For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves (Rom. 2:14, NASB).

Sabbath MARCH 29

Laws in Christ’s Day

Ps. 19:7

"Law is a system of rules and guidelines which are enforced through social institutions to govern behavior. . . . The law shapes politics, economics and society in countless ways and serves as a social mediator of relations between people." We don’t necessarily need a law to know what is right from wrong. In some cases, people know what is right or wrong without having a law to tell them.

Do you think that God’s law limits you?

Laws can make our lives better, or they can make our lives miserable. How much better it is to have God change your heart so you are living the law from the inside rather than following a stone plaque on the wall without giving them a second thought.

A large part of having laws is submitting to authority. In some cases, the authorities involved in creating the laws are unreasonable. Then their laws also are unreasonable and harmful. Usually, however, well thought out laws protect us from harm.

Some people think that keeping laws limits what they can do and that obedience prevents them from thinking for themselves. We see people on television and in films bending the rules and defying the laws of society, yet escaping justice. Some people think that these people are brave and heroic. But how much harm do such individuals bring to the world just to make their point?

Then there are people who take the law seriously. Their acts of selflessness often bring beauty out of a simple law. By their obedience, they help to change the world and inspire others to do so. Thus, they make this world a better place.

What is your moral code? How do you feel about respecting authority? Do you think that God’s law limits you? As you live in this world, surrounded by the laws of the land and the laws of God, how do you view law? Is your view of law changing the world?

This week, take a stand. Think about your morals and standards. Recognize the wisdom in God’s law. Understand how His law affects us and therefore, the world. Decide to make a good difference. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Ps. 19:7).


sunday MARCH 30

Jesus and the Law

Logos

Jesus Manoukian


The Jews of Christ’s time lived by many sets of laws. There were the Ten Commandments and the Mosaic laws for both moral and civic issues. Then there were the traditions of the religious authorities, called the rabbinic laws. In addition to their own laws and customs, the Jews were subject to a foreign government, the Romans.


Jesus was born during a time in Israel’s history of foreign occupation. The Jews were treated like second-class citizens in their own country. They did not have the same rights as Roman citizens. They could be forced to carry loads for Roman citizens (Matt. 5:41). They were subjected to Roman taxes and census (Mark 12:17; Luke 2:1–5). Neither could they enforce all of the civil laws as outlined in the Torah without Roman permission (John 19:7).

[Jesus] demonstrates that externally keeping the law is not enough.

Jesus upheld the Roman law even in the face of occupation and injustice. He admonished followers to literally go the extra mile when imposed upon (Matt. 5:41). And when asked by the Pharisees whether they should pay taxes to the Romans, Jesus said to "give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s" (Mark 12:17, NIV).
The Israelites and tribes of Benjamin and Judah turned toward idol worship again and again. In an attempt to turn the people away from their self-destructive ways, God left them to their own devices, and the Babylonians destroyed the temple and took much of the Jewish population captive. Once Nehemiah, under God’s guidance, had restored the temple and rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, the Jewish leaders created laws to protect the Ten Commandments and the laws of Moses so that the Jews would never again be taken into captivity. For example, God’s command to keep the Sabbath holy was expanded to include rules about how far you could walk on a Sabbath day or whether you could even pick up a handkerchief during the Sabbath.
Jesus seemed to have little regard for these traditions. He initiated healing people who had nonlife-threatening conditions on Sabbath. He let His disciples pick grain and eat it on the Sabbath. He even commanded some of the people He healed on Sabbath to pick up their beds and carry them home on the Sabbath. All of this left the Pharisees and religious leaders feeling very threatened.

The Mosaic Laws (Deut. 22:23, 24; 24:1–4; Matt. 19:9; John 8:1–11)
The Mosaic civil law set guidelines for everyday living among the children of Israel. Some of these laws pointed to Christ. Temple sacrifices and ceremonies were no longer needed after His life on earth. Type had met antitype. Mosaic law permitted a husband to give his wife a certificate of divorce if he found something displeasing about her (Deut. 24:1–4). Jesus, however, said that the only reason for divorce was sexual immorality (Matt. 19:9). Thus, Jesus calls people to a higher standard. In other cases, Jesus challenged the Mosaic law. When a woman or man was caught in adultery, they were both to be stoned to death (Deut. 22:23, 24). In John 8:1–11, the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery to Jesus to judge. His response was, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:7, NIV). The only person who could have fit that description was Christ Himself. While He did not condone the woman’s sinful act, He did not condemn her to death as the Mosaic law required. Instead, He offered her forgiveness and newness of life.

Moral Law (Matt. 5:21, 22; 19:16–26; Mark 12:30, 31)
The Ten Commandments show us God’s character and our sinful condition. Jesus kept this law perfectly. While He understood that salvation by no means came through the moral law, He still upheld that law (Matt. 19:16–26). He clearly states that the Ten Commandments, and ultimately God’s character, can be summarized by love—loving others as ourselves and loving God with all of our hearts (Mark 12:30, 31).
Whereas the Jews attempted to keep the letter of the law, Jesus magnified the law. In the Sermon on the Mount, He demonstrates that externally keeping the law is not enough. We all sin, both outwardly and in our hearts. So according to Jesus, hate is equivalent to murder and lust is equivalent to adultery (Matt. 5:21). Clearly none of us can boast about keeping the commandments.
Keeping the law, showing love to others and God Himself, is not a matter of legalism, but a byproduct of our relationship with Christ and the experiencing of His grace. Because of Jesus’ perfect life, our lives are changed into the likeness of God. It is not the legalism of the Pharisees, but the perfect life of Jesus that saves us.

In Conclusion (2 Cor. 3:18)
It is important for us to understand and emulate how Christ interacted with the laws of His day and the legalistic traditions of the religious authorities. He ultimately revealed God’s perfect character of love, which the Ten Commandments describe. As we spend time with Christ, we will be changed into His likeness.
beloved. But they persisted in their legal review. When Jesus encouraged His followers to eat a little grain as they walked through the field on the Sabbath, they labeled Him a law-breaker. When He healed the man at the pool on a Sabbath—actually healed him and forgave his sins—they cried law-breaker again.

**His take on the law was to internalize it.**

We must remember what law these lawyers traded in. They were not justices of the peace, paralegals, or attorneys. They were not the ones needed to help convey the title to land upon purchase. They were the arbiters of the laws of Moses, the Torah, and the multitude of legal regulations that Jewish churchmen had added to the practice of faith. In fact, their rules had become so incredibly derivative that most times Jesus had only to quote the Word of God to settle their dispute.

When Jesus was on the mount and gave His famous sermon, it was largely a repudiation of this sort of law. “You have heard it said,” He began on several occasions and then maintained, “But I tell you.” Consistently, His take on the law was to internalize it and give it a more comprehensive meaning.

Here is the great irony: in taking the great principles of God’s law, derived from Moses and the prophets, and turning them into rigid, arbitrary rules of behavior, these Jewish men of “law” had actually turned it into the logic of Roman law, which they abhorred. “The basis for Roman law was the idea that the exact form, not the intention, of words or of actions produced legal consequences. Romans recognized that there are witnesses to actions and words, but not to intentions.”

Palestine was under Roman rule. Jews hated the occupation and all that it represented. How tragic that these Jewish lawyers had so forgotten the inward power of God and their need to live before a God who knows even our thoughts, that they had come to mimic the very secular legal logic they so detested!


**wednesday APRIL 2**

**How-to Sonikile Tembo**

**Love Fulfills the Law**

**Rom. 13:8–10**

The Bible shows us our history and our future. It also reveals hope for a hungry, selfish, and lost world. That hope involves a Savior who lives in people’s hearts through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit lives in us, He helps us to keep God’s law. His law is a law of love—love for Him (the first four commandments) and love for people (the last six commandments). Love is literally the foundation of God’s law. The Pharisees, on the other hand, “had taken the Ten Commandments and expanded it into a religious system of 613 laws (365 negative commands and 248 positive laws). By contrast, Jesus was able to reduce all the law into the two commandments to love God and your neighbor.” With Jesus living in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, how can we show our love for God and for our neighbor? Following are some ways. Can you think of others?

**How can we show our love for God and our neighbor?**

Study the Bible regularly. There are many ways of doing so. For ideas on Bible reading plans, go to Bible Gateway at [http://www.biblegateway.com/reading-plans?version=NIV](http://www.biblegateway.com/reading-plans?version=NIV), and choose a plan that suits you.

Pray regularly. To keep your prayer time from getting boring, consider the different ways to pray that are mentioned at [http://www.christianitytoday.com/yi/hottopics/faithvalues/28.57.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/yi/hottopics/faithvalues/28.57.html).

Teach someone to read. Many public libraries instruct literate adults on how to teach other adults how to read. Consider the possibilities this opens up for such people, like finally being able to read the Bible.

*Feed and clothe the poor.* When you shop for groceries, buy one or two items extra to give to your city’s food bank. And if there are good clothes in your closet that you aren’t wearing anymore, donate them to a thrift shop.

**REACT**

1. What other ways can you think of to personally put God’s law (love for Him and love for others) into practice?
2. Civil wars, child abuse, school shootings, and other horrible events have reduced life to almost nothing for many people. What should be the role of the church in such situations?


**thursday APRIL 3**

**Opinion Collins Kafaluka**

**“In Vain They Worship Me”**

**Matt. 15:1–20; Mark 7:1–23; Col. 2:8, 20–23; 2 Tlm. 4:2–4; Titus 1:13, 14**

Since time immemorial, societies have been governed by traditions (rites, doctrines, customs, and practices) handed down from one generation to another through either oral or written communication. Breaking these traditions often meant death or being cast out of society. It is wrong to be traditional when a tradition is harmful to people. For example, every year in Spain men dress as the devil and jump over rows of babies lined along the street.1 Then there is the New Year’s dive in Siberia when men dive 40 meters down into Lake Baikal. One diver takes a tree with him so that all of the divers can dance around it.

At first, these traditions seem harmful enough. But what if a man falls on one of the babies? Or someone drowns during the dive?

Some traditions, however, are good.

Some traditions, however, are good. For example, having sundown worship on Friday evening to usher in the Sabbath. People in Christ’s time also adhered to traditions, many of which were devised by the Pharisees and other teachers of the law. Some of these traditions even went against the commandments of God. One such example is found in Mark 7:1–13. In verse 10, Jesus mentions how important it is to honor our fathers and mothers as commanded by God (Exod. 20:12). He also mentions in verse 11 how this commandment was invalidated by the rabbis.

Thus, through the Written Word, Jesus teaches us that it is more important to obey God’s laws than it is to obey the commandments of men. In trying to expound upon the laws of God, the religious leaders only burdened the people with traditions. In vain they worshiped God, “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9).
As Christ’s followers, we are called upon daily to study and obey His Word. These are two ways of making sure that no one takes us captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ” (Col. 2:8, NIV).

**REACT**

1. What are some of the traditions currently found in Christianity that go against the Word of God?
2. How can we be sure we are following God’s law as opposed to traditions that may cost us eternal life?

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**Friday April 4**

**Exploration**

Leslie Jane Simmons

“Open Our Eyes, Lord”

Ps. 119:18

**Conclude**

Most of us at times feel that certain laws restrict our lives. Yet generally speaking, laws are meant to make our lives better in many ways. The laws that governed the Pharisees were often restrictive. They were built on traditions and rituals, and often the meaning behind the laws was little known or little cared for. Yet God’s law, as seen in the Ten Commandments, is based on love—His love for us, our love for Him, and our love for each other. Let us love Him and one another.

**Consider**

- Summarizing your morals and standards. Upon what are they based? How have they enhanced or detracted from your daily life? In what areas would you like to see improvement? Pray to God about them.
- Using the Internet to research Christian traditions around the world. Consider how these traditions can enhance or stunt a person’s relationship with Christ.
- Drawing, painting, or sculpting something to depict the following quote from Monday’s lesson: “Nature and revelation alike testify of God’s love. . . . The sunshine and the rain, that gladden and refresh the earth, the hills and seas and plains, all speak to us of the Creator’s love.”
- Silently acting out certain religious traditions during a Friday evening worship. After someone has guessed the tradition, discuss its ability to help believers grow in Christ.
- Singing “The Law of the Lord Is Perfect.” See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_35pIJCrGY. Or have your Sabbath School group read it as a voice choir for an adult Sabbath School program (see The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, Responsive Reading No. 774).
- Interviewing a grandparent, aunt, uncle, or cousin to see how God’s law has enhanced that person’s life.
- Reflecting on what God’s law has meant to you during different periods in your life. Consider the circumstances that may have played a role in some of your changing attitudes toward the law.

**Connect**

Psalm 111:1, 7–9; Proverbs 3:1–4; Romans 13:9, 10.


Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . ., pp. 263–270.

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Anonymous
Lesson Two - April 5-11

Christ and the Law of Moses

"'If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me'" (John 5:46, NRSV).

Sabbath - April 5

Introduction

Sifelani Masamba

Remaining Faithful

Luke 2:41–52

Standing on a bridge above the N2 freeway in Cape Town, I waited to get a good look of my country’s president and his motorcade as they traveled from the airport to the city center for the opening of Parliament. It was easy for me to identify his fleet, because the cars were being driven faster than the speed limit allows. This confirmed all the reports I had read in the press about government officials breaking the very laws they create.

He chose no shortcuts, no easy way out.

Mindful of the fact that one of the best ways for adults to teach children to be obedient is for them to model obedience themselves, one would expect government officials to obey laws, thereby setting the example for nongovernment citizens. However, people in all areas of life all around the world have issues with obeying laws, even people who profess to follow Christ. Thankfully, the Son of God took on human nature and came to earth to show us by example how to live according to the Father’s law. In fact, He even lived according to the law of Moses—the ceremonial laws—which were designed by God to create a society that reflected His will and that served as a beacon to other nations. From circumcision to His visit to the temple, to the feasts and His attitude about taxes, Jesus remained faithful to this system of laws that He knew would be fulfilled through His death and ministry in heaven.

Righteousness by works (legalism) typified the Pharisees. They sought to gain salvation by keeping God’s laws—the ceremonial law in particular.

“The rabbis had sought to make a hedge about the law, so to fence in its precepts by additional regulations of their own that there would be no chance to break the commandment.”

This week our lesson focuses on Jesus and the law of Moses. Jesus attended the Jewish festivals and followed Jewish customs, many of which pointed to Him. How easy it could have been for Him to violate those laws, just as the authorities of our day often do. Instead, He chose no shortcuts, no easy way out.

As we study this week’s lesson, may God help us to be as faithful as our Savior.

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2. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 308.

Sunday - April 6

Evidence

Priscilla Tsotsoma Garanewako

He Wrote of Me

John 5:1–18

Oftentimes, many people think about keeping the law as a way to impress God. However, there is really nothing we can ever do to impress Him. That is why Jesus teaches us to look to Him for salvation. This is the case in John 5. In verses 1–15, we read about how He healed a man who had been invalid for 38 years. First, Jesus asked the man if he wanted to be healed. This turned the man’s attention immediately to the Savior, but he still thought help would come to him only from the pool (verse 7). Jesus’ response was swift and to the point, “‘Get up! Pick up your mat and walk’” (verse 8, NIV). The man immediately obeyed.

‘‘Is a person allowed to heal on the Sabbath?’”

What happened next reveals some astounding truths from the answer Jesus gave in response to the allegations of breaking the Sabbath (verses 9–18). The Jews sought to slay Jesus most likely “because He had healed the man and because He had commanded him to carry his bed on the Sabbath.” While it was allowed by Jewish law to treat a man who was acutely sick, the treating of a chronic case such as this was forbidden. Thus an ancient Jewish commentary, written many centuries after Jesus’ time, but which undoubtedly reflects the situation in His day, declares: ‘Is a person..."
allowed to heal on the Sabbath? Our masters have taught. Mortal danger overrides the Sabbath; but if it is doubtful whether he [a sick man] will regain health or not, one should not override the Sabbath [on his account]. . . . Jesus’ choice in the present instance of a man who had been ill for 38 years seems to have been made purposely to demonstrate the fallacy of such Jewish legal restrictions.\(^1\)

Thus Jesus points out to us the greater law behind any set of rules, be they the Ten Commandments or the law of Moses. That law is a law of love and mercy. What Jesus was saying through this Sabbath day miracle is basically this: “Even on the Sabbath God’s love and mercy and compassion act; and so do mine.” \(^2\)

\(^1\) The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 5, pp. 950, 951.


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**monday APRIL 7**

**Logos**

Lisa Poole

*A Beacon That Still Shines*

Exod. 13:2, 12; Lev. 12:1–8; 20:10; Deut. 6:5, 6; Matt. 5:17–20; Luke 2:21–24; John 5:42–46

Several millennia ago, God delivered laws and commandments through Moses to His people. Centuries later, Jesus walked among God’s people, challenging and fulfilling these Mosaic laws. Today, either the relevance of these laws has been legally promulgated as still binding, or they’ve been omitted entirely by various forms of new covenant theology. Nevertheless, there “are many examples of laws that Christians accept even though they are included in the Mosaic legislation—laws against idolatry, homosexuality, bestiality, and incest (Leviticus 18–19). The two greatest commandments are also taken from the Pentateuch: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart’ (Deut. 6:5), and ‘love your neighbor as yourself’ (Lev. 19:18).” \(^1\)

“First comes God’s grace.”

So what was Jesus’ point during His life on earth regarding the Mosaic laws? The “Mosaic laws form a mosaic.” \(^2\) Each little piece arranged with others creates a picture of instruction for God’s people.

**Bless His Heart! (Exod. 13:2, 12; Lev. 12:1–8; Luke 2:21–24)**

Circumcision symbolized the intimate relationship God wanted with His children. This practice actually preceded the Mosaic laws (Gen. 17:10–12). In Leviticus 26:40–42, He clarified His desire to have such a relationship with His people. Jesus’ parents followed the Mosaic law by having Jesus circumcised when He was 8 days old and dedicated when He was 40 days old (see Exodus 13:2; Luke 2:22, 23).

What was the point of Jesus’ circumcision and dedication? Notice several biblical “admissions” that reveal God’s heart: (1) “You wove me in my mother’s womb . . . / My frame was not hidden from You, / When I was made in secret . . . / How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!” (Ps. 139:13–17, NASB); (2) “I will be their God” (Gen. 17:8); (3) “Consecrate to Me” (Exod. 13:2, NIV); “Set apart to the Lord” (Exod. 13:12, NKJV); “I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people” (Lev. 26:12, NKJV).

Jesus’ life demonstrated the intentions of the Mosaic commands and revealed their deeper purposes.

