-pounding psychologist. This from Wikipedia: In the months before the premiere of her TV show in 2000, Schlessinger called [homosexuality](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homosexuality) a "biological error", said that homosexuality was acceptable as long as it was not public, and said that homosexuals should not attempt to [adopt children](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_adoption). She regularly compared [gay parenting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_parenting) to [pedophilia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pedophilia) by reiterating her view that "a huge portion of the male homosexual populace is predatory on young boys."[[31]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Schlessinger#cite_note-words-31) Schlessinger was frequently criticized in [lesbian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lesbian), [gay](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gay), [bisexual](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bisexual), and [transsexual](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transsexual) ([LGBT](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT)) media for these views.   (More about Dr Laura at the end of this manuscript, even surprising facts)

But what about sexuality? My question remains. Dr Laura is opposed on the basis of biblical considerations. And she’s right. But opponents will then point out that we don’t keep OT laws either. What about the famous scene in the tv show The West Wing, where Aaron Sorkin wrote for President Bartlett (Martin Sheen).

"My chief of staff, Leo McGarry, insists on working on the Sabbath. **Exodus 35:2** clearly says he should be put to death. Am I morally obligated to kill him myself or is it okay to call the police?"

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| **Leviticus 11** ***7*and the pig, which does indeed have hoofs and is cloven-footed, but does not chew the cud and is therefore unclean for you.** ***8*Their flesh you shall not eat, and their dead bodies you shall not touch; they are unclean for you."** |

"Here's one that's really important cause we've got a lot of sports fans in this town: touching the skin of a dead pig makes one unclean. **Leviticus 11:7** If they promise to wear gloves can the Washington Redskins still play football? Can Notre Dame? Can West Point?

"Does the whole town really have to be together to stone my brother, John, for planting different crops side by side? Can I burn my mother in a small family gathering for wearing garments made from two different threads?

 [Online, the whole scene is in transcript: <http://westwing.bewarne.com/second/25admonitions.html> ]

Obviously Sorkin is venting. And as a result many Christians pull back from using any biblical (read: OT) reference when trying to teach a lesson about homosexuality. Similarly the noise was voluminous when my friend Pastor Matt Prater up in Brisbane asked then-Prime Minister on Q and A just before the election last month about his views on homosexuality. The PM Kevin Rudd scored many points with the audience, but lost miserably in the election 6 days later, as his mean-spirited views and hostility to the Christian pastor were unveiled. He also demonstrated a lack of biblical knowledge although he tried to be Sorkin-esque in mentioning slavery. The banter went like this:

"I just believe in what the Bible says and I'm just curious for you, Kevin, if you call yourself a Christian, why don't you believe the words of Jesus in the Bible?" pastor Matt Prater asked.

Mr Rudd responded: "Well, mate, if I was going to have that view, the Bible also says that slavery is a natural condition," he said, receiving a loud applause from the audience.

The PM Rudd won the battle for the moment in the audience but lost the war. The Bible does not say that slavery is a natural condition and in fact, even in our text we see a view that is counter-cultural from God. We should treat women, and foreigners, and workers and animals and fruit and all things and all people in an honorable way. This is God’s way. This is “love your neighbor as yourself.”

But what about sexuality? Our text is clear and there are many more texts that help us unpack this issue. The Law was given to help a newly-delivered slave community, coming out of Egypt after 400 years, to know how to relate to God, to each other and to the world around them. We still need to know how to relate to God, to each other and to the world around us. That’s why King David said he loved the Law. That’s why Paul said ‘the law is good.’ It’s useful he said. It matches God’s plan from the beginning that we should love one another.

***The goal of Torah***

“The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.

But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching.” (1 Tim 1.5-10)

The purpose of Torah was to keep us loving people and loving God. That’s the goal of our instruction then and now. Homosexuality and kidnapping (read: sex slavery) and lying and murdering and all kinds of evil damage society, causing mistrust and is as Paul says, “Contrary to sound teaching.” And remember the goal of all that teaching was love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere or un-hypocritical faith.

