

Daily Bites

Is God's Law Important?

OR

Guidance From Your Friend!

And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you, go and do not sin again." The woman rose from her frightened crouch and started to scurry away. But then, as though suddenly aware of Jesus' closing injunction, she stopped and looked quizzically at her rescuer. "What do you mean, 'do not sin again?'" She asked.

"I think you know what I mean." Jesus replied.

"But I don't know, Rabbi; unless you are suggesting that my relationship with Rubin is sinful."

"What would you call it?"

"A significant relationship." The woman answered. "An interpersonal commitment, in which each of us seeks to realize our full potential."

"Oh, really!" Jesus said.

"Rubin and I love one another. Surely you know what that means! How can a relationship be sinful when it expresses true love?"

"Well, what about your covenant with your husband?"

"Isaac? Well, Rabbi, Isaac and I never have really excited one another. We cannot realize our full potential together."

"What does that have to do with...?"

"Come now Rabboni. People have a duty to themselves. You know, a right to their happiness."

"They do?"

"Certainly, and why should we let an outmoded legalism tie us into relationships that are sterile and unfulfilling."

"Oh, you mean that Isaac is unable to father children and you hope that Rubin..."

"Rabbi, You're putting me on. You know very well what I mean. God knows Isaac can father children. I have three of them to prove that."

"You have three children? And you propose to ignore your marriage vows and carry on with this man Rubin?"

"Oh Rabbi, you're really cute! 'Carry on with this man Rubin.' That kind of talk went out with the age of the judges. I'm not saying that Rubin and I will stay together for ever, we may very well outgrow one another after a time and need room to explore our authentic selfhoods. People do change, you know."

"But the children?"

"Kids aren't as fragile as you think, Rabboni. You'd be surprised at how well they get along with Rubin; the way they hang on him when he stays for breakfast, when Isaac is away on a camel drive that is. They call him Uncle Rube and he does magic tricks for them and they like that. They much prefer him to Nathan."

"Nathan!"

Daily Bites

“My previous significant relationship. He got to be a terrible drag. Said his conscious bothered him and legalistic stuff like that. I told him he should pay more attention to people like you.”

“Like me? How might I have helped him?”

“Oh, you know that business you say about not being paralyzed by guilt and fearing human opinion.”

“Oh, um..., but tell me if this Rubin loves you so deeply why wasn't he here today?”

“He wanted to be Rabbi, he really did, very much. But, he just can't stand the sight of blood. He is a very sensitive person, not at all like Joshua.”

“Joshua? Another significant...”

“Oh, that was over a long time ago and it wasn't really significant, not really. You might say I was just trying my wings.”

“What will you say to your husband about today?”

“I'll tell him to view it as a learning experience. A chance to broaden his horizons. Well, I must run now. Bye bye, Rabboni. Have a good day.”

Jesus wept.

“If you [really] love Me, you will keep (obey) My commands.” John 14:15 (The Amplified Bible)

What comes to your mind when you think of the Ten Commandments? A Hollywood movie? Stone tablets? Rules and regulations? Restraints to personal freedom? Please read Exodus 20:3-17 --counting the commandments as you go. (Compare Deuteronomy 5:7-21).

1. Some time ago, I saw a sign in front of a church that read, “They're Not Called The Ten Suggestions.” It reminded me of a similar sign I'd seen which said, “The Ten Commandments Are Not Multiple Choice.” What do you think the sign painters were trying to say with these signs?
2. According to Exodus 19:5-8, how did the Israelites respond to God's instruction and commands? Do you think they gave a good answer?
3. Is man *able* to keep God's Commandments?

Jeremiah 13:23

Romans 8:7

4. It sounds like we are being asked to do the impossible. Is God's law really important? Is obedience really required?

Ecclesiastics 12:13

Matthew 19:17

Romans 2:13

5. Could it be that the Commandments were meant for the Old Testament people and no longer apply today?

Matthew 5:17-18

Revelation 14:12

Daily Bites

Years ago, the state of Oregon passed a law that convicted murderers should die by hanging. Adam Winkle was the first to be hung. Some years later, the citizens of Oregon decided to change the law and Winkle's descendants said, "No fair! If you can change the law after he died, why couldn't you change it before he died?" If God could have ignored, done away with, or changed His Law, don't you suppose He would have chosen an alternative to the death of Jesus?

6. How did Jesus summarize the commandments in Matthew 22:37-40, Did He eliminate all but these two?

Jesus summarized the first four commandments as love for God, and the last six as love for man, concluding, "On these two, hang all the law." If I say, "On my two arms hang all my ten fingers," have I eliminated my fingers by describing what supports them.