**The Heart of the Matter (Deut. 6:5, 6; Matt. 5:17–20; John 5:41–46)**

One of the most beautiful pieces of the Mosaic law is in Deuteronomy 6:5–7. Here it is clearly articulated that God was searching for a heart relationship with His people. Nevertheless, they reduced the signs of the relationship into the sum total of their experience with Him. Thus, many people were offended at Jesus’ apparent disregard for these laws. Even though He said that He came to fulfill the law (Matt. 5:17), the biases of their hearts remained. Recognizing this as a core issue, Jesus responded in a direct manner: “I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. . . . How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another, and do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God? . . . For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me” (John 5:42–46, NASB).

The light shining from the Mosaic laws had been obscured.

**Jesus on the Teeter-Totter (Lev. 20:10; John 8:1–11)**

The people waited in suspense as the woman caught in adultery faced the law—and Jesus (John 8:1–11). Spoken by God Himself, the law demanded that “the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death” (Lev. 20:10, NASB). The terms on which relationships could be broken had been spelled out with the intention that God's people would find and enjoy life (Lev. 18:5). On this occasion, Jesus spoke to a place in the human heart that longs for the simultaneous execution of justice and mercy.

Here He draws the human eye to a place beyond the specific terms of justice, a place where justice and mercy indeed reside in perfect harmony. “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.” Then Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (John 8:11, 12, NKJV). “This is the correct and the only proper sequence of things: first comes God’s grace and then He provides His instruction on how to live in holiness.” \(^3\)

**The Mosaic Is?**

God has always been fixing His gaze on a spiritual reality beyond that of signs and symbols. “You see, if there was anything that Jesus wanted everyone to understand it was this: A person is worth something simply because he is a person. That is why he treated people like he did. . . . The girl caught making undercover thunder with someone she shouldn’t—he forgave her. The untouchable leper who asked for cleansing—he touched him.” \(^4\)

**REACT**

1. What is the purpose of infant/child dedications?
2. How does Jesus “offend” His people today?
3. To where or what do you believe the beacon light of the Mosaic laws have been pointing?

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\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) Ibid., p. 4.

\(^4\) Max Lucado, *No Wonder They Call Him the Savior* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2011), p. 17.

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**tuesday APRIL 8**

**Testimony**

Timothy Chabvalasanza K.
**The Truth of the Matter**

**Matt. 5:17–20; John 5:46**

"God’s people, whom he calls his peculiar treasure, were privileged with a two-fold system of law: the moral and the ceremonial. The one, pointing back to creation to keep in remembrance the living God who made the world, whose claims are binding upon all men in every dispensation, and which will exist through all time and eternity. The other, given because of man’s transgression of the moral law, the obedience of which consisted in sacrifices and offerings pointing to the future redemption. . . ."

"The law of types reached forward to Christ."

"Christians who profess to be Bible students can appreciate more fully than ancient Israel did the full signification of the ceremonial ordinances that they were required to observe. If they are indeed Christians, they are prepared to acknowledge the sacredness and importance of the shadowy types, as they see the accomplishment of the events which they represent. The death of Christ gives the Christian a correct knowledge of the system of ceremonies and explains prophecies and types which still remain obscure to the Jews. Moses of himself framed no law. Christ, the angel whom God had appointed to go before his chosen people, gave to Moses statutes and requirements necessary to a living religion and to govern the people of God. Christians commit a terrible mistake in calling this law severe and arbitrary, and then contrasting it with the gospel and mission of Christ in his ministry on earth, as though he were in opposition to the just precepts which they call the law of Moses. . . ."

"Christ, who went before Moses in the wilderness, made the principles of morality and religion more clear by particular precepts, specifying the duty of man to God and his fellow-men, for the purpose of protecting life, and guarding the sacred law of God, that it should not be entirely forgotten in the midst of an apostate world."**

**REACT**

Israel ended up focusing on the specifics rather than the purpose of the law of Moses. What is the focus of your life?

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**wednesday APRIL 9**

**How-to**

**Japhet J. Madanhi**

**The Goal of Command**

**Matt. 4:1–11; 5:17–20**

When God gave the ceremonial laws to Moses, He did not intend to set aside the covenant He previously had established through the Ten Commandments. When Jesus lived on earth, He was faithful not only to the Decalogue, but to the ceremonial laws as well. Indeed, both sets of laws pointed to His death. What can we learn from our Savior about being faithful? How can we follow His example?

**Love should always be the basis of our obedience.**

* Do not yield to Satan’s temptations. With every temptation, Jesus countered with verses from Deuteronomy, chapters 6 and 8. Obedience is proof that Jesus lives in our hearts. When we obey God, we are demonstrating our love for Him, and we are showing the world that we have no other gods but Him.

* Have faith. Jesus remained faithful to God and to us. That faith led Him to leave heaven and His Father so that He could show us how we could have salvation. Hence, His faith led Him to die the second death for us on a Roman cross. Let us believe in His sacrifice for us so that we can live with Him for eternity.

* Freely return His love: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" *(Deut. 6:5, NKJV).* "Love your neighbor as yourself!" *(Lev. 19:18, NKJV).* Love is the basis of both the Ten Commandments and the ceremonial laws. Likewise, love should always be the basis of our obedience.

**REACT**

Some people use certain Bible verses to "prove" that we no longer need to obey the Ten Commandments because Christ’s death abolished the need to do so. For example, see *Galatians* 3:11. How would you respond to them?

**thursday APRIL 10**

**Opinion**

**Yeukai Cleopas Muchemwa**

**Identifying Crisis**

**Matt. 16:13–16; Hebrews 11**

Jesus once asked His disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” *(Matt. 16:13, 14, NIV).* He asked them this because they needed to have a clear understanding of who their Savior was. Again the question came, “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” *(verses 15, 16, NIV).*

**Do people see Jesus in you?**

Many times, we fail to understand and identify who we really are and what Jesus and His law means to us. Do you know that you are fearfully and wonderfully made *(Ps. 139:14)*? You are unique. No one has the same fingerprints or voice as you. And if that's not enough, you were created by God in His image *(Gen. 1:26).* He put you on earth to accomplish a task, to leave a name, a legacy. We can accomplish this by doing what the Lord asks of us, by obeying His law through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 11 gives us a report of people in the Bible who left a legacy for us to emulate—a legacy of faith. If you were to stand among them today, what testimony would you be giving? What are your words and deeds saying about you? Do people see Jesus in you? His life on earth is an example of the life we should lead—a God-centered life. We are to identify ourselves with Him and His law.

When we graduate from a course of education, we receive a diploma or a certificate. If we marry, we receive a certificate of marriage. Likewise, if we
accept Christ as our Savior and live according to His will. Our names will be recorded in the book of life. So renew your thoughts and unload your past and burdens (Heb. 12:1). Develop the fruit of the Spirit with His help (Gal. 5:22–25), for we are the work of God's hands, and we were bought by the blood of the Lamb.

Friday April 11

Exploration
Allison Saucedo

Just as Jesus Did

Matt. 5:17–20

CONCLUDE

During Jesus’ time on earth, He set a perfect example for us. Although He could have counted Himself as being above the law—after all, He was God—He followed the laws of Moses. He must have known that, in order to guide our life choices, we would one day look back at the way He lived. Following God's laws is not always easy, and rarely is it popular, especially in a world that has no value for the things of heaven. Therefore, it is especially important that we stay in constant communion with our Father, that we choose to dwell in Him each day.

CONSIDER

- Journaling about how you see yourself deviating from the law. Brainstorm ways to make changes to those deviations.
- Starting a small accountability group. Use your time together to share areas in which you struggle to follow God's law to encourage one another toward growth.
- Analyzing your current lifestyle. Make notes of areas in which you find that you are not living in accordance with God's law. Then, with His help, work to align yourself more closely with His principles.
- Drawing or painting a picture that depicts Jesus following the laws of His Father. Put the illustration where you can see it so that it will remind you of His example.
- Writing a poem or song that tells about Christ's example regarding the law. Share it with a friend or perform it for your Sabbath School class.
- Meditating on God's law while going on a nature walk. Pray that He will impress upon you where you need to grow. When you return from the walk, write down ideas or inspirations in a notebook.

CONNECT

lesson three APRIL 12–18

Christ and Religious Tradition

"...This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines..." (Matt. 15:8, 9, NRSV).

sabbath APRIL 12

Introduction
Glenn Orion

Confusing the Method With the Message

Matt. 15:8, 9

While on assignment with the travel magazine I worked for, I was to explore two "religious" diets: halal and kosher. The latter led me to the first synagogue built in Makati City in the early 1940s. I was particularly fascinated with the scrutiny given to certain rituals performed in the process of ensuring that food preparation strictly followed kosher laws. For example, a goat's throat must be slit precisely the right way, and an egg must be inspected to make sure that the yolk does not have any blood spots.

Jesus’ answer put their behavior in perspective.

Another tradition involves the "kosher lamp." This lamp is designed so that the shade can be twisted to block the light without actually turning the lamp off. Thus a person need not "work" on the Sabbath by turning the electricity on or off. How to keep the Sabbath as commanded in God's law is also often a point of contention among Seventh-day Adventists, including young adult church members. As children, we had the benefit of our parents' watchful eyes to keep us from playing certain games or reading secular material during the Sabbath hours. Maybe some of us even tried to rationalize certain activities by giving them a biblical spin.

Interestingly, over 2,000 years ago, Sabbath keeping was an issue during Jesus' time. He and His disciples were subjected to scrutiny when they were walking through a field of grain and ate some of what was to be harvested. The Pharisees didn't hesitate to accuse them of doing what was unlawful on the Sabbath. Yet, Jesus' answer put their behavior in perspective: "Then he said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath'" (Mark 2:27, 28, NIV).

In other words, the interpretation of the scribes and Pharisees was a legalistic view. They failed to see that God's law was put in place for our benefit. Sometimes it's easy to be so focused on the message that our methods end up getting in the way. Let's avoid falling into that trap starting this week. With God's guidance, let us seek true righteousness rather than our own ideas of right and wrong.

sunday APRIL 13

Logos
Paul Graham

Be On Your Guard

Matt. 16:5, 6; Mark 7:1–8; 8:14–21; John 8:1–12

Valuing the Traditions of Men (Mark 7:1–8)
The book of Mark highlights the person of Christ, along with His mission and teachings as they relate to the Old Testament. Through Christ's teachings and life, the Old Testament comes alive. Most of the Jewish people during Christ's day lived according to how the Pharisees and Sadducees interpreted Jewish law. These men directed the spirituality of the people and promoted tradition rather than the true principles of God's law. The Pharisees and certain scribes came from Jerusalem and saw Christ's disciples eating without having washed their hands according to ceremony.

Religious people can be dangerous people.

Based on tradition, before Jews eat, their hands must be washed in case they had come in contact with a person who was not a Jew and therefore was considered to be unclean. However, just washing their hands was not enough. They had to do it a certain way. In Mark 7:5, the religious leaders questioned Jesus for not teaching the disciples the tradition of the elders. He then referred to Isaiah 29:13, where the prophet Isaiah warned of the hypocrisy of the people who "honor Me with their lips, / But have removed their hearts far from Me" (NKJV). Christ teaches that the commandments of God, which are based on His love for us, are much more important than the doctrines of men. While many traditions are important, they must be governed by the Word of God. Jesus categorizes individuals who teach the doctrines of men as hypocrites.

Saved by the Spirit of the Law Rather Than the Letter of the Law (John 8:1–12)
What happened in John 8:1–12 teaches us that Christ desires us to live according to the spirit of the law rather than according to the letter of the law. Traditionally, Hebrew law taught that if a man and a woman were caught together in adultery, they both should be stoned (Deut. 22:22). But here only the woman was brought before Jesus, who proceeded to challenge the letter of the law as interpreted by the teachers of the law and the Pharisees. What they really cared about was trapping Jesus.

Religious laws and traditions can be trapping Jesus. Religious traditions do not generally require a lot from us. When we contrast what such traditions actually demand of us to what Christ desires from us, we discover just how lacking we can be in our commitment to Him. How often do we discover that we actually desire and choose to go the extra mile rather than His laws really require?

Yes, Christ came to live out the will of the Father and to show us what it means to live a godly life. He longs for us to be guided by the spirit of His law rather than by the letter of the law. Let us not be entangled with religious traditions that supersede the true meanings God desired His laws to have. Rather than His laws really require?

REACT
1. What are some religious traditions in your life that may conflict with the true meaning of Christ's teachings?
2. What traditions in your life or local church help you to have a closer relationship with Christ?

**monday APRIL 14**

**Testimony**

**Abigail McPherson**

**The Rules Still Apply**

**Matt. 5:17**

God created us with free will. We live in a world full of influences to see, touch, taste, and do whatever is appealing and entertaining to us. The problem with this train of thought is that much of what is appealing to us often goes against the will of God for our lives. Society and even misconstrued biblical teachings have persuaded believers that the Ten Commandments became null and void when Christ died on Calvary, thus giving us permission to live as we please and still have eternal life.

**God's law is not inconvenient.**

"There are many who claim that by the death of Christ the law was abrogated; but in this they contradict Christ's own words, 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. . . . Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law.' Matthew 5:17, 18. It was to atone for man's transgression of the law that Christ laid down His life. Could the law have been changed or set aside, then Christ need not have died. By His life on earth He honored the law of God. By His death He established it. He gave His life as a sacrifice, not to destroy God's law; not to create a lower standard, but that justice might be maintained, that the law might be shown to be immutable, that it might stand fast forever. "Satan had claimed that it was impossible for man to obey God's commandments; and in our own strength it is true that we cannot obey them. But Christ came in the form of humanity, and by His perfect obedience He proved that humanity and divinity combined can obey every one of God's precepts. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." John 1:12. This power is not in the human agent. It is the power of God. When a soul receives Christ, He receives power to live the life of Christ.*

God's law is not inconvenient. It is the road map to His kingdom, and Jesus Christ is the perfect Example that "the works of his hands are faithful and just; / all his precepts are trustworthy" (Ps. 111:7, NIV).

**REACT**

Has following God's unchangeable law been difficult for you? How can you reincorporate God's precious law into your life?

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**tuesday APRIL 15**

**Evidence**

**Makeeya Hazelton**

**The Heart of the Law**

**Isa. 29:13; John 4:23**

The book of Isaiah is a prophetic book, written during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, all kings of Judah. In it are recorded visions and messages given by God to Isaiah to deliver to both Jerusalem and Judah (Isa. 1:1). Later, we find an important proclamation concerning the observance of human laws and its interference with the true worship of God: “The Lord says: ‘These people come near to me with their mouth / and honor me with their lips, / but their hearts are far from me. / Their worship of me / is based on merely human rules they have been taught’” (Isa. 29:13, NIV). From this verse, we begin to understand the heart of the matter—their worship of God was pointless as long as they focused on following human rules. “Their worship consisted of ritual utterly devoid of true communion with Heaven . . . They looked upon their outward performance as meeting the requirements God had made, and thought thereby to merit divine favor.”

**Let us surrender our hearts to God.**

In the New Testament, we see the Pharisees and teachers of the law confronting Jesus because His disciples were not observing the religious ritual of hand washing before they ate (Matt. 15:1, 2). In verses 7–9, Jesus confirms the earlier prophecy of Isaiah and informs the elders that they were setting religious traditions above God's law. Although the religious rituals put in place were well-intentioned, they eventually became the wrong focus for upholding the law.

We can learn a valuable lesson from the Pharisees and teachers in how we choose to worship God in our lives. If our worship is purely out of...
obligation, we will not produce the result God is looking for. "What is that result?" you may ask. It is genuine worship, which comes from the heart. Such worship reflects our obedience to God's law out of love rather than out of obligation.

What does your heart reflect?
Let us surrender our hearts to God so that we may worship Him through love rather than from tradition or obligation.

**REACT**

1. How can we prevent ourselves from worshiping God out of obligation?
2. What are some human rules that we often bring into worship that hinder us from being truly present with God?

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* The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 216.

**wednesday APRIL 16**

**How-to Brandi Vicks Out With the Old, In With the New**

**Rom. 10:3–13**

God gave us the Ten Commandments so we would know what He expected of us and how to live so that we would have happier lives. Jesus’ life and teachings, however, show us that our obedience does not save us. Rather we are saved by His grace. If we accept Him into our hearts, His Holy Spirit will help us to obey. The Holy Spirit will help us to trust and believe in the Savior with all of our hearts. Following are some steps we can take to align our hearts with Jesus.

**Speak with your actions, your loving-kindness.**

Surrender to God completely. Tell Him that you want to surrender your life to Him. Often when we talk to God, we just ask Him for things we think we need. So take time to thank Him for what you have now. Then ask Him to order your steps according to His will. Let go of what weighs you down. These things make it difficult for you to grow in Christ. Think about all the judgments you make about the people in your life and how these judgments ruin your peace of mind. It is not your responsibility to determine what these people are doing is right or wrong. That is God’s concern. Think, too, about all the grudges you hold. God will renew your soul if you let them go.

Practice living in alignment with God. Once you let go of all your negative thoughts, your load will become much lighter, and it will be much easier to align yourself with God. Negative circumstances might not fade away, but you will be able to see God working through them on your behalf.

Teach righteousness. You might consider this a daunting task. However, the best way to teach other people about God's righteousness is by example. You do not have to say much in order for people to learn from you. Speak with your actions, your loving-kindness. Once you are aligned with God, His Holy Spirit will help you to do so.

**REACT**

1. What does it mean to you when God asks you to fully trust Him?
2. Why must surrendering yourself to God be the first step in aligning your heart with His heart?
3. For what are you presently thankful?

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**thursday APRIL 17**

**Opinion Randall E. Flash**

**Righteousness 101: The Main Ingredient**

**Matt. 5:20; Rom. 10:3–4**

One of my favorite classes in high school was home economics. Who wouldn't enjoy a class where you get to eat your homework? Life has moved on from those days of meal prep and group projects. But one thing is sure even now: having the right ingredients is still essential.

In Righteousness 101, the Principal (God) sent His Son (Jesus Christ) to be our Instructor. Through the life of Christ, we are shown a great deal, but my main focus here is on one food item in particular—the bread of righteousness (Matt. 5:6). The ingredients are found in a recipe given to Moses.

Ask any good cook you know, and you'll learn that a recipe isn't a meal until it's planned for, paid for, and worked for. The Pharisees claimed to be the best chefs available. Unfortunately, there were two major issues. They modified the recipe to exclude the key ingredient, and they made their bread from inferior ingredients. Thus, the taste of the finished product left much to be desired. In fact, it was basically a different type of bread altogether; it was the bread of self-righteousness.

**Stay hungry. Stay thirsty. Consult often with your Teacher.**

In Matthew 5:20, Jesus highlights the ineffective approach used by the Pharisees. Simply put, any substitution, addition, or deviation from the original recipe is unacceptable (Rom. 10:3, 4). The Pharisees brought an offering more akin to Cain's than Abel's (Gen. 4:1–16).