Mixing clothing and mixing marriages and mixing field crops and boiling a kid in its mother’s milk are all about the same thing. It’s the same as God dividing the light from the darkness in the beginning. It’s the same as Paul to the Corinthians: “Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6.14)

God designed us with two feet but we cannot walk in two directions at once. We have two eyes, and unless you are the Aussie comic Tim Ferguson, interviewed by Margaret Throsby last week on ABC classic radio, (He has a condition called strabismus:  see this link: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/001004.htm>) you will probably be reading this sermon with both eyes looking in the same direction.

The apostle Paul referenced this phenomenon in his battle with Peter in the epistle to the Galatians.  We read “When I saw that they were not straightforward aboutthe truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, “If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how *is it that* you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?” (Galatians 2.14) The Greek word for ‘straightforward’ is *orthopodeo*, straight *footedness*. Going in one direction, in other words. Peter was having it both ways and Paul rebuked him publicly and saved the freedom-message from going the way of checklist religion.

**Where then is grace?**

Remember we are not talking about compliance by which we gain God’s approval. We are talking about ordinary human good will and human good and sound teaching. We are talking about an ordered and civil society.

So where is grace?

That’s the system by which we gain God’s approval on the basis of what Jesus did on our behalf. It’s not about my good deeds or my behavior which will cause God to smile at me. Or to like me more. Or to listen to my prayers that much more intently.

*This one won’t work or will it: Negotiation*

The story is told of the little Catholic boy who was having a hard time thinking God was listening to his prayers.

“Dear God, if you will give me a new bicycle, I promise I’ll be a good boy and …” He thought better of that.  He started over.

“Dear God, I promise to make my bed every day and do my homework and then will you please give me a new bicycle?” He thought again about promises made and unfulfilled. He thought better. He went downstairs and got his father’s little sacred statue of the mother of Jesus, Mary.  He went back to his room, wrapped the little statue in a towel, put it under his pillow, and knelt down. Again he prayed,

“Dear God, if you ever want to see your mother again…”

*Approval by one means*

Look, you don’t have to negotiate with God. You don’t have to work your way to heaven. In fact, you can’t do that. All your good works are like filthy and bloody rags, Isaiah says. (“For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.” Isaiah 64.6)

Consider this example. You have a full trolley of groceries. You are in the queue at the checkout and now everything is packed back and you give the checker your credit card. He swipes the card. Now you wait. The word on the credit card machine reads, “Processing.” And you wait. The line behind you seems to be growing and growing impatient. The machine still spins the word ‘processing.’ And your anxiety level rises. Then finally the word appears, “approved.” Your fears subside. Your smile returns to your face. You exit with relief and approval.

That relief, my friends, is the feeling this Orthodox Jew had when I gave my life to Yeshua 42 years ago. I who had sought God’s favor through prayers and religious observance had finally found forgiveness, favor and approval in one fell swoop, by receiving Yeshua, by receiving Jesus as my Lord and Savior. That’s all it took. God had already done everything I needed for his love and favor to be mine. All I had to do was to admit my sin, repent of my sin, and receive him as my sacrifice, as my forgiver, as the one who perfectly kept Torah on my behalf and become his.

Grace was overwhelming. I even sang it with the woman who prayed with me that night. “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I’m found, ‘twas blind, but now I see.” Paul wrote the Romans about this, when he said, “knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him,* that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.” (Romans 6.6-7)

We are no longer alive to sin. We used to be very much alive to sin, but not any longer. Sin shall not reign in us. “Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts” (Romans 6.11-12)

Those things are not us any longer.

You were buried. You no longer are alive to sin. You are alive to God. That’s sound teaching. That’s love from a pure heart.

Be motivated by grace and forgiveness, and you will not obey the lusts of the flesh.