Lesson 1 made the point that we are saved by faith without the deeds of the law (See Romans 3:20 & 28). Does this mean obeying God is not important? Romans 6:14 says we "are not under the law, but under grace." Does grace do away with the law, or the need to obey it?

7. Does grace *increase* or *lessen* our responsibility to obey God?

Romans 6:15

Romans 6:1-2

Suppose the Governor visits an inmate on death row and asks what he'd do if he were pardoned. If the inmate replies, "Kill the judge who put me here," do you think it likely he will be given pardon (grace)? Imagine he is pardoned, but returns to a life of crime, and winds up before the judge again. What might the judge say if the man, after being asked why he went back to crime, answered, "I thought if you were saved by grace you didn't have to keep the law anymore."?

8. Apparently God's law is still in effect. If we can't produce obedience what purpose does the law serve?

Romans 3:20

Romans 7:7

Galatians 3:24

"Schoolmaster" (Gal. 3:23) is translated from the Greek word paidagogos, (pahee-dag-o-gos'); a name given to a person whose job it was to take children to school. Like a truant officer, such a person got the children where they needed to be in order to learn, but did not actually do the teaching. Part of the good news of the Sabbath is that not only will Jesus free you from the guilt of sin—He will free you from its power as well!

9. A thermometer does not cure a sick person, but it does show him that he is not well. Once he knows he is actually sick, he can go to a Doctor for the help and prescription he needs to become healthy. How could God's Law be like a thermometer? Who is the Doctor and what is His prescription?
10. Is obeying God's commandments something we do in order to prove we love Him, or something that results from loving Him? Based on what you have learned about Jesus and how He works in your life, is obedience a requirement or a response? Could it be both? Which is the cause and which is the effect?

John 14:15

John 14:21-24

John 15:10

1 John 5:3

Daily Bites

As you get to know Jesus better, you will love Him more. As you love Him more, you will find it natural to obey Him. His Law does not change, but KNOWING JESUS changes you and enables you to meet His requirements.

In pre-Civil War days, Joe, a tall slave with a physique like Hercules, was being sold at auction. With a sneer on his face and rebellion in his eyes, he kept loudly insisting that he would never work for any man! Finally the gavel came down and Joe was sold to a man who'd bid an astronomical price. As he was escorted in chains to the wagon, and on the subsequent journey home, Joe kept angrily repeating that he would never work. At last the wagon pulled up to a tidy cottage in a picturesque clearing beside a tumbling brook. The man who bought him led him inside and removed his chains. "This is your home Joe," he said. Joe looked around in wonder at the lovely home—beautifully decorated and fully furnished. For a moment he stood speechless, then suddenly shaking his head, he said, "Whether you beat or bribe me, its all the same, I will never work!" In a voice filled with compassion and love, the man who had bought him said, "That's O.K., Joe, this is still your home! I didn't buy you to make you work, I bought you to set you free." Again Joe was silent as he tried to grasp the meaning of those words. Then suddenly he fell weeping at the feet of the man who had paid so much and said brokenly, "Master, I will serve you forever!"

In Ezekiel 36:25-27 God says, "I will cleanse you from all your impurities ... I will give you a new heart ... And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws." God will do for you what you are not able to do for yourself—produce obedience! As you spend time with Jesus through these passages you will get to know Him better, you will love Him more, and you will want to obey Him—it all depends on knowing Him!

Begin each session with prayer - maybe something like this: "Lord, help me to come to know you better as we spend time together..."

Read the passage - several times noticing as many details as you can.

Imagine the setting - put yourself in the picture. Try to imagine the sounds, smells, sensations.

Summarize the passage - in your own words.

Apply the passage - what message is God giving you?

Meditate and pray - meditate on how this passage makes Jesus more real. Talk to Him about the passage and about using the information you have learned to deepen your friendship with Him. Listen for impressions He is giving you.

Passages for This Week

John 20:24-31

John 21:1-14

John 21:15-23

John 21:24-25

1 John 1:1-4

1 John 1:5-10

1 John 2:1-2

Daily Bites

From where He stood He could see the sleeping city below. The empty streets and shops would soon be filled with people. He longed to teach them what His Father was really like but His time was short and their hearts seemed dulled to understanding. He sat down on a rock and put His face in His hands. His mind drifted back over the past. Back through the struggle in the wilderness and His baptism, all the way an event that had occurred when He was just a boy...