Why did the Pharisees refuse to ask the instructor for help? The Bible tells us that He is willing to provide everything we need (2 Cor. 9:8–10). Righteousness is obtained by entreating our Teacher and consulting with Him. He wants us to ask Him questions, to sign up for study sessions, and to engage in confidential student-Teacher conferences. These endeavors are impossible without His help. Many of the Pharisees went through Righteousness 101, but failed it miserably. They knew their craft but left out the main ingredient.

Stay hungry. Stay thirsty. Consult often with your Teacher. That's the only way to pass Righteousness 101.

**REACT**

1. Why do we, like the Pharisees, often get caught in the trap of self-righteousness? How can we release ourselves from this trap? Or can we? Be able to explain your answers.
2. Second Corinthians 9:8–10 provides scholarship opportunities for Righteousness 101. What do these opportunities entail, and what do they mean to you personally?

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**friday APRIL 18**

**Exploration Debbie Battin Sasser**
Who Has Your Heart?
1 Corinthians 13

CONCLUDE
During His time on earth, Jesus can be found acting in love toward sinners instead of focusing on religious law. Paul's thoughts on love confirm what we see in Jesus—that words and actions without love are nothing (1 Cor. 13:1–3). We will fail to be like Christ if we are constantly trying to qualify for heaven by being good. We can live a truly Christian life when His love softens, molds, and fills our hearts. We look at the appearance of others, but God looks at our hearts (1 Sam. 16:7). Who has your heart?

CONSIDER
- Drawing an illustration of what God’s mercy means to you.
- Writing a prayer about God’s love and grace that you could pray to help comfort the woman caught in adultery. Who might you personally know who needs this prayer?
- Comparing the flawed view of the religious leaders with the loving, wise responses of Jesus in Mark 7:1–8; 10:17–27; John 6:1–12.
- Telling an experience about when you were reminded of God’s grace (for example, an emergency where you had to go to the store on Sabbath to buy baby formula for a mother in need).
- Going on a bird watching excursion to learn how God has lovingly provided food, shelter, and companionship for these small, fragile-looking creatures.
- Volunteering with a local organization that has planted a community garden. If your town doesn’t have such an organization, why not start one yourself or with your Sabbath School class?
- Listening to or playing the song “More Like Falling in Love” by Jason Gray. Check out http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKTW-srvr6E.

CONNECT
Max Lucado, In the Grip of Grace, chap. 1; Ty Gibson, See With New Eyes, chaps. 9, 10.
lesson four APRIL 19–25

Christ and the Law in the Sermon on the Mount

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot, or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (Matt. 5:17, 18, NKJV).

sabbath APRIL 19

Introduction

Emily Carlson

Addicted to Religion

Matt. 5:17, 18


All these are addictions. Yes. Even religion. But wait a minute. There's no such thing as too much faith, right? Too much of the Bible? Impossible! But that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about addicted to religion, not to Jesus. There's a big difference. And if there was ever a group of people addicted to religion, it was the Pharisees. But wait. You can't get more righteous than the Pharisees, can you? They followed the law to the letter.

You're a child of the King.

But that was just the problem. The Pharisees were hiding themselves inside walls of religion to hide from truth. Jesus was not the Messiah they were looking for. They were so busy trying to work their way to heaven that they didn't recognize that heaven had come to earth.

When it comes to God's law, we usually are drawn to one of two extremes—either we want nothing to do with any rules and regulations, insisting that Jesus did away with it all by dying on the cross, or, like the Pharisees, we get caught up in the tangle of works and rituals. Neither is what God wants for us. Jesus makes it clear: "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot, or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (Matt. 5:17, 18, NKJV). Jesus isn't asking us to throw out the law. He came to fulfill the law. However, He makes it clear in the Sermon on the Mount that keeping the law isn't just about keeping the commandments. It goes much deeper than that. Our words can be murderous; one glance, an act of adultery; our social niceties nothing but self-righteous emptiness.

There is a difference in knowing the law versus living the law, going through the motions of ceremony versus being sincere, faking ritual versus fostering a relationship with Jesus. He doesn't just want our obedience, He wants our entire heart. There is a hole, a feeling of unworthiness inside our beings that we try to fill with works. However, works do not equal worth. Our incompleteness must be filled instead with Jesus' grace. And His grace will transform our lives, helping us to live our God-given identity. You're a child of the King. Why not live like it?

sunday APRIL 20

Evidence

Elliott Moseley

The Law in 3-D

Matt. 5:17–48

The people were amazed at what Jesus was saying. He said to them, "I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20, NIV). How can that be possible? they must have wondered. The Pharisees and teachers of the law were considered to be the most righteous people of the day. They followed the law to the last letter of it. Jesus gave the people new insight into what it means to live by the law. By no means was He undermining the importance of the law, for in verse 18, He said, "Truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, nor the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (Matt. 5:18, NIV). By using examples such as murder and adultery, Jesus showed that really following the law encompasses not just our actions, but also our thoughts and motives. For example, adultery is more than just committing the act. Jesus said that even "anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:28, NIV). Temptation starts with a small thought which, when dwelt upon, can develop into the act of sin itself. When we grow in our relationship with Jesus, our thoughts and motives will be more in harmony with His, and we will delight in following His law.

Adultery is more than just committing the act.
We often see God’s law in terms of behaviors we do or do not do. In the busyness of life, we fail to remember that His laws involves more than that. Our relationship with Him is the most important thing of all. Since the beginning of Creation, Satan has tried to make God’s law seem burdensome. If we neglect spending time with the Lord every day, this also will become our view of His law. However, when we allow Jesus into our lives on a daily basis through prayer and Bible study, we allow Him to make us more and more like Him. And the more like Him we become, the more pleasure we take in following His law.

**REACT**
1. How do you see the relevance of God’s moral law in your life today?
2. How do you perceive the relationship between law and grace?
3. What can you do to improve your relationship with Jesus?

**Monday April 21**

**Logos**

**Rich Carlson**

**A Higher Calling**

**Matthew 5–7**

It culminated on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus was with His disciples and, as usual, He attracted a crowd. Jewish tradition and rabbinic regulations had stifled Jesus’ attempts to teach about the Father’s grace and mercy, and the wisdom of following His ways. Mark records His frustration in chapter 7, where Jesus said that the rabbis “have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions” (verse 8, NIV). Matthew expanded on this confusion of priorities in the Sermon on the Mount.

**God never bids us to a lower calling.**

**The Essence of the Sermon, Part 1 (Matt. 5:3–10, 21, 22)**

After multiple examples of what will make one “happy” or “blessed” (the Greek word maraios means “either”), Jesus launched into a series of statements illustrating what He thought was important for believers to understand. Now, there is nothing wrong with traditions, as long as the message is clear that traditions are ways of ordering liturgical and ecclesiastical life in order to provide stability. Every denomination has traditions, and as long as they are clearly identified as systems designed by people to help apply beliefs to current situations, they are not bad. For example, keeping the Sabbath is a command. However, much of what is called proper Sabbath observance is tradition. Coming together to worship is a command. The order of service or musical preference is tradition.

As Mark said, the Jews were “laying aside the commands of God” and replacing them with “the traditions of men.” As Jesus tried to rank these two contrasting priorities, He consistently emphasized a “higher calling” for God’s commands. He never said, “You have heard that it was said . . . , but I say to you, don’t be so legalistic. Lighten up.” Rather, He said things like, “You have heard that it was said, . . . You have heard that it was said, . . . You shall not murder,” and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment. But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment” (Matt. 5:21, 22, NIV). A good Jew could easily have said, “I have never taken the life of anyone. Therefore, I keep the law.” But He might have hated every Gentile he saw. Killing with a knife or a gun is terrible. Killing with a look, a word, or an attitude is apparently just as bad. Maybe it doesn’t have the same legal ramifications in a secular court of law, but to Jesus, avoiding such behavior is a “higher calling.”

**The Essence of the Sermon, Part 2 (Matt. 5:27–48)**

Let’s paraphrase some other commands in Jesus’ sermon:

“ ‘You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’ ” (verse 27, NIV). A good Jew would never think of doing such a thing. “ ‘But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart’ ” (verse 28). Sin is more than the act of the body. It’s the attitude of the heart. Again, it’s a “higher calling.”

You have heard that it was said . . .

An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I say don’t resist one who is evil.

If someone strikes you on the right cheek, you have a right to defend yourself.

If someone forces you to go one mile, go two.

Let people know how much you give. It might “guilt” them into giving more.

Your enemies probably deserve to be hated.

When you give your offerings, don’t let anyone know.

When you pray, don’t make a show of your piety.

And when you fast, wash your face and comb your hair so you don’t look like you are fasting!

In every case, Jesus does not set the bar lower. He sets it higher! He could have said:

If someone strikes you on the right cheek, you have a right to defend yourself.

If someone forces you to go one mile, don’t go a step farther.

Your enemies probably deserve to be hated.

Let people know how much you give. It might “guilt” them into giving more.

Pray so that others see you. You’ll be a good witness.

And when you fast, make sure everyone knows it, because it’s a “true” sign of spirituality.

God never bids us to a lower calling, but to a carefully considered higher calling. It is a calling that does not imply that works earn points with God or that we have a greater right to salvation. Rather it is a calling that uses God as our benchmark instead of society, personal opinion, or compromise for convenience’s sake. So now the question is, “If Jesus were giving His ‘sermon on our mountain’ today, what would be His ‘You have heard that it was said, but I say to you’ statements regarding our traditions and cultural compromises?”

**React**

1. Write your own versions of “You have heard, but I say to you” statements that currently affect you. In doing so, see if you can identify a “higher calling” without becoming self-righteous or legalistic.
2. How can you set your spiritual behavioral mark higher without judging others?

**Tuesday April 22**

**Testimony**

**Emilian Grigore**

**Are We Better Than the Pharisees?**

**Matt. 5:20**
“The proud heart strives to earn salvation; but both our title to heaven and our fitness for it are found in the righteousness of Christ. The Lord can do nothing toward the recovery of man until, convinced of his own weakness, and stripped of all self-sufficiency, he yields himself to the control of God. Then he can receive the gift that God is waiting to bestow. From the soul that feels his need, nothing is withheld. He has unrestricted access to Him in whom all fullness dwells. For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” Isaiah 57:15

“A new heart also will I give you.”

“Whom Christ pardons, He first makes penitent, and it is the office of the Holy Spirit to convince of sin. Those whose hearts have been moved by the convicting Spirit of God see that there is nothing good in themselves. They see that all they have ever done is mingled with self and sin. Like the poor publican, they stand afar off, not daring to lift up so much as their eyes to heaven, and cry, ‘God, be merciful to me the sinner.’ Luke 18:13, R.V., margin. And they are blessed. There is forgiveness for the penitent; for Christ is ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ John 1:29. God’s promise is: ‘Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’ A new heart also I will give you. … And I will put My Spirit within you.” Isaiah 1:18. Ezekiel 36:26, 27:

“The scribes and the Pharisees,” He said, ‘at in Moses’ seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.’ The scribes and Pharisees claimed to be invested with divine authority similar to that of Moses. They assumed to take his place as expounders of the law and judges of the people. As such they claimed from the people the utmost deference and obedience. Jesus bade His hearers do that which the rabbis taught according to the law, but not to follow their example. They themselves did not practice their own teaching.”

2. White, Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, pp. 7, 8.
3. The Desire of Ages, p. 612.

**wednesday APRIL 23**

**How-to**

**Amy Matsuda**

**Christian Manners**

Matt. 5:43–45, 48; 6:24–27

Rules, rules, rules, and more rules. When will they ever let us have any freedom? Many of us tend to ponder this question. We must realize that God is not trying to stop us from having freedom. He gives us the freedom to follow Him, and He instructs us to love others with all of our inner being. For us to give sincere love, such as the love God has bestowed upon us in giving us His only Son to die for our sins, can be a challenging process. How can we provide that amount of love to others while managing to live our own lives as God would want us to?

**God tells us not to worry about our lives.**

Make the effort to love others. God understands our struggles to love unselfishly. Proverbs 3:4, 6 reminds us that if we trust Him and confess Jesus as our Savior, He will help us. We must remember that loving others is a choice and the fact that we are sinners should not be an excuse for not showing love.

Serve God. His perfect image is the best example to use as our guide. Matthew 6:24 explains that we cannot obey Him while a love for money governs our behavior. When we focus on items that money can buy, we cannot focus on our Savior.

Don’t worry. God tells us not to worry about our lives. We are not to obsess about what we wear, eat, or drink. Doing so cannot help us. Philippians 4:6 explains that we should not be anxious about anything, because all we need to do is present our requests to God, and His peace will guide our lives.

**REACT**

1. Why do you think God has given us these reminders and guidelines to follow if He is not trying to take away our freedom?
2. In what ways can we strive to live our lives according to God’s instructions?

**thursday APRIL 24**

**Opinion**

**Kathy Bollinger**

**You Aren’t the Boss of Me; But Wait—Maybe I Want You to Be**

**Matthew 5–7**

I remember going through one of “those” phases when I was sure everyone was telling me how to live. My parents were “on my case,” and so were my teachers, my siblings, and even my classmates. Often my reply was, “You aren’t the boss of my life.” But then one day I used my parents’ rules as an excuse to get out of a difficult situation with a so-called friend who wanted me to participate in an activity I knew was wrong. I remember the feeling of relief that coursed through me as I basked in the safety of their rules—or, as I prefer to think of it—their “perimeters of love.”

**It will shake up our world.**

We live in a society peppered with rules, and often we sigh just thinking about all of them. While reading the newspapers or listening to the radio, we are confronted with what happens to those who don’t follow the rules. There are guidelines to follow if you don’t want to pay fines or hurt others or yourself. There are rules to guide society as a whole, as well as rules for a host of individual “units” within society (such as having to pay library fines for an overdue item). All these rules help us live a better life.

When I read Christ’s sermon on the mount, my heart fills with thankfulness for a God who does not condemn us in our humaness, but who points to the path of righteous. He not only blesses us, but He also gives us hope in our obedience—hope for an even better life. Who would not want to inherit the earth, obtain mercy, or be God’s child? His laws, created for our protection, clearly show the same love parents have for their children—a love that encircles them for their safety. When we take Jesus’ sermon on the mount to heart, it becomes personal. It will shake up our world, for often we feel that rules are for others and only meant to keep us safe. How important it is, then, to realize that in truly keeping God’s laws, we are stewards of not only ourselves, but the lives of our fellow human beings.

**REACT**

1. In Matthew 7:24–27, Jesus gives us a deeper perspective of His law. Why, then, when we understand this parable, do we choose to pursue foolish
friday APRIL 25

Exploration
Glenn Poole

The Best of Rules

Matt. 5:17, 18

CONCLUDE

God is not about “rules, rules, rules!” Scripture has enough examples of the misuse of religion and God’s laws for us to understand that His principles, guidelines, and commands are meant to foster a sacred romance with Him. They are not about gaining a title and fitness for heaven based on our own obedience. Instead, they form part of a higher calling and hope for a better life—a life that helps our thoughts and motives to be more like Jesus as we grow closer to Him and His abundant gift of righteousness.

CONSIDER

- Taking a digital photograph of a “No Parking” sign. Manipulate the photo with your favorite photo-editing software to make it appear as if it were posted on a mountain top, sheer cliff, or some other place where parking would be fatal. Post the photo on your online social network with a title such as, “Some laws really make sense—just like God’s laws do.”
- Using the Internet to access laws where you live. Choose some laws that interest you and spend 15 minutes reading them. How do they help to improve your life?
- Writing a paragraph of not more than 100 words that tells about your favorite law of God. Explain why following that law will help anyone to have a better life.
- Selecting a few verses from Psalm 119 and putting them to your own music or to a familiar hymn tune.
- Taking a 30-minute walk in a forest. If you do not live near a forest, visit a landscaping nursery. Count the number of small seedlings (new trees) you can find. Observe each one individually. Consider what the world would be like without the law of natural reproduction.
- Asking three of your best friends what their favorite law is. Discuss it with them.
- Meditating on the golden rule for a few minutes (Matt. 7:12). Plan how you can live that rule in a challenging situation you’re expecting to face next week.

CONNECT

Psalm 19:7–11; Psalm 119.
Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 1, “Why Was Sin Permitted?”
"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27, 28, NKJV).

Sabbath APRIL 26

Introduction
Deena Bartel-Wagner

Catch Your Breath!

Neh. 9:14; Isa. 56:2; Ezek. 20:12

Don't forget the Sabbath,
The Lord our God hath blest
Of all the week the brightest,
Of all the week the best.*

At the end of a grueling week of studies and work, do you anticipate the Sabbath as the brightest and best day of the week? Is it easy to forget the Sabbath, because life gets in the way?

Tired yet?

Imagine you are given a set of tasks that contain explicit instructions. You have to deliver 15 packages to several people within 60 minutes. As soon as that's done, you're tasked with packing several boxes of used clothing to deliver to the homeless shelter. Your time to accomplish that task is 45 minutes. But wait, you aren't done yet. Next you have to entertain six five-year-olds for 75 minutes. Of course, they aren't content to sit and be quiet. You must run, jump, carry them, and keep them all together where you can see them.

Tired yet? In our busy lives, the days of the week are full of the unending tasks, such as those listed above. God has provided the Sabbath as a way for us to catch our breath. But too often we don't take advantage of His gift—the quiet Sabbath hours. Instead, we tune in to our mp3 players, surf the Web, hang with friends, or check Facebook and Twitter.

As you contemplate this week's lesson, think about how you can more effectively catch your breath on Sabbath. You might just find that it makes it easier to breathe during the week.

REACT

What value do you see in keeping the Sabbath? In a world that is always "wired," how is taking a Sabbath break being counterculture?

* "Don't Forget the Sabbath," The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, no. 388.

sunday APRIL 27

Logos
Steven J. Dovich

Transformed By a Day


The Sabbath Is Established (Gen. 2:1–3; Exod. 20:8–11; John 1:1–3; Heb. 1:1, 2)

Scripture speaks clearly about the origin of the Sabbath: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being" (John 1:1–3, NRSV). "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation" (Gen. 2:1–3, NRSV).
"A new creation is everything!"

"Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets" (Heb. 1:1, NRSV), and to the descendants of Israel, He said, "Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy" (Exod. 20:8, NRSV).

As Creator, the Son established the sanctity of the Sabbath. And as the designated spokesman in these last days, His Sabbath message proclaims its continuance for post-Jewish believers.


The Son "is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word" (Heb. 1:3, NRSV). The Sabbath is therefore sustained through this exact imprint of the character and law of God. So we can look to Jesus' habit of Sabbath observance as a model we can imitate.