For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, (the system by which you gain God’s approval on the basis of what you do), but under grace (the system by which you gain God’s approval on the basis of what Yeshua did.) (Romans 6.14) Thanks be to God!

The Bible in Romans chapter 6:

What shall we say then? Are we to *c*ontinue in sin that grace might increase? *m*ay it never be! How shall we who *d*ied to sin still live in it?  Or do you not know that all of us who have been *b*aptized into *C*hrist Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been *b*uried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was *b*raised from the dead through the *g*lory of the Father, so we too might walk in *n*ewness of life. for *i*f we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also *in the likeness* of His resurrection, knowing this, that our *o*ld self was *c*rucified with *Him,* that our *b*ody of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.

Now *i*f we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been *r*aised from the dead, is never to die again; *d*eath no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be *d*ead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Therefore do not let sin *r*eign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on *p*resenting the members of your body to sin *as* instruments of unrighteousness; but *p*resent yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God. For *s*in shall not *b*e master over you, for *y*ou are not under law, but *u*nder grace.

What then? *Shall* we sin because we are not under law but under grace? *May* it never be! Do you not *k*now that when you present yourselves to someone *as s*laves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of *s*in resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But *t*hanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that *f*orm of teaching to which you were committed, and having been *f*reed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

*I* am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members *as* slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in *further* lawlessness, so now present your members *as* slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. For *w*hen you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is *d*eath. But now having been *f*reed from sin and *e*nslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and *t*he outcome, eternal life.

For the wages of *s*in is death, but the free gift of God is *e*ternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.  (Romans 6.1-23)

The Bible in Leviticus chapter 19.

      "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: “Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘*y*ou shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. ‘every one of you *s*hall reverence his mother and his father, and you shall keep *m*y Sabbaths; *I* am the LORD your God. ‘Do not turn to *i*dols or make for yourselves molten *g*ods; I am the LORD your God.

‘Now when you offer a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD, you shall offer it so that you may be accepted. ‘It shall be eaten the same day you offer *it,* and the next day; but what remains until the third day shall be burned with fire. so if it is eaten at all on the third day, it is an offense; it will not be accepted. Everyone who eats it will bear his iniquity, for he has profaned the holy thing of the LORD; and that person shall be cut off from his people.

     Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the LORD your God. *y*ou shall not steal, nor deal falsely, *n*or lie to one another, and ‘*y*ou shall not swear falsely by my name, so as to *p*rofane the name of your God; I am the LORD. *y*ou shall not oppress your neighbor, nor rob *him. The* wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning. ‘You shall not curse a deaf man, nor *p*lace a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall revere your God; I am the LORD. ‘*y*ou shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly.you shall not go about as *a* slanderer among your people, and you are not to act against the life of your neighbor; I am the LORD.you *s*hall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you *m*ay surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. *and y*ou shall not take vengeance, *n*or bear any grudge against the sons of your people, **but *y*ou shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.(.18)**

    You are to keep my statutes. You shall not breed together two kinds of your cattle; *y*ou shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor wear a garment upon you of two kinds of material mixed together. *N*ow if a man lies carnally with a woman who is a slave acquired for *another* man, but who has in no way been redeemed nor given her freedom, there shall be punishment; they shall not, *however,* be put to death, because she was not free. He shall bring his guilt offering to the LORD to the doorway of the tent of meeting, *a* ram for a guilt offering. The priest shall also make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering before the LORD for his sin which he has committed, and the sin which he has committed will be forgiven him.

     When you enter the land and plant all kinds of trees for food, then you shall count their fruit as 1forbidden. Three years it shall be forbidden to you; *it* shall not be eaten. But in the fourth year all its fruit shall be holy, an offering of praise to the LORD. In the fifth year you are to eat of its fruit, that its yield may increase for you; I am the LORD your God.