He had finished breakfast and gone to draw water from the well for His mother. Though not quite eleven, He was big for his age, and the work he did for His father in the carpentry shop had greatly strengthened Him.

He was not far from the well when he came upon a small group of boys, teasing a young girl. The girl came from a home that was ostracized because her father was a tax collector for the Romans. He had heard her being teased about it before.

She must have come for water also, because her jar lay broken a short distance away from where she stood. The boys surrounded her to prevent escape, taunting her mercilessly.

“Your daddy’s a Roman!” shouted one.

“Traitor!” screamed another.

Then one of them grabbed her shawl. She cried out, trying in vain to get it back. They tossed it back and forth among themselves, letting it fall in the dirt. Suddenly, while chasing one of them, she tripped on her skirt and fell to the ground. The boys laughed and jeered as tears welled up in her eyes, and streaked her face.

He quickly set His jar down, and began running to her rescue. He had almost reached her when an adult voice rang out.

“Jonathan, get back over here this instant! Hurry up with that water!” A heavysset woman was walking down the path. Red-faced and winded, she grabbed one of the boys by the ear, and dragged him after her. The rest of the group scattered to avoid similar punishment at the hands of their mothers.

He went over to where the girl’s shawl was and picked it up. He brushed off the weeds, then walked over to her and held out His hand to help her up. Her black hair was matted, and she looked up at Him through muddy brown eyes, as though expecting Him to laugh or throw the shawl in her face. All she saw in His eyes, however, was compassion.

She took His hand, and He pulled her up and handed her the shawl. “Thank You,” she whispered as she turned away from Him and started home.

“Wait!” He called. “Here, take My jar. But let Me fill it with water for you first.” He turned to the well and swiftly drew up the water. After He placed the jar in her arms, He helped arrange the shawl about her shoulders. He watched her turn and make her way back up the path to her home before returning to His own. His parents had understood about the missing jar...

Footsteps on the path brought Him back to reality. Morning had come.

“Master?” came a whisper.

It was John. Jesus looked up and smiled. “Good morning, John,” He said as He stood up and grasped the other’s hand. John smiled back.

Jesus turned to look at the rising sun, and His face reflected its glory. Breathing one last prayer for strength, He pivoted and headed back toward the city. He made His way to the Temple and began teaching the crowd that formed around Him there.

While He was teaching, some Pharisees and scribes approached Him. They had a woman with them. The group of men threw her at His feet. “Teacher,” one of them said, “this woman was caught in the very act of adultery. Moses said in the Law that such should be stoned to death. What do you say?”

Jesus knew she wasn’t the one on trial. He was. She was merely a pawn in their scheme to trap Him. His heart filled with pity. Sighing, He knelt in the dirt beside her and began writing in the dust with His finger. The men grew impatient with His apparent delay and demanded an answer, so Jesus straightened and met them with a challenge. “Whichever one of you has committed no sin may throw the first stone.”

Daily Bites

He bent and continued writing in the dirt. One by one they peered over His shoulder then drifted away without looking back.

Finally, Jesus was alone with the woman. As she raised her head and looked into His face, a flood of memories washed across His mind. The black hair, the brown eyes, the tear-streaked face...

“Woman, where are your accusers?” He asked, “Is there no one here to condemn you?”

Timidly, she looked around before replying, “No one, Lord.” She whispered it again, unbelievably, “No one.”

“I don’t accuse you, either,” He said as He helped her to her feet, “Go and sin no more.”

She gazed into His face, her eyes brimming with thankfulness. The earthen jar He had given her in childhood could not compare with what He gave her now. She whispered her gratitude, then slowly walked away—transformed! **Exodus 20:3-17** - Due to space, this passage has not been included.

Deuteronomy 5:7-21 - Due to space, this passage has not been included.

Exodus 19:7-8 So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him. Then all the people answered together and said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do.”

Jeremiah 13:23* Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.

Romans 8:7* The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

Ecclesiastics 12:13* Here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

Matthew 19:17 So He said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.”

Romans 2:13* For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

Matthew 5:17-18* Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

Revelation 14:12^ Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the faith of Jesus.

Matthew 22:37-40 This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

Romans 6:15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

Romans 6:1-2 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

Romans 3:20* Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

Romans 7:7* What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.”

Galatians 3:24** Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

John 8:46* Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me?

John 14:15* If you love me, you will obey what I command.

John 14:21^ They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

John 14:23-24* Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

John 15:10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.

1 John 5:3^ For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome

(Unless otherwise mentioned, all quoted scripture is from the New King James Version)

***King James Version *New International Version ^New Revised Standard Version*