The Creation record clearly establishes "rest from labor" as a means of observing the sacredness of the Sabbath. Drawing from Jesus' time on earth, we can identify other activities that have been similarly sanctified. In Luke 4, we learn that He "went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom" (verse 16, NRSV) to meet with others for worship and to study the Scriptures. Paul reminds us not to neglect meeting together, but to encourage one another to follow our Lord's example (Heb. 10:25).

More controversial in Jesus' time was the ministry of healing, and John calls out otherwise routine accounts of healing as having taken place on the Sabbath (John 5:1–9; 9:1–14). Two other accounts describe conflicts with religious leaders over the practice of healing. In answering the objections to healing for the crippled woman (Luke 13:10–17), Jesus pointed to the routine release of livestock for water and feed on the Sabbath. He then claimed the commission from Isaiah 61:1 to "bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners." In a second encounter, He challenged the Pharisees who sought to destroy Him (Mark 3:1–6), saying that if their desire to kill Him was acceptable for the Sabbath, then saving life on the Sabbath was clearly an appropriate act. In addition to defending ministries of mercy, Jesus took a stand for the basic needs and pleasures of living (Mark 2:23–28). He questioned blind observance of the law, and proclaimed that "the Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath" (NRSV). By claiming Lordship over the Sabbath, Jesus established His right to interpret the context and purpose for the law of God.

**A New Creation** (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; 2 Pet. 3:13)

The Sabbath narrative in the Gospels describes worship, healing, rest, and nourishment. This combination represents a theme of restoration, of creating anew. Too often our Sabbath observance is the new circumcision, a form of identity that demonstrates our acceptance of God's law. Paul reminds us, however, that "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything!" (Gal. 6:15, NRSV). The human conception of God's law must be replaced by the righteousness of Christ. Just as the law is a reflection of the character of God, it must also be seen in us. "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (2 Cor. 5:17, NRSV). And so Sabbath by Sabbath, we are transformed into His likeness. "In accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home." (2 Pet. 3:13, NRSV).

**REACT**

1. What part of your life most needs the transforming renewal of the Sabbath?
2. How can you partner with Christ in restoring His creation during the Sabbath hours?

**monday APRIL 28**

**Testimony**

Ashley Trecartin  

**The Forever Sign**

Exod. 16:23; Lev. 19:30; Heb. 4:9

"Great blessings are enfolded in the observance of the Sabbath, and God desires that the Sabbath day shall be to us a day of joy. There was joy at the institution of the Sabbath. God looked with satisfaction upon the work of His hands. . . . When the Lord delivered His people Israel from Egypt and committed to them His law, He taught them that by the observance of the Sabbath they were to be distinguished from idolaters. It was this that made the distinction between those who acknowledge the sovereignty of God and those who refuse to accept Him as their Creator and King. 'It is sign between Me and the children of Israel forever,' the Lord said . . . (Exod. 31:17).

"Every day their light will shine forth."

"As the Sabbath was the sign that distinguished Israel when they came out of Egypt to enter the earthly Canaan, so it is the sign that now distinguishes God's people as they come out from the world to enter the heavenly rest. The Sabbath is a sign of the relationship existing between God and His people, a sign that they honor His law."1

"All through the week we are to have the Sabbath in mind and be making preparation to keep it according to the commandment. We are not merely to observe the Sabbath as a legal matter. We are to understand its spiritual bearing upon all the transactions of life. All who regard the Sabbath as a sign between them and God, showing that He is the God who sanctifies them, will represent the principles of His government. They will bring into daily practice the laws of His kingdom. Daily it will be their prayer that the sanctification of the Sabbath may rest upon them. Every day they will have the companionship of Christ and will exemplify the perfection of His character. Every day their light will shine forth to others in good works."2

**REACT**

1. Imagine you were one of the children of Israel who came out of Egypt. How is it possible for you to have that kind of excitement about the Sabbath today?
2. Why is it important to "keep the Sabbath before us" from Sunday through Friday? If we did that, how might it change our daily behaviors?

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1. Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, pp. 349, 350.
2. Ibid., pp. 353, 354.

**tuesday APRIL 29**

**Evidence**

Lindsey Johnson  

**A Precious Gift**

Exod. 20:8–11; John 1:1–14
“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy” (Exod. 20:8, NIV). As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we can appreciate this opportunity to rest and rejuvenate after six days of stress related to school or work. Many people, however, suggest that this commandment is an outdated Jewish tradition and is no longer applicable to modern Christianity. Because of the influence of Constantine and the cult of Sol Invictus (the Sun Cult) that was dominant in second-century Rome, most Christians now keep Sunday as God’s holy day and believe that the original seventh-day Sabbath is simply a Jewish tradition.

In the same way that God is unchanging, so are His laws.

It is important to note, however, that God created the Sabbath as a precious gift for His children—children who are not defined by race, ethnicity, or heritage, but by a personal choice to become part of His family. Read John 1:12, 13. An individual’s ethnic background makes no difference in his or her salvation. When we accept Jesus, we become new creatures in Christ. We begin a new life as a child of the God of the universe. As God’s children, we are compelled by our love for Him to keep His commandments—all of them. Furthermore, in the same way that God is unchanging, so are His laws. Satan wants us to believe that the Sabbath is something that died with Christ at Calvary. He would have us think it doesn’t matter to God which day of the week we keep holy, as long as we acknowledge Him in some way. This, however, is a direct contradiction to the law God handed to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Sabbath is not an interchangeable commodity that adapts as the times change. Rather, it is a crucial part of God’s plan for us to lead full and enriched lives.

**REACT**

1. Why do you think it is important to understand the difference between the Sabbath as something historical or something that is real in your life?
2. How do you defend the Sabbath when questioned about your faith? What would be your advice to someone facing the same challenge?

### How-to

**Shant’e L. Bellamy**

**A Day of Rest**


It was my senior year in college when my research group decided to do our assignment at the last minute. So we finished our twenty-six-page proposal on a Friday night. What should we have done differently so we would not have felt as though we had to work during the Sabbath hours?

On the seventh day, God sat back and looked at everything He created and blessed it. Following are some ways you can keep the Sabbath day holy.

**Praise the Lord!**

*Complete your manual work.* Deuteronomy 5:12–15 tells us how God has commanded us to keep His Sabbath day holy. We have six days in which to do our usual work, so that on the seventh day we will be able to give God our full attention. At the beginning of the week, make a list of the goals you need to accomplish, and set specific times to complete those goals. Then on Sabbath, you will have a clear mind to worship the Father with your church family. You also will have time to do appropriate acts of services for others.

**Praise God.** When you go into the house of worship, set aside all of your problems and worries that come about during the week. Go into God’s holy place and praise Him! God wants us to praise Him for His acts, His loving, forgiving character, and all He has done for us. Read Psalm 150.

Sabbath rest is a symbol of the rest we have in Jesus. This rest represents our salvation from sin. We are God’s chosen people. He designed us to rest and to be refreshed on His Sabbath day. Let us all go into the house of worship and praise the Lord!

**REACT**

Why is it important to keep the Sabbath holy? In what ways do you keep it holy?

### Opinion

**Courtney Johnson**

**Why It Matters**

**Gen. 2:1–3: Exod. 20:8–11**

Having grown up in the Adventist faith, keeping the Sabbath holy and using it as a time for rest, reflection, and enjoyment of God is second nature to me. So when someone asks me whether or not it matters what day one keeps as the Sabbath, it makes me reflect on why the Sabbath is important to me.

**Embrace the Sabbath as the gift it is and praise God for it!**

Many Christians today believe that the Sabbath was changed from the seventh day of the week (Saturday) to the first day of the week (Sunday). They claim that the Sabbath was just a part of the ancient Israelite faith, and is no longer relevant. However, the Bible contains proof that the Sabbath was not meant only for the Jews. Genesis 2:1–3 points out that the Sabbath was instituted at Creation. God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. Therefore, the seventh day of the week is ordained by God as the Sabbath. Then, in Exodus 20:8–11, He reminded His people after He delivered them from slavery to “remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.”

The Sabbath is a gift from our heavenly Father—an entire twenty-four hours to spend time with Him. Imagine what would happen if our church were to decide that the Sabbath really doesn’t matter. This would cause everything else the church stands for to be questioned. If the church cannot honor something that is plainly stated in Scripture, it would begin to shake people’s beliefs in other areas.

The Bible plainly states when the Sabbath is and how we are to honor it. So embrace the Sabbath as the gift it is and praise God for it!

**REACT**

1. Why did God ordain a specific day for rest?
2. In what ways does the Sabbath help you to connect with God?
3. How would you explain the importance of resting on the Sabbath to a friend who does not keep the Sabbath?
A Time to Grow Love

Isa. 58:13, 14

CONCLUDE

The Sabbath is a wonderful gift from our Creator—a gift that we too often push aside in our haste to "get on" with our busy lives. However, the Bible promises rich blessings, deep rest, a great inheritance, and a close relationship with the God of the universe as a result of spending the Sabbath hours with the One who loves us.

CONSIDER

- Debating (for/against) the following quote in light of the Sabbath commandment (i.e., Should we still follow the Sabbath?): "The message of the seventh day of creation is that God set apart a full day of dedicated time to grow love with His children. . . . If the Sabbath was vital to love in a perfect world, it was even more critical in a fallen world" (Des Cummings Jr., Original Love, p. 9).
- Sculpting out of clay, a symbol of what the Sabbath means to you. Ask to display the symbol somewhere prominent in your church.
- Interviewing a number of people in your church from a range of ages to gather an in-depth perspective on how they have kept the Sabbath over the years. List creative ideas and distribute these ideas to church members to help them broaden the "specialness" of this holy day.
- Planning an "Epic Sabbath" with your youth group or family. To make it as memorable as possible, consider the biblical principles of why God blessed and rested on the Sabbath, and why He made it holy.
- Illustrating Isaiah 58:13, 14 either on paper or canvas. Use words, pressed flowers, beads, paint, paper maché, and other artistic techniques to emphasize the meaning of these verses.
- Journaling a prayer to God about the significance of the Sabbath to you personally.
- Writing a short story or poem about what you think it might be like to share your first Sabbath with God in the New Jerusalem.

CONNECT

Genesis 1:31–2:3; Genesis 3; Exodus 16:11–35; 20:2, 8–11; 20; Ezekiel 20:12, 20; Mark 2:23–3:6; John 14:15.

There are no comments.

Anonymous

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Close
In the same way, my friends, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God” (Rom. 7:4, NRSV).

Gal. 2:20

“So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull. . . . Here they crucified him” (John 19:16–18, NIV). They took away the Author of life! He suffered so that we might be saved. His death means hope and freedom from sin.

As God’s children, we ... “have been crucified with Christ.”

Many people wonder what life is all about. They think that obedience to God sounds boring. I used to feel that way too. But then I met Jesus. Before we experience Him, sin is like a noose around our necks. It strangles the life out of us. And Satan is determined to kill us. Yes, God’s law shows us how sinful we are. We want to keep His law, but we cannot (Matt. 26:41).

However, the truth about God’s law is not that it is like a rope that binds us. Rather, it is like a rope that extends from heaven to connect us with our heavenly Father and our true home.

As God’s children, we really have died to the law. We really “have been crucified with Christ and [we] no longer live, but Christ lives in [us]. The life [we] now live in the body, [we] live by faith in the Son of God, who loved [us] and gave himself for [us]” (Gal. 2:20, NIV). We live through His righteousness, and we are perfectly free only in Him. Only the power of Christ can win the war between the flesh and the spirit.

Let us learn this week that being a Christian is not about trying not to sin; it’s about focusing on Jesus so much that sin isn’t even an option!

Jesus Christ Died. Did the Law Die Also?

Rom. 8:1–8

Christ’s birth was a turning point in history. Now the Julian and Gregorian calendars designate the years as either a.d. (Anno Domini—after Christ) or B.C. (before Christ). It’s like a mark for the end of one period and the beginning of a new one. But have you ever asked yourself what really has changed due to Christ’s birth and death?

Jesus didn’t come to destroy the law and prophets.

Romans 8:2 tells us that those who are in Christ are free from the law of sin and death. If we take these words out of context, we might conclude that when Jesus died on the cross, He abolished God’s moral law—the Ten Commandments. But is this true? The moral law demands that whoever breaks it must die. Therefore, because we all have sinned (Rom. 3:23), we all should die an eternal death. But praise be to God, Jesus Christ died a death that He thought would forever separate Him from His Father. His death meets the moral law’s demand. We can choose to accept Christ’s death as our own, and therefore escape an eternal death because of our sins, or we can accept His death on our behalf and live with Him throughout eternity.

When we accept Christ’s generous gift, may we live as we want, as if God’s Ten Commandments have no power over us? Is this how we show our gratefulness to the Lord for saving us? Or does our obedience to the moral law, through the indwelling Spirit, show that we have truly accepted His salvation? Jesus didn’t come to destroy the law and prophets, but to fulfill them (Matt. 5:17). Therefore, God’s law still has its demands, but the price for our disobedience has been paid by Christ.

Christ’s death did not abolish our need to obey God’s Ten Commandments. Instead, His death was on our behalf. His Ten Commandments are still important to us because they show God’s true character, the type of character He desires us to develop through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, His law constantly reminds us that we need Him who is, who was, and who is about to come.
In Romans 6, 7, and 8, Paul shows us the relationship between obedience and God’s grace. Grace “supplies the power that makes obedience and victory over sin possible.”

Everything that was impossible through the law, Jesus accomplished through His death.

**The Law of Sin and Death (Rom. 7:7–13; 8:1–8)**

When we learn about God’s moral law, we realize that we are infected with a deadly virus—sin. We learn that all the bad things in our lives are caused by this virus, and we realize that our sinful nature is at war with our desire to serve the Lord. As Paul wrote of himself, “I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me” (Rom. 7:23, NIV). Because the sin virus is too complex for us to fight against on our own, the only way to conquer it is to hold on to Christ and His promise of life. He will deliver us from sin and ultimately from eternal death (Rom. 8:2).

**The Power and the Function of the Law (Rom. 4:15; 7:8–11)**

According to God’s moral law, we are all guilty before Him because we have no power in and of ourselves to keep the law. Punishment for transgressing the law is death. Of his experience, Paul wrote, “Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death” (Rom. 7:9–11, NIV). Although this realization could lead us to despair, the beautiful truth is that it should lead us closer to Christ, for it is He who holds the keys to death. “Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:58, NIV).

**The Powerless Law or What the Law Cannot Do (Acts 13:38, 39; Rom. 8:3; Gal. 3:21)**

The law of God was meant to keep humankind close to Him. However, the law can never justify us. “For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law’ ” (Gal. 3:10, NIV). This is because we are all sinners too weak to keep the law on our own. If we could keep the commandments of God without breaking them, Christ would have not needed to live on earth and die for our sins. Salvation would be the result of our own effort. That is why “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole’ ” (Gal. 3:13, NIV).

**The Curse of the Law (Gen. 2:17; Ps. 51:5; Isa. 64:6; Ezek. 18:4; Rom. 3:23; Gal. 3:10–13)**

Although the Ten Commandments are holy, just, and good (Rom. 7:12), they cannot justify us before the Lord. They actually condemn us for our sinful nature. That is the curse of the law which Paul speaks about in Galatians 3:10–13. Jesus took all the sin of this world upon Himself when He came to our planet. He carried these sins to the grave. He paid the price for all of us, and the only way for us to be righteous is through faith in His sacrifice. “Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because ‘the righteous will live by faith’ ” (Gal. 3:11, NIV).

Everything that was impossible through the law, Jesus accomplished through His death. He came in a human body and died for us, never transgressing the law during His life. When we accept Him through faith as our Savior, God then accepts us as His precious children.

**REACT**

1. Why do we keep the commandments of God if doing so doesn’t bring salvation?
2. How does Romans 6:1–2 affect your personal battle with sin?
"While we dwell upon the paternal character of God, and His love expressed for man in the gift of His only begotten Son, we must tell people why such a costly sacrifice was necessary. It was because of sin. What is sin? The transgression of the law. Only the Son of God could pay the penalty, and that by His own humiliation and death. As men look at the cross, conscience will be aroused. They will see the majesty of the law, the holiness of God, and their own unlikeness to His character."  

Jesus, our Substitute, consented to bear for man the penalty of the law transgressed. He clothed His divinity with humanity and thus became the Son of man, a Savior and Redeemer. The very fact of the death of God’s dear Son to redeem man shows the immutability of the divine law. How easily, from the transgressor’s standpoint, could God have abolished His law, thus providing a way whereby men could be saved and Christ remain in heaven? The doctrine which teaches freedom, through grace, to break the law is a fatal delusion. Every transgressor of God’s law is a sinner, and none can be sanctified while living in known sin.

**REACT**

How would you explain to someone what Jesus did on the cross?

3. White, Review and Herald, March 8, 1881.

**wEDNESDAY MAY 7**

**How-to**

_Suzane Ziko_

**_The Powerless Law—Possible in God_**

Acts 13:38, 39; Rom. 8:3, 4; Gal. 3:21

For us to appreciate forgiveness, we must understand what life would be without it. Without forgiveness, there would be no entry into heaven, no knowledge of God’s love, and no hope. All would be lost. Forgiveness is necessary to avoid eternal death—the penalty for sin. But how can we have forgiveness?

*Understand that forgiveness of our sins is proclaimed through Jesus—that through Him we are justified (Acts 13:38, 39). Forgiveness is not an excuse for sin. It is an encouragement for obedience. We cannot earn forgiveness. Since Jesus paid the price of forgiveness on Calvary, all that is left for us to do is to believe. Believing implies walking in obedience with God.*

**The function of the law is to point us to our Redeemer.**

"Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of everyone" (Eccles. 12:13, NRSV). In Romans 8:3, the Greek word for “flesh” is sarx. This refers to the “carnal, lower nature of man which is opposed to spiritual things." Because of sin, we have lost our ability to obey God. The law of sin works through our sinful nature and oppresses God’s law. For this reason, God sent “his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3, NIV).

The word incarnation is a theological term for the coming of God’s Son into the world as a human being. The capacity of Jesus to reveal God to us and to bring us salvation depends upon His being fully God and fully human at the same time. Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? In Galatians 3:2, Paul equates life with righteousness (and by implication, death with unrighteousness). He says that if it were possible for any law to give life, then the law given through Moses would have been the one to do so. It could not, because that was not the function of the law. The function of the law is to point us to our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

**REACT**

1. What is forgiveness? How does it work?
2. How are we made aware of sin? How are we, as sinful humans, even able to identify sinful behavior?
3. Why can the law not provide life?

* The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary, s.v. “flesh.”

