

# Luke 10:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

## Analysis

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**He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?** Jesus responds to the lawyer's question ("What shall I do to inherit eternal life?") by redirecting him to Scripture. The Greek phrase *en tō nomō ti gegraptai* (ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τί γέγραπται) asks "in the law what has been written?" The perfect tense *gegraptai* (γέγραπται) indicates something written in the past with continuing authority—Scripture's permanent, binding nature.

The second question, "how readest thou?" (*pōs anaginōskeis*, πῶς ἀναγινώσκεις), goes deeper than mere recitation. The verb *anaginōskō* (ἀναγινώσκω) means to know again, recognize, or understand. Jesus asks not just what the text says but how the lawyer interprets and applies it. This reflects rabbinic teaching methods where questions prompted thinking rather than providing direct answers.

Jesus's pedagogical approach is brilliant: rather than letting the lawyer remain passive, He engages him actively in Scripture. This method accomplishes several purposes:

1. it reveals that the lawyer already knows the answer intellectually
2. it exposes the gap between knowledge and practice
3. it demonstrates that Scripture itself, properly understood, testifies to truth
4. it shifts responsibility from Jesus to the questioner.

The pattern anticipates Jesus's regular practice of answering questions with questions, forcing people to examine their own hearts and assumptions (Matthew 21:23-27, Mark 10:2-9).

## Historical Context

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This exchange occurs within Luke's travel narrative (9:51-19:27) as Jesus journeys toward Jerusalem and His crucifixion. The questioner is described as a *nomikos* (νομικός)—a lawyer or expert in Mosaic law, likely a scribe or Pharisee. These professionals devoted their lives to studying, interpreting, and teaching Torah, holding significant religious and social authority in Jewish society.

The question "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" reflected contemporary Jewish theological debates about salvation, works, and covenant relationship. Different schools (Hillel vs. Shammai, Pharisees vs. Sadducees) held varying views on requirements for eternal life, relationship between faith and works, and the scope of God's commands.

Luke notes the lawyer asked this to "test" (ekpeirazō, ἐκπειράζω) Jesus—not seeking genuine instruction but attempting to expose theological error or heterodoxy. Such challenges were common as religious leaders sought to trap Jesus in controversial statements that could discredit Him with the people or Roman authorities. Jesus's response brilliantly avoided the trap while exposing the questioner's heart. The subsequent parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) would devastate common Jewish assumptions about who qualified as "neighbor," demonstrating that knowledge of Scripture without compassionate application is worthless.

## Related Passages

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**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

## Study Questions

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1. How does Jesus's question-based teaching method challenge our desire for easy answers to spiritual questions?
2. What is the difference between knowing what Scripture says and truly understanding how to read and apply it?
3. In what ways might we approach Scripture seeking to justify ourselves rather than genuinely learn God's will?
4. How does the lawyer's question about doing reveal misunderstanding about the relationship between works and salvation?
5. What does this passage teach about the importance of not just reading but rightly interpreting and applying God's Word?

## Interlinear Text

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ό	δὲ	εἶπεν	πρὸς	αὐτόν	Ἐν	τῷ	νόμῳ	τί	γέγραπται
G3588	G1161	<b>He said</b>	<b>unto</b>	<b>him</b>	<b>in</b>	G3588	<b>the law</b>	<b>What</b>	<b>is written</b>
		G2036	G4314	G846	G1722		G3551	G5101	G1125

πῶς ἀναγινώσκεις  
**how**      **readest thou**  
G4459              G314

## Additional Cross-References

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**Romans 3:19** (Word): Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

**Isaiah 8:20** (Word): To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

**Romans 10:5** (Word): For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.