     You shall not eat *anything w*ith the blood, nor practice *d*ivination or soothsaying. *y*ou shall not round off the side-growth of your heads nor harm the edges of your beard. you shall not make any cuts in your body for the dead nor make any tattoo marks on yourselves: I am the LORD. (.28)

     ‘Do not profane your daughter by making her a harlot, so that the land will not fall to harlotry and the land become full of lewdness. ‘you shall *k*eep My Sabbaths and *r*evere my sanctuary; I am the LORD. ‘Do not turn to mediums or spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God. *y*ou shall rise up before the gray headed and honor the aged, and you shall revere your God; I am the LORD. *w*hen a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. ‘The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and *y*ou shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God. *Y*ou shall do no wrong in judgment, in measurement of weight, or capacity. and you shall have *j*ust balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin; I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt.

       ‘You shall thus observe all my statutes and all my ordinances and do them; I am the LORD.’”

Wikipedia entry on Dr Laura Schlessinger:

**Marriage and family life**

Schlessinger met and married Michael F. Rudolph, a dentist, in 1972 while she was attending Columbia University. The couple had a [Unitarian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unitarian_Universalism) ceremony.[[60]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Schlessinger#cite_note-60) Separating from Rudolph, Schlessinger moved to [Encino, California](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encino%2C_Los_Angeles) in 1975 when she obtained a job in the science department at the [University of Southern California](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Southern_California).[[61]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Schlessinger#cite_note-61) Their divorce was finalized in 1977.[[62]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Schlessinger#cite_note-62)

In 1975, while working in the labs at USC, she met Lewis G. Bishop, a professor of [neurophysiology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neurophysiology) who was married and the father of three children.[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Schlessinger#cite_note-vanityfair09-98-2)[[63]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Schlessinger#cite_note-63) Bishop separated from his wife and began living with Schlessinger the same year.[[64]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Schlessinger#cite_note-64) Schlessinger has vociferously proclaimed her disapproval of unwed couples "shacking up" and having children out of wedlock. But according to personal friend, Shelly Herman, "Laura lived with Lew for about nine years before she was married to him."[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Schlessinger#cite_note-vanityfair09-98-2) "His divorce was final in 1979.[[65]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Schlessinger#cite_note-65) Bishop and Schlessinger married in 1985.[[66]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Schlessinger#cite_note-66) Herman says that Schlessinger told her she was pregnant at the time, which Herman recalls as "particularly joyful because of the happy news."[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Schlessinger#cite_note-vanityfair09-98-2) Schlessinger's only child, a son named Deryk, was born in November 1985.[[67]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Schlessinger#cite_note-67)

Schlessinger was estranged from her sister for years, and many thought she was an only child.[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Schlessinger#cite_note-vanityfair09-98-2) She had not spoken to her mother for 18[[68]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Schlessinger#cite_note-68) to 20 years before her mother's death in 2002 from heart disease.[[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Schlessinger#cite_note-times2006-13) Her mother's remains were found in her Beverly Hills condo approximately two months after she died,[[69]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Schlessinger#cite_note-sfchrondec212002-69)[[70]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Schlessinger#cite_note-nytapril112003-70) and lay unclaimed for some time in the Los Angeles morgue before Schlessinger had them picked up for burial.[[71]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Schlessinger#cite_note-philly1-71) Concerning the day that she heard about her mother’s death, she said: “Apparently she had no friends and none of her neighbors were close, so nobody even noticed! How sad.”[[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Schlessinger#cite_note-times2006-13)[[71]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Schlessinger#cite_note-philly1-71) In 2006, Schlessinger wrote that she had been attacked in a "vulgar, inhumane manner by media types" because of the circumstances surrounding her mother's death, and that false allegations had been made that she was unfit to dispense advice based on [family values](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Family_values). She said that she had not mourned the deaths of either of her parents because she had no emotional bond to them.[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Schlessinger#cite_note-wnd04-11-06-1)[[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Schlessinger#cite_note-times2006-13)