**THURSDAY MAY 8**

**Opinion**

_Adriana Nunka Borges_

**_The Curse of the Law_**

Gal. 3:10–13

As Seventh-day Adventists, we always have affirmed and preached about the importance of obeying God’s Ten Commandments. The Bible is clear when it speaks about God’s law: “Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law” (Rom. 3:31, NIV). “So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good” (Rom. 7:12, NIV). But when we come to Galatians 3:10, we read that “all who rely on observing the law are under a curse” (NIV).

**All that we need, we find in Christ!**

If the law is holy, righteous, and good, how can it be cursed? Here Paul refers to those who expect to have righteousness imputed to them as a result of their compliance with the ritual requirements of the ceremonial law. This group stands in contrast with the group of v. 9—“they which be of faith.”  

*What Paul is referring to is that while the Galatians had gladly accepted the gospel, some of them had started to listen to other voices and were thereby convinced that the gospel of Jesus Christ would be perfected if it were submitted to the ceremonial laws. So Paul contrasted the people of faith with the people who espoused salvation through obedience to the ceremonial laws. When he speaks about the curse of the law, he refers to the frustration of trying to be saved by obeying the ceremonial laws, forgetting that these laws, and indeed obedience per se, do not provide salvation. In Galatians 3:11, he affirms that the only way to be justified is by being close to God: ”The righteous will live by faith” (NIV). The law has no power to save. It only condemns. “Christ redeems us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us” (Gal. 3:13, NIV). When Jesus gave His life, He bore our punishment for sin. The curse we deserve fell upon Him. Thus, He redeems us from this curse. All that we need, we find in Christ! Through Him, we can come before God, dignified and just.*

**REACT**

1. How can the law be a blessing in your life?
2. How do you react to people who claim that God’s law is canceled?
Friday May 9

Exploration
Sergio Torres

Relational Obedience

John 15:1–5

Conclude

There can be no true obedience without having a relationship with Jesus. The new covenant brings Him into our lives so that it's no longer just about the tablets of stones. We learn to relate to our Savior, instead. That's why it's a better covenant. That's the beauty of the Incarnation. The indwelling Spirit lives the life of Christ in us. It is through this experience that we fulfill God's precious commands. These commands are not separate from Christ. Indeed, they are the life of Christ. As we daily relate to Him, His life becomes our life through the experience of relational obedience.

Consider

- Writing or outlining your life story with Jesus. What brought you to Him? What changes did He make in your life? What changes is He currently helping you to make?
- Sharing your life story with someone in your neighborhood, work place, or school about how Christ has changed, and is changing, your life.
- Visiting a local court to observe how the judge interprets and applies civil laws to specific cases. Consider how this process relates to God and His law.
- Having a group of creative college students interview people on campus about what they think regarding the relevance of the Ten Commandments. Video record their responses for posting on various social media networks. (Be sure to tell them that is what you plan on doing. And consider that you might need to get written clearance from them and the college to do so.)
- Searching the Internet for the story behind the hymn “Just As I Am.”
- Having a conversation about obedience with your earthly father and comparing this conversation to a similar one you could have with your heavenly Father.

Connect

John 1:16–18; John 15.
W. W. Prescott, Victory in Christ, at http://cleartruth.wordpress.com/he-loved-me/.

There are no comments.

Anonymous
Sabbath MAY 10

Introduction
Daniel Saputra

_The Rock of Salvation_

Romans 6

Imagine that there was once a wise king who ruled a prosperous kingdom. His son John was curious about everything, and he liked to travel throughout the realm. The king told John to be careful with whatever he found in one of the mountains because there was a magic stone there. Anybody who touched this stone would be cursed, sent to a far-off land, and become a peasant.

One day, John went to this mountain and found a sparkling rock. He decided to pick it up and bring it home. However, when he touched it, he was struck unconscious, and when he woke up, he found himself in a small hut at the brink of a canyon. John could dimly see the other side of the canyon to his father's kingdom. Oh, how he regretted not paying attention to his warning.

We work hard to save ourselves, but we always fail.

John toiled to make a bridge that would bring him back to his father's kingdom; but every time he almost reached the middle of the canyon, the pole that supported the bridge would sink to the valley below, and he would have to start over.

Finally, John's father found him, and out love for his son, he built a bridge with portions of the rock as a base for each of the bridge poles. As John began to walk across the bridge, he held his hand out to him. Out of faith, John clung to his father's hand, and finally, together with his father, walked back to their kingdom.

We are like John. We love to venture into the world on our own. We want to do whatever we feel like doing because we think we are smarter than our Creator. Ideally, however, we finally realize that we cannot do anything on our own to bring us back to the heavenly kingdom. We work hard to save ourselves, but we always fail. However, our heavenly Father sends us His Son, Jesus, the Rock of Ages. He is the Foundation of the bridge that brings us back to heaven. Unfortunately, we often forget about Jesus, the Source of the law. We often forget that by His grace we are saved. We don't like to be governed by His law, yet without His law, the bridge to salvation would collapse.

This week we will continue to learn about Jesus and His law and grace, which reaches out to sinful humans.

sunday MAY 11

Logos

Victor Joe Sinaga

_Christ, the End of the Law_

Isa. 59:2; 61:1–3; John 3:16; Romans 3–7

Adam and Eve's violation of God's law made all of us sinners. Sin separates us from God and from each other. It causes physical and spiritual death. God, Christ, and the law are one. God and Christ are co-Authors of the law. The law reflects Their loving character. Satan is delighted when we choose to violate this law. Since the beginning of sin, Satan always has maintained that God's law is impossible to keep and that people who break His law cannot be forgiven. God, however, has a beautiful plan to restore our relationship with Him. We learn about this plan in the texts above. We need to understand and accept this plan in order to be saved.

Christ's death did not dissolve the Ten Commandments.

Paul's Understanding of the Law (Rom. 3:31)

Many people view God's law as having a negative effect on their spiritual and social lives. Yet Paul's letter to the congregation in Rome clearly discusses the relationship between the law and salvation. To obey the law is to be in line with God's will. The law is "spiritual" (Rom. 7:14) because it comes from God (verse 22), and it is intended to bring us life (verse 10).

Through his personal experience with Christ, Paul fully realizes that the law is a gift of God's grace. However, he also recognizes that with this gift comes the great responsibility of obedience (Rom. 2:17–24).
Christ Fulfilled the Law’s Requirement (Rom. 5:8; Heb. 2:9)

Every sinner must fulfill the law’s requirement. That is why during Bible times, God’s people prepared substitute sacrifices that symbolized the Savior’s death on their behalf. Christ fulfilled the law in that He Himself was the Sacrifice which the law required, “By the grace of God,” He experienced death for everyone (Heb. 2:8). Like Adam, all have sinned (Rom. 5:12), therefore, everyone experiences death—the first death. The death that Christ tasted for everyone was the second death—the full curse of death (Rev. 20:6 . . .).”

Christ also fulfilled the law in that while He was on earth, He lived in complete harmony with the law. He “lived a pure, holy, and loving life, relying completely on God. This precious life He shares with repentant sinners as a gift. His perfect character is portrayed as a wedding garment (Matt. 22:11) or a robe of righteousness (Isa. 61:10) that He gives to replace the filthy rags of human attempts to achieve righteousness (Isa. 64:6).”

The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ (Rom. 10:4)

“In Christ’s life of perfect obedience to God’s will, His suffering, death, and resurrection, God provided the only means of atonement for human sin, so that those who by faith accept this atonement may have eternal life, and the whole creation may better understand the infinite and holy love of the Creator. This perfect atonement vindicates the righteousness of God’s law and the graciousness of His character; for it both condemns our sin and provides for our forgiveness. The death of Christ is substitutionary and expiatory, reconciling, and transforming. The resurrection of Christ proclaims God’s triumph over the forces of evil, and for those who accept the atonement assures their final victory over sin and death. It declares the Lordship of Jesus Christ, before whom every knee in heaven and on earth will bow.”

Christ’s death did not dissolve the Ten Commandments. Instead, it upheld the law, by paying the penalty we would have had to pay for breaking the law. When we accept Christ’s death as our own, we will not have to die that eternal death ourselves. He “is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes” (Rom. 10:4, NIV).

God’s Law (Rom. 3–7)

“The great principles of God’s law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God’s love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are the basis of God’s covenant with His people and the standard in God’s judgment. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sin and awaken a sense of need for a Saviour. Salvation is all of grace and not of works, but its fruitage is obedience to the Commandments. This obedience develops Christian character and results in a sense of well-being. It is an evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow men. The obedience of faith demonstrates the power of Christ to transform lives, and therefore strengthens Christian witness.”

Whoever believes in Christ has forgiveness and salvation (John 3:16).

1. Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . ., 2nd ed. (Silver Spring, Md.: Ministerial Association General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), p. 128.
2. Ibid., p. 129.
3. Ibid., p. 121.
4. Ibid., p. 263.

Testimony
Danny and Rachel Handoko
Between Two Extremes

Rom. 6:1–4; 9:30–33; 10:4

As Christians, we face the danger of thinking that because we receive grace, we may ignore the claims of the law and continue to transgress God’s law. “The hearts of many are at war with God. They are not subject to His law. . . . They may talk of Christ as their Saviour; but He will finally say to them, I know you not. You have not exercised genuine repentance toward God for the transgression of His holy law, and you cannot have genuine faith in Me, for it was My mission to exalt God’s law.”

“Faith takes hold of Christ in love.”

In trying to prevent such thinking, we may go to the other extreme by relying on the law for our salvation. Consequently, we either become frustrated by our failures or we forget about God’s grace and become self-sufficient. “What a loss it is to the soul who understands the strong claims of the law, and who yet fails to understand the grace of Christ which doth much more abound.”

“How can our ministers become the representatives of Christ, when they feel self-sufficient—when by spirit and attitude they say, ‘I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing’? We must not be in a self-satisfied condition, or we shall be described as those who are poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked.”

That Christ is the end of the law means that He has forgiven us and freed us from the condemnation of the law. It also means that He will enable us to live according to that law. “The Redeemer raises the sinner from the dust, and places him under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As the sinner looks upon the Redeemer, he finds hope, assurance, and joy. Faith takes hold of Christ in love. Faith works by love, and purifies the soul.”

“Jesus, precious Saviour! assurance, helpfulness, security, and peace are all in him. He is the dispeller of all our doubts, the earnest of all our hopes. How precious is the thought that we may indeed become partakers of the divine nature, whereby we may overcome as Christ overcame!”

REACT
How can you comfort a friend who is afraid that he or she is not good enough to come to God?

1. Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, bk. 1, p. 239.
2. Ibid., p. 156.
4. Selected Messages, bk. 1, p. 349.

Evidence

monday MAY 12

REACT
How can you comfort a friend who is afraid that he or she is not good enough to come to God?
Gomgom Douglas Cougar Simatupang

More Than Just Law

Romans 6

While the four Gospels recount the life of Christ, the book of Romans explores the significance of His sacrificial death. This book is perhaps the most systematic presentation of doctrine in the Bible. As we read chapters 1–11, we find the basis of the gospel—how all humans are guilty and cannot free themselves from punishment, that God sent His only Son to set us free so we can be right with Him and live under the love of Christ instead of under the law. Chapters 12–16 tell us about the behavior that is possible because of believing the gospel.

Christ represents you before the Father.

In Romans 6, Paul focuses on the problem of sinfulness, about how we who are saved by the blood of Christ become dead to sin and alive in Him. Thus we leave our old sinful lives to live new lives guided by the Holy Spirit. This chapter is often misunderstood by many people. Satan misleads them to believe that the law was done away with at Calvary. But this is not Paul’s point. Instead, he is saying “that Christians are not under law as a way of salvation, but under grace. Law cannot save a sinner; nor can law put an end to sin or its dominion. Law reveals sin (ch. 3:20), and because of the sinfulness of man, law, as it were, causes transgression to increase (ch. 5:20).” Our debt has been paid for by the blood of Jesus. “And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness” (Rom. 6:18, NKJV).

As slaves of righteousness, we no longer live under the law, but by grace, love, and compassion. Always remember the price that was paid for your sin. Always remember that Christ represents you before the Father.

Keeping the law doesn’t save you. Yet it should be evident to all that your lifestyle is God’s style. “Sanctification is a continuous process of consecration. . . . It is the harmonious development day by day of the physical, mental, and spiritual powers, until the image of God, in which we were originally created, is restored in us. . . . God’s purpose in the plan of salvation is not only our forgiveness, or justification, but our restoration, or sanctification.”

REACT

Why do people sometimes look at Adventists as those who are saved by the law? How can you change their perspective?

1. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 541.
2. Ibid., p. 543.

wednesday MAY 14

How to

Osvaal Taroreh

Delighting in God’s Law

Rom. 7:22, 23

Many families have rules that their members are expected to obey in order to have a happy home. When I was a child, I was sometimes late for supper because I played soccer past the time I was supposed to quit. Then my father would be waiting for me in front of our house, and some of those times, he would discipline me for making everyone wait.

We are here to make a difference.

God has given us the Ten Commandment laws that He wants us to follow in order to be happy in Him. And while following these laws does not save us, they do help us to have a better life. Below are three things about the Ten Commandments that we would do well to remember:

Obeying God’s law is doable. How? “As received in Christ, it [the Ten-Commandment law] works in us the purity of character that will bring joy to us through eternal ages. To the obedient it is a wall of protection. We behold in it the goodness of God, who by revealing to men the immutable principles of righteousness, seeks to shield them from the evils that result from transgression.” **When we receive the Ten Commandments “in Christ,” then we, like Paul, can say that we delight in it (Rom. 7:22).**

**Obeying the Ten Commandments helps us to become good role models.** By remembering and obeying God’s law, we can become wholesome role models in our families and churches, in our classes, and with our friends during social gatherings. Paul reminds us “not [to] be conformed to this world, but [to] be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2, NKJV). We are here to make a difference. Obedience to God’s law helps us to do just that.

Obeying God’s law contributes to creating better communities. As Christians, we are to be good examples to the world around us. As Jesus put it, we are the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world” (Matt. 5:13, 14, NKJV). Being “salt” and “light” starts with our keeping God’s law. Once the people we know see how we experience the benefits of obedience, many of them also will desire to live in God’s kingdom.

REACT

Besides setting a good example, how can we teach others that the law of God is desirable?

* Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, bk. 1, p. 235.

thursday MAY 15

Opinion

Fritz and Joice Manurung

Do Your Good Deeds Save You?

Rom. 9:30–10:4

For years, Christian denominations have been arguing about whether or not the Ten Commandments remained valid after Christ’s death. In Romans, Paul often discusses these laws and the need for us to obey them. It is true that we cannot be saved unless we have faith in our Lord’s sacrifice for us. We love Him so much, because He loved us enough to actually die the second death for us. “When we love in this way, can we then disregard the law? No, for it is an important part of God’s instruction that gives specific shape to love. True love will hardly find itself stealing, murdering, or committing adultery. The person who loves will therefore fulfill the law. And even though love will never break the law, when the law is properly understood, love might appear to be violating the law to those who understand the law only in a legalistic or literalistic way.” We need to understand that following God’s law is an act that absolutely improves our character and forges us into a new person.
We are to be lights to the world, lights that reflect Christ.

We read in Romans 9 and 10 how God’s people earnestly kept the law but failed to listen to God’s voice. We, too, are sometimes guilty of doing this. We focus only on the “dos and don’ts” of the law rather than on Christ, the Lawgiver. It is then that we find ourselves trapped in trying to keep the law through our own limited human abilities. It is then that we forget that we are to let the Holy Spirit help us develop a Christlike character and be of service to those around us.

As Christians, it is important to understand that we are to be lights to the world, lights that reflect Christ, who perfectly embodies the law.

REACT
1. What is the general purpose for following Christ? How do we learn what His specific purpose is for each one of us?
2. How can we help others to understand and follow God’s law? Why aren’t words enough?


friday MAY 16

Exploration
Debbie Battin Sasser

Infinite Love

Rom. 4:3, 4; 5:1, 2, 18–21

CONCLUDE
Looking at planet Earth from other worlds, the beings who see what is going on here must find it so mind-boggling. God wrote a perfect law which, because of Adam and Eve’s sin, ended up being impossible for us to keep. So He sent Jesus to be our Savior to show us how to live by living in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. God is the Originator of life. Yet in Christ, He had to die for us in order that we might be saved. Even with all this, God still continues to have infinite love for us. He wanted Eden to be the beginning of eternity, but when the first humans failed, He was ready immediately with plan B—grace and sacrifice.

CONSIDER

• Painting a huge mural on plywood or a large piece of canvas. Focus your artwork on illustrating Christ as the Savior of the world.
• Role-playing what beings from other worlds, who can see what is happening on earth, might say about God’s grace.
• Write an additional verse that relates specifically to your life.
• Memorizing Romans 6:23. As you do so, consider what it means to you personally.
• Baking breadsticks in the shape of crosses using a pizza dough or soft pretzels recipe for this Sabbath’s church potluck or for this Friday night’s vespers.
• Diagraming the concept of salvation. A good example, called “The Bridge,” can be found at http://bible.org/seriespage/bridge-session-3.

CONNECT
Ephesians 2:8, 9; Philippians 2:8; Isaiah 59.
Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ, chap. 1; Early Writings, chap. 36.
Shawn Brace, Pursued by a Relentless God, chap. 3; John S. Nixon, Redemption in Genesis, chaps. 2, 5.

There are no comments.

Anonymous
Guilt Meets Grace

John 15:10

Most people become excited at the thought of having a rendezvous. Yes, a rendezvous! A special meeting that holds pleasant memories and is usually beneficial to the parties concerned. This week we will examine our rendezvous with justice and mercy in both the law of God and the law of Christ.

God is love! Rejoice!

When I think of the law of God, I am reminded of a poem I studied as a teenager, “Guilty, or Not Guilty?”


Evidence

Linda Skeete McClellan

Divine Exhibits for All

Josh. 22:5; Prov. 3:1, 2; Matt. 5:17, 18; Rom. 6:1–23; 8:1–4; Gal. 2:16; 3:23, 24

Joshua was clear in his instruction to “do the commandment and the law” (Josh. 22:5); Solomon understood the law’s importance in obtaining eternal life (Prov. 3:1, 2); and Paul stated that the law freed him “from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2). He also stated that “what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh; on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:3–5, NKJV). What a joy to know that we are “not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith in Jesus Christ” (Gal. 2:16, NKJV), and that “the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal. 3:24, NKJV).

Let no doubt reside in your heart.

Let no doubt reside in your heart. Jesus tells us: “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.
For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one title little by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled” (Matt. 5:17, 18, NKJV). As our Intercessor, Jesus provides us with an opportunity, through faith, to develop a meaningful relationship with Him and to be transformed into His image so we may obey His law and receive eternal life.

**REACT**

1. Identify persons from whom you need to seek forgiveness, and persons whom you need to forgive. Then ask God to show you how to communicate with them.
2. Consider how you spend your time and interact with others. Are you fulfilling the law of Christ? What do you need to do to enhance your relationship with Christ and your ministry?

**monday MAY 19**

**Logos**

**Jason McCracken**

**The Law and the Schoolmaster**

**Gal. 3:24**

**The Schoolmaster Is a Guide (Gal. 3:24)**

In the book of Galatians, the New Kings James Version compares the law of Christ to a tutor. The King James Version uses the word schoolmaster, which better fits that period of time.

In Greek households, parents employed schoolmasters to be supervisors and companions to their male children between the ages of six to sixteen. Schoolmasters “accompanied them to school, protected them from harm, kept them from mischief, and had the right to discipline them. . . . If qualified to do so, [they] may also have assisted them in the preparation of their lessons.” 1 The law of God is like the schoolmaster. Its intent is twofold: to point out the wrong that is part of our life and then to direct us to Christ, our Savior.

“The law teaches us the need for salvation; God’s grace gives us that salvation.”

**The Impact of the Schoolmaster As It Relates to the Law (Gal. 3:26; 2 Cor. 5:17)**

When I was growing up, I had to walk to school. My grandmother asked my neighbor to walk with me. The reason my neighbor walked me to school was to show me the way. Likewise, the purpose of God’s law is to show us how God wants us to live.

When I arrived at school, the neighbor returned home, and I was then under the teacher’s care. The teacher’s primary job was to instruct me in various subjects. Christ is our Teacher in the subject of salvation. His desire for us is to become like Him.

When we are justified by faith in Christ, we become new creatures in Him (2 Cor. 5:17), “with the law of God written in [our] minds and hearts (Heb. 8:10).” And thus ‘the righteousness’ [or ‘requirements’] of the law is ‘fulfilled’ in [us] (Rom 8:4):’

**The Law Points to Obedience in Christ (Gal. 3:23–25; 4:1–7)**

In Bible times, an heir who was still a child “had no more authority over the inheritance he [had] received than as though he were one of his father’s slaves. He [was] placed under the supervision of a guardian . . . . whom he [was] required to obey.” 3

“In due time, he [would] receive custody of his father’s property. As a child, he [had] a right to it, but not authority over it.” 4 This illustration explains what it means to live under the law, which can only condemn us. God’s law “is like the supervision given by a tutor to a young child. We no longer need that kind of supervision. The law teaches us the need for salvation; God’s grace gives us that salvation. The Old Testament still applies today. In it, God reveals his nature, his will for humanity, his moral laws, and guidelines for living. But we cannot be saved by keeping that law; we must trust in Jesus.” 5

**A New Life in Christ (Gal. 5:22–25)**

Once we give ourselves to Christ, the old life we once lived is gone. Growing in Christ means we develop new ways of thinking, believing, and hoping. It means we become like Him. It means we follow in His footsteps and give Him control of our lives.

“Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (Gal. 4:3–5, NKJV).

**REACT**

1. How can we learn to trust Jesus more?
2. Matthew 7:12 is often referred to as the golden rule. Jesus said that this rule summarizes the law. Explain how this is so.
3. What is the best way to share what you know about God’s law and salvation with your friends who are not Adventists?

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1. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 961.
2. Ibid., p. 962.
3. Ibid., p. 964.
4. Ibid.

**tuesday MAY 20**

**Testimony**

**Hilary E. Daly**

**The Truth of a Testimony**

**Isa. 8:20; John 15:10**

“It is not for lack of knowledge that God’s people are now perishing. They will not be condemned because they do not know the way, the truth, and the life. The truth that has reached their understanding, the light which has shone on the soul, but which has been neglected or refused, will condemn them. . . . Light, precious light, shines upon God’s people; but it will not save them unless they consent to be saved by it, fully live up to it, and transmit it to others in darkness.”

**What kind of witness are you?**

“It is not enough to make a profession of faith in Christ and have our names registered on the church roll. ‘He that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us.’ ‘Hereby we do know that we know.
Him if we keep His commandments.” 1 John 3:24, 1 John 2:3. This is the genuine evidence of conversion. . . .

“The truth is to be planted in the heart. It is to control the mind and regulate the affections. The whole character must be stamped with the divine utterances. Every jot and little of the word of God is to be brought into the daily practice.

“... He who becomes a partaker of the divine nature will be in harmony with God’s great standard of righteousness, His holy law. This is the rule by which God measures the actions of men. This will be the test of character in the judgment.

“... There are many who claim that by the death of Christ the law was abrogated; but in this they contradict Christ’s own words, ‘Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. . . . Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law.’ Matthew 5:17, 18. . . . Could the law have been changed or set aside, then Christ need not have died. By His life on earth He honored the law of God. By His death He established it.”

What kind of witness are you? As Christians, the way we live should speak volumes of the God we serve. Let your prayer be: “God, help me to authenticate Your Written Word in what I do so that people who don’t know You will desire to know You as I do. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”


**wednesday MAY 21**

How-to

**Esther Easter-Hampton**

**One With the Father**

Deut. 6:4–7; Col. 1:15, 16; Matt. 5:17; John 1:1–4; 10:30–33

How often have you spoken to someone who said, “You sound just like your mother,” or “When I hear you, I hear your father”? Perhaps they’ve seen you from a distance and called out your mother’s or your father’s name because you look like that parent. When we follow God’s law, people will recognize that we belong to Him.

**God’s law is meant to guide all humans.**

As Christians, we struggle from time to time with the law of God and Christ. Satan wants us to believe that we don’t really need to follow this law or that the law has been done away with at the Cross. However, Christ stated He did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17). We must count God’s law as our best asset. Paul tells us in no uncertain terms how important, how holy, righteous, and good the law of God really is. God’s law is meant to guide all humans. So how then can we make it a part of our lives?

Accept God’s law as your one guiding principle (Rom. 3:31). “Real faith, based on wholehearted love for the Saviour, can lead only to obedience. The fact that Christ endured such suffering because of our transgression of God’s law is one of the strongest motives for obedience. We do not easily and readily repeat a course of conduct that overwhelms our earthly friends in calamity. Likewise we can only hate the sins that inflicted such woes on the best Friend of all.”

Recognize that God’s law “is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” (Rom. 7:12, NKJV). The word good is used here “in a moral sense. . . . The commandment is designed to bring man nothing but life and blessing, both now and throughout eternity. . . . If obeyed, it will bring righteousness and happiness everywhere.”

“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2, NKJV). Like His Father, Christ demonstrated the fruit of the spirit—“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22, 23, NKJV). Because of this, He could say that He and His Father are One.

**REACT**

Which of the fruit are you growing? Which are not thriving in your life?

1. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 510.
2. Ibid., p. 553.

**thursday MAY 22**

Opinion

**Troy Brand**

**Is Christianity a Fraud?**

Gal. 5:14

Many people are hostile toward Christianity. They openly question our position on a large range of issues, suggesting that everything Christian is a hoax or a myth. They believe that Christianity has done more harm than good and that the world would be better without it. However, maybe the problem these people have is not with Christianity, but with the people who profess to believe but then do not live accordingly. What the Bible teaches is love for God and love for fellow humans. This love is to be consistently lived out in the lives of everyone who believes in Jesus Christ. Indeed, this love is the very fulfillment of God’s law.

**Love is the very fulfillment of God’s law.**

The sad reality is that we do not have to look outside of any local church to know that some of what the skeptics say is true. There are people who have come to church looking for acceptance and guidance only to be mistreated because of what they were wearing. They see glaring inconsistencies between Christ’s law of love and certain attitudes and behaviors of proud professing believers. Then there is a “fallen” church member who is mistreated by some of the most ardent churchgoers. They also join nonbelievers in pronouncing our profession a fraud.

While we can do little to directly change the mind-set of those on the outside, we can perhaps regain the confidence of a fallen brother or sister in Christ. The Ten Commandments help us “to live in harmony with God and with fellow human beings.”* Our desires, ideas, customs, and practices cannot be the basis on which we build our lives. We should want what God wants. Love is the fulfilling of God’s law: The way of living God desires for us is based on His love for us and on our loving one another. The commandments are intended to demonstrate to love because “all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Gal. 5:14, NKJV).

**REACT**

1. Why do some people lose confidence in Christianity?
2. What can you do to rectify this confidence drain in your local church?
3. How can love misapplied compromise God’s law?


**Friday May 23**

**Exploration**

Leslie Jane Simmons

*A Life of Obedience*

**John 13:34, 35; Phil. 2:5–11**

**Conclude**

As the Supreme Head of the universe, our Creator God has established laws for all of His creatures. When Jesus Christ voluntarily transformed Himself into human flesh, He gave Himself to a life of obedience to His Father and to His commandments. Thus, everything that Jesus taught, the perspective that He put on the law, even the “new” commandment that He gave, was always in full harmony with the law of God.

**Consider**

- Interviewing a church member or Bible teacher you admire. Ask this person what she or he thinks it means for a Christian to love someone as Christ loves us.
- Creating a chart that lists the pluses of loving as Christ loves, the potentials for loving as He loves, and the concerns you might have about loving as He does. Present this chart to Him in prayer, asking Him to help you make such a love a part of your daily life.
- Drawing with vibrant colors a modern-day scene of someone loving another person as Christ does.
- Role-playing with your Sabbath School class or Bible study group an incident that shows Jesus’ love for others (for example, the feeding of the 5,000—Matthew 14:13–21; the woman caught in adultery—John 8:1–11). Discuss acts of kindness we might be able to perform today.
- Taking time to empathize with a friend who is going through a particularly difficult time. Pray for each other before you go on to other things.
- Reflecting on how God loves you. Then think about what that means regarding your feelings toward others. How will your reflections influence the way you deal with people from now on?

**Connect**

1 Peter 1:22, 23; 1 John 4:7–21.


There are no comments.

Anonymous

Name:

Email:


Previw Comment

Name:

Email:


Previw Comment

Close
Lesson Nine  May 24–30

Christ, the Law, and the Gospel

"The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17, NKJV).

SABBATH MAY 24

Introduction
Carl Henry
Everyone Is Welcome

John 15:10; Acts 10:34, 35; Rom. 6:23

When Christ cried "It is finished" from the cross, was He saying, "I'm dying"? Was He saying that the law was now done away with and grace had taken its place? Was He saying that with sin comes the law, that there is a penalty for sinning, and that the gospel is available for all to believe and accept? Was it love that prompted Him to hang suspended between earth and heaven in what was determined to be one of the most humiliating ways to die? *He who knew no sin became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21).*

Each person matters to Jesus.

Christ's willingness to go out of His way to offer the gospel even to persons who may be perceived as outcasts was demonstrated when He met the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well (John 4:1–42). If Jesus had abided by the conventions of the day, that woman would not have been convicted of her sinfulness, and those whom she told to "come, see a Man" (verse 29, NKJV) may never have acknowledged that "this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world" (verse 42, NKJV). The Father wants us to come to a knowledge of the gospel because though our "sins are like scarlet, / They shall be as white as snow" (Isa. 1:18, NKJV).

When the scribes and Pharisees brought the woman caught in adultery to Christ, He wrote on the ground and invited those who had no sin to cast the first stone (John 8:7). The crowd dispersed quickly, leaving only the woman cowering in shame, knowing what her fate would be according to Jewish law. Jesus, however, told her to go and sin no more (John 8:10, 11). Similarly, disobedience to God's precepts or our country's laws and code of conduct brings penalties. Ignorance to the law does not preclude our punishment. However, Christ made provision for our forgiveness and redemption through His death.

Christ showed grace and mercy to those men and women, and to all of us through the ages who have "sinned and fall short" (Rom. 3:23, NIV). His death gives us abundant life (John 10:10). Each person matters to Jesus. He is willing to forgive all, no matter who we are.

This week, as we study about Christ, the law, and the gospel, may we contemplate His sacrifice for our sins, the law He came to exemplify, and the gospel that saves us.

* * *  


SUNDAY MAY 25

Logos
Paula Olivier

Unraveling Antinomianism

Rom. 7:7–25

"Is the Law Sin?" (Rom. 7:7)

Christianity has had a long history of dealing with antinomianism. Antinomianism refers to "interpretations of St. Paul that take his assessments of Jewish law as a rejection of all forms of law."1 This way of reading Paul’s letters became popular during the Protestant Reformation. Some considered Luther’s theology of justification by faith alone as justification for disregarding the law. Many are proud to associate their disdain for the law with one of church history’s theological champions. The problem with this approach, however, is that Luther himself objected to it. Luther wrote an entire treatise dedicated to refuting the idea that the moral law is of no use to the Christian. He entitled it Against the Antinomians.2

The law and the gospel complement each other.
"God Forbid" (Rom. 7:7)

A more accurate understanding of Paul’s writings shows that the gospel does not eviscerate the law. In Romans 7:7, he writes “God forbid” that we call the law sin. He goes on to describe the spiritual struggles he himself faced. What he wants to do he does not do. What he knows he should not do is what he finds himself doing. Paul articulates the reality of the mature Christian. He understands that in Christ, we have won the war. But until He returns, there are still spiritual battles we must fight.

Paul admonishes church members in Galatia to live life according to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and not the flesh (Gal. 5:16–21). He reminds us not to allow our flesh to guide our thoughts and actions. The apostle gives similar council in 2 Timothy 3:1–5. He describes what the world would be like in the last days. He warns that “people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy” (verse 2, NIV). Verse five is the clincher. Here he warns Timothy to steer away from such people who have a form of godliness but who deny its power. He is talking about people in the church! Often we assume that moral instruction is directed toward people of the world. However, in Romans, Galatians, and 2 Timothy, Paul is writing to church members.

Now It’s Our Turn (Rom. 6:12)

What are we to do with the moral instructions Paul wrote to the early Christians? We must understand that being born-again Christians does not automatically make us perfect. Christ has crucified the flesh (Rom. 6:6), but He has not taken away our power of choice. Accordingly, Paul writes “Do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts” (Rom. 6:12, NKJV). We want to be resurrected when Christ returns. But if we are not careful, we will be dreadfully disappointed.

Another popular claim is that Christ came to abolish the law because it was oppressive. However, Christ declared the law eternal. He did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17, 18). Christ speaks positively of the law. Some people, on the other hand, have a visceral reaction when they hear the words law and commandments. It may be helpful to note that the Hebrew word for “commandment” is mitzvah. To perform a mitzvah is to take the opportunity to do a good deed. When I choose to tutor a friend who is struggling with a subject, I have performed a mitzvah. “The word mitzvah is always used positively, suggesting that doing what God asks is a joy and a spiritual opportunity, not a burden.”

Second, it is true that Christ fulfilled the law by perfectly obeying it. However, there is also another implication. When a rabbi misrepresents the Torah, he is said to have canceled or nullified it. His misinterpretations of the texts thereby abolish it. By paralleling “abolish” and “fulfill,” Christ is using a Jewish idiom that means He has come to clarify the meaning of law and to make clear to people how God truly wants them to live. Therefore, every day we must spend dedicated time with Christ. He will reveal to us how to better live out the deeper principles of the law.

Getting Back on Track (Rom. 7:24, 25)

In conclusion, denigrating the law in the name of the Lawgiver is not biblical. As a matter of fact, when one frames the law and the gospel in an either-or context, a false dilemma is created. The law and the gospel complement each other. The law signals us when we have become lax or delinquent in our relationship with God. The gospel points us to the One who can get us back on track (Gal. 5:16–21). In Romans 7:24, Paul writes, “I present before you the...Son of God uplifted on the cross.”

The gospel helps us to see the Christ of the Cross, the good news of our release from sin, and the promise of life with Christ in the New Jerusalem. “The gospel of good news was not to be interpreted as allowing men to live in continued rebellion against God by transgressing His just and holy law. God’s requirement under grace is just the same He made in Eden—perfect obedience to His law.”

2. Martin Luther, Only the Decalogue Is Eternal: Martin Luther’s Complete Antinomian Theses and Disputations (Minneapolis, Minn.: Lutheran Press, 2008).

testimony

Mark Henry

Mirror, Mirror

John 15:10; Rom. 7:7–12

The gospel helps us to see the Christ of the Cross, the good news of our release from sin, and the promise of life with Christ in the New Jerusalem. “The gospel of good news was not to be interpreted as allowing men to live in continued rebellion against God by transgressing His just and holy law. . . . God’s requirement under grace is just the same He made in Eden—perfect obedience to His law.”

“I present before you the . . . Son of God uplifted on the cross.”

Fallen man cannot possibly satisfy the claims of the law. But Christ took man’s place and satisfied its justice. All that Christ has done and suffered is imputed to the believer. Therefore, He is no longer in debt to the law’s demands, for He stands as One who is without sin and who is fully in harmony with the law.

“The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light which streams from the cross of Calvary. . . . “I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption—the Son of God uplifted on the cross.”

3. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, 2nd ed., vol. 6, p. 1070.
4. White, Selected Messages, bk. 1, p. 323.
5. Ibid., p. 367.
6. Ibid., p. 309.
7. Ibid., p. 367.
8. White, Sons and Daughters of God, p. 221.
Evidence
Carol Joy Fider

Guilty! Pardoned! Free!

John 1:17; Rom. 6:23; 7:7–12

The principles of God's law are embodied in the Ten Commandments, which He gave to Moses at Sinai. Paul notes that he could not know sin except through the law (Rom. 7:7). The law, therefore, points out our shortcomings and failings, in short: sin. We are condemned to die (Rom. 6:23). However, God, through His forgiveness, offers us eternal life.

"I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

In the Old Testament, the word law is synonymous with the Hebrew Torah, which means "instruction." Hence, the law is that which provides authoritative guidance. In the New Testament, the Greek word used for law is nomos, meaning "that which is assigned," "law," or "a rule governing one's actions." "The law was given not only to Israel, but to all humankind. Its principles give instruction on how we should relate not only to God but also to one another."

In Deuteronomy 30:15–20, Moses encouraged the Israelites to keep the commandments and live. "These precepts are the basis of God's covenant with His people and the standard in God's judgment. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sin and awaken a sense of need for a Saviour. Salvation is all of grace and not of works, but its fruitage is obedience to the Commandments. This obedience develops Christian character... It is an evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow men. The obedience of faith... strengthens Christian witness."

2 The story of Cornelius reveals that God's law and grace extend to all human beings regardless of ethnic origin, status, or condition (Acts 10:23–35). And in his sermon on Mars' Hill, Paul notes that God's grace is offered freely to all people (Acts 17:26; 27). Paul points out the condition of all human beings in Romans 7:24, 25. Although intellectually we know what is right and know we should do it, we do what is wrong if and when the carnal part of us is in control. But Paul exclaims, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with my flesh the law of sin" (NKJV).

REACT

How do the principles of the law apply to you personally?


wednesday MAY 28

How-to

Liberated Slaves

Beverly Henry

Matt. 5:17; 18; Rom. 7:12

During the slave trade, people were taken forcibly from their country, thrust into a new environment against their will, and mandated to work in subhuman conditions. Some individuals realized that this was a crime against humanity and worked tirelessly for the abolition of slavery. Noticeable among them were Thomas Clarkson, John Newton, William Wilberforce, John Wesley, and David Livingstone. The laws which allowed the practice of slavery were done away with, initially in England and the British Commonwealth (1807), and then in the United States (1865).1

Thank God for Christ, the Cross, and grace.

We may not realize it, but we are all slaves to sin. One Man came to change that picture, and He still has a great deal of opposition. The main opposition is from Satan, who, although created perfect (Ezek. 28:15), is the father of lies (John 8:44). But God, not wanting anyone to perish, sent His only begotten Son to abolish slavery to sin and to redeem us to eternal life (John 3:16). Thank God for Christ, the Cross, and grace. How can we help others understand what Christ has done for our salvation?

Acknowledge our sinfulness. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Confess your sins both to God and those whom you have transgressed against. Read 1 John 1:9

Encourage individuals to learn about Christ's sacrifice for our sins. Point others to Christ, who is the way (John 14:6). Remember that God sent His own Son so the law might be fulfilled in us (John 3:16; Rom. 8:3, 4).

Discuss God's law and its relationship to our salvation. Understand that "by grace you have been saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8, NKJV). And remember that "salvation is all of grace and not of works, but its fruitage is obedience to the Commandments."2


thursday MAY 29

Opinion

O. Patricia Haakmat

Ridiculous Exchange!

John 1:17; Rom. 7:12

I had difficulty accepting God's law as holy due to the "thou shalt nots." They sounded like scolding. Now I perceive "the law given by Moses" as written for sinners who practice sin, and not for sinless beings. My perspective changed when I applied the meaning of "scientific law" to God's law. "Scientific laws are repeatedly observed phenomena in nature that appear to be nearly universally true... Laws are different from theories in that they are not designed to provide a causal framework in which to describe why a series of observations reliably occur, but are rather merely descriptions of the observed phenomenon... For instance: A law of gravity will tell that two objects will be attracted to each other and the magnitude of the force, contrasting a theory of gravity will offer an explanation for the existence of the force." Using this definition, the unbroken law then governs how things were designed to function, and the law given to Moses points to the law being broken and thus leading to death. This awareness should lead to
repentance and acceptance of God's gift—life through Jesus.

The choice is ours. The work is His.

An example of the unbroken law is seen in God's relationship to fallen humanity. He serves humankind (Phil. 2:7) and gives us life (John 10:10). The "thou shalt not" would not apply to Him nor to Adam in his unfallen state. Adam chose to reject the law that governed his existence. Now, funeral homes, the news, correctional centers, the entertainment industry, domestic abuses, and life in general depict where sin leads (Rom. 6:23).

Through the graciousness of His character, Jesus became Adam's Offspring and lived according to God's law. Jesus, Himself sinless, took the sins of Adam and his descendants as if they were His own. He paid the price (death) and gained eternal life—the victory over death (1 Cor. 15:57). Christ will share His victory and His life with those who willingly accept His life as theirs and through the Holy Spirit, live as He would. Christ takes the responsibility to sustain this relationship once a person chooses Him.

The choice is ours. The work is His (Josh. 24:15; Matt. 7:7).

**REACT**
1. Develop an illustration depicting the lesson's title.
2. Reread the last paragraph and jot down your understanding of what the Lord has done for you.


**friday MAY 30**

**Exploration**

**Allison Sauceda**

**The Law = A Light!**

**Rom. 6:23; 7:7–12**

**CONCLUDE**

While many view God's law as a condemning force, existing only to point out our sins, people who are in Jesus learn to view it as a light. The law does not oppress us. Instead, it illuminates our lives so we can see areas in which we are not living like our Savior. Therefore, we cannot view the law as though it does not matter because it is an instrumental part of building a close relationship with Jesus. After all, even though we should be condemned for our sins, Jesus' gift of dying on the cross gives us the glorious hope of a future! He is our key to heaven! Hallelujah!

**CONSIDER**

- Evaluating ways in which you are taking God's law lightly or disregarding it completely. Devise a plan to make His law a central part of your life.
- Rereading the passages from this week’s lesson. Mark them in your Bible (highlight, underline, etc.). When you feel yourself beginning to understand what it means to keep God’s law, reread the verses to get yourself back on track.
- Drawing or painting a picture that depicts how the law serves as a mirror (see this week’s Testimony lesson). Share your illustration with your Sabbath School class.
- Memorizing this week’s memory verse (John 1:17). Challenge a friend, your spouse, or your children to memorize it with you.
- Rewriting this week’s memory verse (John 1:17) in your own words. Journal about how it applies to you and how you may need to change some of your views and/or lifestyle choices.
- Discussing with a friend how the law has illuminated sin in your life. Ask your friend to pray for you, and ask how you can pray specifically for him or her.

**CONNECT**

Psalm 119:1–16.


There are no comments.

Anonymous

Name: 
Email:

body

Preview Comment
Name: 
Email:
lesson ten MAY 31–JUNE 6

Christ, the Law, and the Covenants

“For this reason, Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant” (Heb. 9:15, NIV).

sabbath MAY 31

Introduction
Rhode-Jael Alce
Our Broken End of the Bargain and God’s Faithful Promise

Deut. 7:9

Most educational systems have contracts between students and their professors. As long as students abide by the requirements presented to them in the syllabus, they are better able to earn a good grade. But some students don’t do what's required of them. They often come to class late or skip class entirely. They turn their homework in late or not at all. Perhaps they even behave disrespectfully toward their professors. These students will not receive a high grade because they did not keep their part of the contract.

God will never fail us.

It is similar between God and us when it comes to His covenant with humankind. “The Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments” (Deut. 7:9, NKJV). Many times, though, we fail to uphold our part of the covenant. Then sin overcomes us. This is where God’s covenant is different from a student/professor agreement. Although we break God’s commandments, He is always ready to forgive us when we repent wholeheartedly and seek forgiveness (2 Pet. 3:9). Our works may cause us to reap the benefits of obtaining a high grade in the educational system, but in the case of salvation, our works constantly fail us.

Acceptance and faith in Jesus Christ are where our salvation lies. We must remember that God’s covenant is for all of humanity and applies to each and every one of us. It is our duty to read and understand the covenant between Him and us.

*s*


sunday JUNE 1

Evidence
Jennifer Zambales
The Rainbow Promise

Gen. 6:5, 6, 11, 12

Society had become so corrupt during Noah’s day that God regretted creating humans. People’s thoughts were continually evil, and their behavior was an abomination to Him. The human race is fortunate that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. It was because of his obedience and his just character that humanity was saved.

When He speaks, it is so!

After the death and destruction of the 40-day Flood, the rainbow (Gen. 9:12–17) depicted God’s promise that a worldwide flood would never occur again. In Scripture, the Hebrew word for “covenant” is berîyth. It refers most often to “agreements between man and God.”* Noah and his family shared an intimate experience with God in the ark. They were the first to experience the forces of heavy rain and flood waters, and they watched the world around them disappear under roiling waves. Yet they trusted God’s plan even if they didn’t know when they would again see dry land. How reassured they must have felt when they experienced God’s steadfast love in the form of a covenant promise to never again destroy the entire world by a flood. We also can be assured of God’s promises when we see a rainbow. And never forget the assurance we receive when we read biblical passages such as Psalm 119.

Every day we have the opportunity to trust God amid the rising floods that are the troubles of life. Or we can disregard His ability to deliver us, much
like the corrupt society to which Noah preached. With His commandments in our minds and hearts, we will desire to obey Him (Heb. 10:16). His promises to us are as sure as the rainbow after the storm. It is not in God’s nature to lie. His words created the earth and the heavens. When He speaks, it is so! When we better understand the nature of His covenant, we better understand His promises. We also will have a fuller image of His faithful character. The rainbow is a beautiful reminder of a promise He made thousands of years ago. It is a reminder that God is as faithful to us as He was Noah and his family all those centuries ago.

— The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Covenant.”

**Monday June 2**

**Logos**

**Rene Diaz**

**Christ in the Law and the Covenants**

Exod. 20:3–17; Ps. 40:8; Jer. 31:31–34

The Law (Exod. 20:3–17; Deut. 5:1–22, 29)

Many Christians believe that God’s law given at Mount Sinai was for the Israelites only. However, His law always has existed, for the principles of the Ten Commandments are the foundation of His government. As we read Genesis 4:7, we learn that “sin lieth at the door” waiting for Cain. And 1 John 3:4 teaches us that “sin is the transgression of the law.” So what law was Cain about to break? In Genesis 26:4, 5, we read that even before God gave the Ten Commandments to the Israelites, Abraham was obeying God’s “divine laws.” These examples provide evidence that God’s law has always been around.

We have nothing to fear as Jesus represents us in the heavenly sanctuary.

The Covenant (Genesis 9; 12; 17; Exod. 19:3–8)

In Genesis, we see God as our Creator. In the story of the Fall, we learn that He is our Hope. We witness His mercy when He instructs Noah to build an ark for his family and the animals so that they might be saved from the destruction that He will bring upon the wicked. The Lord gave Abraham the sign of the covenant. Through his descendants to the time of Moses, we see how faithfully God upholds His justice and mercy to all. This sampling of Scripture’s signs, promises, and covenants gives us a solid foundation.

A True and Faithful God (Deut. 7:9; 1 Kings 8:22, 23; Dan. 9:4)

God’s relationship with His people over the generations has not changed. As knowledge, technology, violence, and the world’s population continue to increase, we may be tempted to wonder if even He changes. However, Malachi 3:6 simply states, “For I am the Lord, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob” (NKJV). Unfortunately, we do change, sometimes to the point where we even forget about God. It’s as we read Jeremiah 2:32, “Yet My people have forgotten Me days without number” (NKJV). Although Jeremiah was speaking of literal Israel during his time, this message also applies to spiritual Israel. As God’s people, we need to always gaze upon Calvary and meditate on why Jesus chose to die for us.

The Law Revisited (Matthew 5; 22:34–40)

From the time of Moses to Jesus, the Jews’ perception of God’s law had become corrupted. When Jesus began His ministry, He gave a powerful message we now call the Sermon on the Mount. Although this “sermon” consists of many teachings for Israel and for us, we will look at two points here. (1) Jesus explains God’s law to the multitudes in Matthew 5:17–19, and (2) He explains the effects of sin in our hearts in verses 21–28. Today, Christians like to believe that they are free from the law, that they are saved regardless of what they do or don’t do. Yet in the New Testament, we see Jesus revisiting His universal unchanging law and correcting the misconceptions that many people had even back then. It’s hard to believe that today, many people still do not understand the role God’s law should play in our lives.

Is Jesus God? ( Isa. 44:6; John 1:1; 8:58; Heb. 13:8; Rev. 1:17, 18)

According to Hebrews 13:8, Jesus does not change. Malachi 3:6 also says that God does not change. Thus we see yet another parallel between God and Jesus. Another parallel can be found in John 8:58, where Jesus referenced Abraham’s experience with God. Jesus told them that, “before Abraham was, I AM” (NKJV). There are many other verses we could discuss, but these two and the ones in the heading prove our point. No wonder He is the Son of man. The God of the universe came down to earth for sinners like us. Jesus paid the infinite price for us, a price tag only the Creator God could afford.

Christ Our Mediator (Heb. 9:11–15)

Through the centuries, God’s people held on to the signs, promises, and covenants He made with them. All of His promises become visible in the life of Jesus Christ, the Savior. He is also our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. According to the book of Hebrews, Jesus is not only our High Priest, He is our Mediator as well. A mediator is someone who negotiates between parties, such as an attorney who represents his or her client to a judge. It is clear as we read Hebrews 9 that the author wants us to see the relationship between the first covenant and the new covenant with regards to the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries. We understand that the earthly sanctuary (made by man) is the pattern of heaven’s sanctuary (made by God), where Jesus is currently mediating for us. As His chosen people, and because He is fully God as well as fully human, we can confidently approach Him. He understands our sinful hearts and can speak to the Father on our behalf. Therefore, we have nothing to fear as Jesus represents us in the heavenly sanctuary.

**React**

1. If God’s law could be changed, would Jesus still have had to die for us? Explain your answer.

2. Why is it important to understand Jesus’ work in the heavenly sanctuary?

* The Seventh-day Adventist Commentary, vol. 1, p. 373.

**Tuesday June 3**

**Testimony**

**Jodi Wilson**

**Finding Joy in the Law**

Gal. 3:15–29

*"If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved in the ark by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, of which circumcision was a token or pledge, they would never have gone into idolatry or been suffered to go down into Egypt, and there would have been no necessity of God’s proclaiming His law..."*

http://www.cq biblestudy.org/article/597/cq-april-june-2014-lessons/archi...
There is no peace in unrighteousness."

Since we have broken His law, God has devised a plan to save us by His grace through Jesus Christ. The law has no power to pardon the transgressor, but it points him to Christ Jesus, who says to him, I will take your sin and bear it myself, if you will accept me as your substitute and surety. Return to your allegiance, and I will impute to you my righteousness.

Even though the law has no saving power, it is still crucial to our happiness. "There is no peace in unrighteousness; the wicked are at war with God. But he who receives the righteousness of the law in Christ is in harmony with heaven. 'Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other' (Ps. 85:10)."

The law of ten commandments is not to be looked upon as much from the prohibitory side, as from the mercy side. Its prohibitions are the sure guarantee of happiness in obedience. As received in Christ, it works in us the purity of character that will bring joy to us through eternal ages. To the obedient it is a wall of protection. We behold in it the goodness of God, who by revealing to men the immutable principles of righteousness, seeks to shield them from the evils that result from transgression.

REACT

1. If "the law has no power to pardon," then why should we keep the law?
2. In what ways can you give your allegiance to God each day?
3. What joy have you found in keeping the law?
4. How can you make God's covenant a part of your everyday life?

4. Ibid.

Wednesday June 4

How to

Joneen Wilson

Making It Personal

Gal. 3:15–28; Phil. 1:6; Heb. 10:11–18; 1 John 5:11–13

In the Old Covenant, God told us the Ten Commandments. In the New Covenant, God showed us the Ten Commandments, through Jesus Christ. There is no contradiction between what God told us and what He showed us. However, Jesus’ example is the powerful force in our salvation. It is by seeing God’s love lived out in Jesus’ life that stirs our hearts and gives us the desire to become like Him. Thus, God writes His law on our hearts (Heb. 8:10).

Pray as He did. Help others as He did. Love others as He did.

How can we best comprehend the difference between our role and God’s role in our salvation?

Understanding the covenant is key. This can be illustrated by the analogy of a growing child. A child’s most basic needs are nutritious food, sunshine, rest, exercise, and clean water. Likewise, we as Christians must feast on the Bread of Life, bask in the Son of Righteousness, rest in the finished work of Jesus, exercise our faith, and drink deeply from the Water of Life. As it is with a child, these steps automatically produce growth. However, just as children inhibit their growth by refusing to eat, sleep, or even move, we, too, inhibit our growth by refusing to receive spiritual food, rest, and exercise. Imitation is essential. Children are great imitators, and often it is through imitating that they learn important life skills. Likewise, we must imitate our Savior, Pray as He did. Help others as He did. Love others as He did.

Paul wrote, “Let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith” (Heb. 12:1, 2, NLT). As children depend on their parents for food and instruction, we, too, must take hold of the resources for salvation our heavenly Father provides.

REACT

1. Why is the simplicity of the covenant message so disconcerting and at times repulsive to our fallen nature?
2. If immersing ourselves in Jesus is the key to Christian growth, why is it so hard for us to stay focused on Him?

Thursday June 5

Opinion

Leila Celestin

Not I, But Christ

Jer. 31:31–34; Gal. 3:15–28

God’s law, covenants, and promises are like tutors and mirrors. A tutor walks us through problems until the concepts “click” and we are able to understand them for ourselves. A mirror makes us aware of any flaw, whether it’s crumbs on our lips or blemishes on our foreheads. Galatians 3:24 refers to the law as “our tutor to bring us to Christ” (NKJV). Before Christ came, the example of how to live as someone “in the running” to be redeemed, was the law (tutor). It was a way of keeping us until Christ came, until the gospel “clicked” with us and we were able to respond freely in faith.

“It is no longer I who live.”

In Jeremiah 31:31–34, we read about God leading His people by the hand (like a tutor) out of Egypt. He goes on to say, “I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts” (verse 33, NKJV). It’s as if He’s saying to us, “This is when you finally don’t have to simply follow the laws I’ve given and possibly resist them later, because now you are a part of you. Now you are no longer under a tutor.” (Gal. 3:25, NKJV).

Previously, we were guided by the law, but now we are “led by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:18). Galatians 5:22 and 23 goes on to tell us about the fruit of the Spirit we are to develop under His direction. In other words, we are now to live by all the knowledge given to us by our tutor, and the beautiful thing is that it is not our doing. We are not living by some law that we were taught and now just happen to keep by ourselves. It is the Spirit doing these things in us.

The law (mirror) made obvious to us the idea that we are, in fact, not right with God, and that we are in desperate need of Christ. However, the law, like
a mirror, cannot fix our problems. As Paul says, “If there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law” (Gal. 3:21, NKJV).

As we continue to walk in God’s Spirit, the reflection in the mirror will begin to change. We will no longer see ourselves, but Christ before us and inside us. “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2:20, NKJV).

friday JUNE 6

Exploration
Debbie Battin Sasser

Digesting Truth

1 Thess. 5:23, 24; Heb. 10:19–24

CONCLUDE

The Bible contains stories, prophecies, and testimonies that help us to trust in God. When Jesus came to live on earth, He fulfilled the covenant that had been established in Eden and affirmed throughout the experiences of the patriarchs and prophets. We eagerly await His return to fulfill the new covenant—that He is preparing a place for us and will come again to receive us to Himself (John 14:1–3). By faith, we digest the promise of this covenant. Then the power of the Holy Spirit is able to transform our lives so that we produce Christlike fruit (Gal. 5:18–23).

CONSIDER

- Photographing natural and man-made objects that illustrate the concepts of faith, strength, and trust.
- Rewriting Hebrews 10:19–24 in your own words.
- Journaling about your level of faith in God, how faith in Him is evident in your life, and how you can improve in the areas where you lack faith.
- Writing and performing a series of skits that illustrate the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:18–23).
- Presenting a series of slides with Bible verses, quotations, and illustrations about having absolute trust in God.
- Analyzing the faith-based experiences you have had during the past week (for example, other drivers will not cross into your lane, lights will come on when you hit the switch, water from the faucet is not contaminated, your family will return home after having been apart during the day).
- Praying for yourself, your family, and your church to be revived by a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

CONNECT

Psalm 111:9; Romans 7:12; Hebrews 7–9.
Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, chap. 87; Patriarchs and Prophets, chap. 32.
Dennis Smith, 40 Days Prayers and Devotions to Prepare for the Second Coming, pp. 96–102; Stuart Tyner, Chosen by Grace, pp. 37–53.

There are no comments.

Anonymous

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lesson eleven JUNE 7–13

The Apostles and the Law

"The law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good" (Rom. 7:12, NKJV).

sabbath JUNE 7

Introduction

Juliette Mckenzie

A Life of Crime

Rom. 7:12

In chapter 2 of Steps to Christ, Ellen White explains that human nature is so corrupt and sinful, that if left to our own devices, we would destroy not only each other but everything else around us. How else can you explain why a young woman on a bus on her way home was attacked, raped, and then brutally mutilated by nine men on the same bus, including the bus driver? How else can you explain why people in positions of authority and trust are found guilty of abuse, exploitation, and other hideous crimes?

Because God is perfect, so is His law.

The sole purpose of God's law is to convict and reveal the true nature of sin. Paul writes, "No one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are" (Rom. 3:20, NLT). Romans 3:23 says, "All have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard" (NLT). This means that while we can exceed our own standard of righteousness, we can never of ourselves, attain to God's standard of righteousness.

Why?

Because God is perfect, so is His law. His law requires no changes or amendments because just like Him, His law is both perfect and holy. However, because of God's infinite grace and mercy. He has provided for us so that when we do break His law, He can redeem us. This is called justification. Justification is the act of God, whereby our legal standing in heaven is changed from sinful to being declared righteous. When we express our faith in God, He adds righteousness and perfection to our record. God is the only source with the power to declare someone righteous and man is the recipient being declared righteous. This gift is received through a personal relationship with God, which He imparts to those who trust Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Therefore, anyone who comes to God and trusts Christ for their salvation will be justified.

So to conclude, because God is perfect, so is His law. As we study this week's lesson about Christ's apostles and the law, let us examine ourselves and seek to understand how it is that we need to be changed.


sunday JUNE 8

Logos

Mindi Vetter

The Law: A Key to Salvation and True Happiness


The Law as a Tutor (Romans 6; 7:4–25; Gal. 3:21–25)

As Christians, we are constantly at war with sin. Like Paul, we keep doing what we don't want to do because that is our sinful nature overpowering our desire to do what we want to do—live for God. We become slaves to God's law and fear it because we are unable to stop sinning. But to Paul, the law meant salvation. He wasn't afraid of the law, for he understood that it is to be our tutor (Gal. 3:24, NKJV), not our condemner. The law may be a chronicle of sins, but it also teaches us about the consequences of sin, which Paul believes makes the law "holy and just and good" (Rom. 7:12, NKJV). Without the law, we would have no hope, because not only does the law teach us about sin, it illuminates the path to our Savior. By believing in God, letting go of the chains holding us to sin, and accepting the grace God offers, we have the chance to become slaves to God. As Paul writes, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23, NKJV). The law is a wonderful aspect of our faith, because without it, we would never know the beauty that is freedom.

What good is our faith if we don't feed it with our actions?

The Vine Metaphor (John 15:1–11; 1 John 2:3–6)
In addition to being our tutor, the law also teaches us the meaning of love. John describes the law as love when he uses the metaphor of Jesus as the Vine: “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5, NKJV). This fruit is the law manifesting itself in us, which grows only if we remain connected to the Vine, which is Jesus. Furthermore, if we keep His commandments, we will be living within the circle of His love (John 15:9). Having the law in us means we are connected to Jesus. We have a place in which we belong—a place where anything is possible. Jesus offers us the law so that we can find the joy inherent when we are close to Him. Through the vine metaphor, we know without a doubt that Jesus desires nothing more than to have every one of His children experience the love that inspired Him to die for us.

When John meditates on this metaphor, he writes that we will “know that we are in Him” (1 John 2:5, NKJV) only when we truly follow His words and walk as He walked, thus showing the world the key to true happiness.

**Being Examples of the Law (1 Pet. 2:9–12; 2 Pet. 2:20, 21)**

Like John, Peter also takes the vine metaphor to heart when he urges us to realize that we are “a chosen generation” that has the honor of shouting God's praises to the world (1 Pet. 2:9, NKJV). Because we know what the law means, we need to be examples of it for others, so that whenever people speak evil about us, others will see in our good works a reason to glorify God. Being an example of the law is a huge responsibility, because no matter what, we cannot contradict the law. When we introduce people to their Savior, we must remain steadfast in our faith, or we risk losing them forever to the darkness (2 Pet. 2:20). Peter argues then that “it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them” (2 Pet. 2:21, NKJV).

To have glimpsed the light inherent in the holiness of God’s law, only to be turned off by a contradictory believer, is far worse than never having known such a light existed. Our mission to show that the law is good must never waver in our hearts; otherwise, we will fail to do the one thing God asks us to do—be examples of the law.

**Faith and Works—An Unstoppable Team (James 2:14–26)**

James furthers the importance of living as examples of the law when He states that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:20, NKJV). If we don’t act out our faith, it means nothing. If we encounter people who need food and clothes and kindly send them on their way without giving them what they need, our faith helps no one.

What good is our faith if we don’t feed it with our actions? To illustrate his point that faith and works must work together, James recounts the experiences of Abraham and Rahab. Though Abraham believed that God wouldn’t let Isaac die, he followed God’s instructions anyway. His actions showed the strength of his faith. Rahab’s actions illuminated her faith when she helped the spies escape from Jericho by hanging out the scarlet cord, believing all the while that when the city fell, she and her family would live. Abraham and Rahab should inspire us all. Let us strive to be like them and show the world that God's law is not something to be feared, but something that brings us life, happiness, and love.

**REACT**

1. What does it mean for you to be connected to the Vine?
2. How can you be an example of the law to other people who might not know the Light to which it could lead?

**monday JUNE 9**

**Testimony**

Laura Vetter

"Stand for the Right”

1 John 3:4–6

"By misrepresentation and falsehood the emissaries of Satan sought to arouse opposition against the doctrines of Christ, and in consequence dissensions and heresies were imperiling the church. Some who professed Christ claimed that His love released them from obedience to the law of God. On the other hand, many taught that it was necessary to observe the Jewish customs and ceremonies; that a mere observance of the law, without faith in the blood of Christ, was sufficient for salvation. Some held that Christ was a good man, but denied His divinity. Some who pretended to be true to the cause of God were deceivers, and in practice they denied Christ and His gospel. Living themselves in transgression, they were bringing heresies into the church. Thus many were being led into the mazes of skepticism and delusion.1"

"We are to make no compromise with evil.”

“'We are authorized to hold in the same estimation as did the beloved disciple [John] those who claim to abide in Christ while living in transgression of God’s law. There exist in these last days evils similar to those that threatened the prosperity of the early church; and the teachings of the apostle John on these points should be carefully heeded. 'You must have charity,’ is the cry heard everywhere, especially from those who profess sanctification. But true charity is too pure to cover an unconfessed sin. While we are to love the souls for whom Christ died, we are to make no compromise with evil. We are not to unite with the rebellious and call this charity. God requires His people in this age of the world to stand for the right as unflinchingly as did John in opposition to soul-destroying errors. "The apostle teaches that while we should manifest Christian courtesy we are authorized to deal in plain terms with sin and sinners; that this is not inconsistent with true charity. 'Whosoever committeth sin,' he writes, 'transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him.'2"

**REACT**

1. When encountering our fellowman, the sinner, how does God desire us to interact? He requires love, but what does it mean to “make no compromise with evil”?
2. How can keeping the commandments of God lead to prosperity in the church?

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2. Ibid., pp. 554, 555.
In one of my literature theory classes, we discussed the relevance of two opposing viewpoints: relativism and absolutism. Because of the significance of these viewpoints’ end results, the discussion took on a spiritual component in my own consideration. Relativism assumes that there is such a thing as relative truth, that all final decisions are based on criteria relative to the individual and his or her circumstances. Truth is as you find it. Absolutism assumes that truth is based on some indelible foundation, that whatever the conditions of truth are, they cannot be altered.

I will serve the God who saved me!

Which do you think I sided with, as a practicing Seventh-day Adventist? Yes, absolutism. A perfect example of absolutism is a belief that there is a God who has established rules that cannot be changed. For instance, God set out ten rules and wrote them down for the children of Israel. He called them the Ten Commandments. The Bible says there is a right way and wrong way. There is nothing relative about it. We face the absolute to accept Jesus’ grace or to reject it. In Jude, we read of God’s mercy and His absolutes: “The Lord at one time delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe” (verse 5, NIV). God showed mercy on all the children of Israel, but if some did not ultimately choose to trust in Him, He had to cut them off from Himself. Also, we read that “Sodom and Gomorrah . . . serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire” (verse 7, NIV). Perhaps Sodom and Gomorrah best represent the outcome of this notion of finding a relative truth, a truth that changes based on your own whims. God gives us many chances, and He accepts all who believe in Him, but He cannot keep probation open forever. He is a God of absolute love, mercy, and grace. He also promises to one day end evil forever. There is absolutely no question about what side I want to be on! I will serve the God who saved me!

Wednesday June 11

How-to

Fred Z. Neiwert

Walking the Walk

John 15:1–17; Rom. 7:7–8:3; 1 Pet. 2:16–20

What would the world be like if there weren’t laws to regulate our behaviors? Crime would be seen as a normal part of daily living, and no one would recognize crime as wrong. When criminals break the law, they know they are going against the morals of society. In the same manner, God points out our sins and holds us accountable for them.

We must completely submit to Him.

Paul writes in Romans 7:7 that he “would not have known sin except through the law” (NKJV). Without the law we are slaves to sin, and through the law comes the knowledge of sin. It is clear that keeping the commandments is an important part of salvation. Without Christ in our lives, we continually struggle to establish our place in His kingdom. In order to be free from sin, we must not fall victims to our sinful nature. In 1 Peter 2:16, we are instructed to act “as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bond servants of God” (NKJV). We also are taught that “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” (John 15:10, NKJV).

In order, then, to keep God’s law, we must do the following:

Abide in His love. First, we must completely submit to Him. In order to do so, we must first know Him. Through daily Bible reading and meditating on what we’ve read, through prayer and the sharing of our faith, we are able to draw nearer to Him. As a result, He will draw nearer to us (James 4:8).

Know the law. Knowing the law is more than comprehending the words that make up the law. While it is important to understand what has been written for us, we also must understand the spirit of the law. The spirit of the law was best summed up by Christ when He said, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' " (Matt. 22:37–39, NKJV).

Get rid of self. By focusing on helping others and doing God’s will, we eliminate selfish tendencies and our need for self-gratification.

React

1. Why is it important to keep the commandments?
2. What changes do you need to make to abide in Christ and keep His commandments?

Thursday June 12

Opinion

Cheryl Forster

Changed by Beholding

Rom. 7:7

Most of us have seen or heard of elderly married couples who looked like each other. A variety of explanations for this have been proposed. They have similar genes. They share a common diet. They have been through the same experiences. One study suggests that we mimic the facial expressions of those we interact with, leading us to feel similar emotions that, over an extended period of time, leave us with the same wrinkles and therefore with similar-looking faces.

The law is God’s self-portrait.

In a different way, we see this "by beholding we become changed" idea among groups of friends. Each of us has felt the tug to be like someone else. I started listening to country music to be like one friend, and later deleted that same genre from my iPod to be like a different friend. Conscious or not, we all want to be like someone else. It’s not generally a great idea to try to be exactly like our human friends. God, on the other hand, is a Friend worth imitating. And being a Christian requires that we focus on becoming Christlike.

What does this all have to do with the law? To become like someone, you have to know what he or she is like. In human relationships, we do this by observing other people’s actions and listening to their words. Through the Bible, we observe our heavenly Father. We see His actions through the Bible’s stories, and that gives us a good start on knowing Him. But to know what He’s thinking—what basic principles He lives by—we need to have some things spelled out for us. That’s where the law comes in. It shows us God’s character, so we know what to aim for in our own lives.

Think about the Ten Commandments. Of course, we shouldn’t go around murdering people. And imagine a society in which stealing other people’s possessions was the norm. However, there are also less obvious things to avoid. Even the apostle Paul says, “I would never have known what coveting really was” (Rom. 7:7, NIV) without the law. The purpose of the Bible is to show us God. As we look at Him with open hearts, we are changed, the same way we change as we spend time with a
CONCLUDE
If we didn't have God's law, we would have no hope, no light for the pathway to our Savior. Unfortunately, some people who know God's law become slaves to it—they simply try harder and harder to stop sinning. Or they conclude that they don't have to keep it at all. But the true purpose of God's law is to illuminate the path to Jesus. It was not given to condemn us. It is not something to be feared. It is meant to show us how to find happiness, love, and life in a portrait of the character of God.

CONSIDER

- Creating a flowchart that illustrates the path to salvation in Jesus Christ. Especially highlight the function of God's law to illuminate that path. Post the chart on your wall or refrigerator for a week to remind you how it works.
- Listening to a piece of classical music. Notice the patterns that make up the "rules" or themes for how the piece flows. Afterward, consider whether fear of those rules and themes should play a part in how a musician would approach performing that piece.
- Producing and performing in private a solo, 60-second mime that illustrates the role God's law has of pointing us to Christ and His righteousness so that we can be saved.
- Spending 30 minutes interacting with your pet. Make a mental list of the rules you naturally follow (and maybe didn't even realize were there) that make your relationship with that animal better.
- Journaling a paragraph about where you have darkness (confusion, uncertainty) in your life. Ask God to illuminate a pathway through that obscurity.
- Getting up an hour before sunrise to observe the world. Notice specifically how the increasing light illuminates the objects around you. How does the increasing light of God's truth illuminate your faith?

CONNECT
Psalm 1; Galatians 3.

There are no comments.
lesson twelve JUNE 14–20

Christ’s Church and the Law

"Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12, NKJV).

Sabbath JUNE 14

Introduction

Munyaradzi Michael Hove

Knowing Christ Through His Law of Love

John 17:3

An American celebrity, who shall be known as Peter, was visiting a village school in the heart of an African country. The children had talked about Peter’s arrival for weeks. They discussed what contributions he would make to their needs and all the things that might happen when he visited their school and community.

All of the children were thrilled at the thought of Peter’s visit as they anticipated his arrival. On that day, they waited expectantly for him in the assembly hall. When Peter and those who traveled with him entered the hall, the children shouted, “Peter! Peter! Peter!” They continued to shout as Peter and his entourage made their way to the front of the assembly hall, where seats had been reserved for them.

We need to know Jesus personally.

Just as Peter was a special envoy, so Jesus was a special envoy from heaven to earth. Through Jesus, we learn what God is like. As Christian youth, we believe in the Savior. We know that God the Father sent His Son to die for our salvation. This is all good, but such knowledge is not enough. We need to know Jesus personally. We each need to have a relationship with Him in order to know what things are of Him and what things are not.

Many people in today’s world do not know Jesus and what He can bring to their lives. They do not know about His church and the laws He represents. Each of us must seek Jesus and get to know Him personally. He has graciously revealed Himself to us through His Word (John 1:1–2), and through His Word, He is readily available to us. Through daily communion with Him, we can look into His perfect law of liberty, give up all sin, and be justified and sanctified by Him (James 1:21–25).

This week, we will learn more about Christ’s church and His law by studying His law and how it relates to His church. We will see how the law is as relevant to us as the remnant as it was to God’s people during Bible times.

sunday JUNE 15

Evidence

Eduardo Rodriguez

The Significance of God’s Moral Law

Exod. 20:1–17; Mark 12:30, 31

The first five books of the Bible established guidelines, rules, and stipulations that the Israelites were to follow. These laws were to strengthen Israel’s reliance on God and to help them develop an understanding of His divine presence in their daily lives. Each law reflected God’s love for them and His desire that they live in unity with each other and with Him. The climax of these laws is the Ten Commandments. Through them God entered into a moral covenant with His people. Plus, they foreshadowed their literal manifestation in Jesus Christ. Today, these laws still offer insight into the relationship God desires His children to have with Him and each other. The first four are guidelines for our relationship with God. They instruct us to place Him first in our lives, to worship Him only, and to keep His Sabbath day.

Christ is the prime Example of the law.

The second half of the commandments deals with a person’s relationship with other people. In other words, a positive relationship with God is reflected in a positive relationship with other people. This is what Jesus was saying when He paraphrased the law in Mark 12:30, 31, “ ‘And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’ ” The second is equally important: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” “No other commandment is greater than these” (NLT).

Christ is the prime Example of the law. His example reached its pinnacle when He died on the cross to save us, fulfilling God’s plan and placing all of human life in front of His own. As Christians, we must reflect Christ’s example, and in doing so, maintain God’s law. However, keeping the law does not
save us. We are saved only through God’s grace when we accept Jesus as our Savior. Then the Holy Spirit abides in our hearts and empowers us to keep the law.

We maintain God’s moral law when we place Him first in everything we do, when we love Him fully, and when we spread His good news. We also maintain the law when we treat others in a manner that mirrors Christ’s love.

**REACT**

While the law is an important aspect of our spiritual lives, we must be sure that Christ is the central theme in all of our studies. How do we maintain a balance between teaching God’s moral law and not becoming legalistic?

**monday JUNE 16**

**Logos**

Ezzer Dale Pajanconi

*The Fall and the Rescue—a Problem and a Solution*

**Gen. 3:1–7; Ezek. 18:4; Matt. 27:46; John 11:49–52**

**The Disconnect** *(Gen. 2:16–3:7)*

An old dusty light bulb spreads its light throughout a dark room. Unplugged, its light dies. Then darkness engulfs the room.

We can compare the Ten Commandments to the wiring system that makes the lighting process happen. God is the Power Source. We, His church, become the light bulb. In Genesis, we read about our first parents and the time when all of creation dwelt in perfection. But then the Fall occurred.

Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the forbidden tree, and the fate of all humanity must have flashed before God. Satan had succeeded.

The light will shine forevermore.

**Recipe of Death** *(Ezek. 18:4)*

"The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away" *(Job 1:21, NKJV).* We are His creatures. We may say He had every right to create or not to create us. He also had every right to create us the way He did. He created us to have free will. And beings with free will we always will be. We live because there is this law that holds the vastness of our universe. It is the law of God. It’s also called the law of love. And when we choose to break this law, there is no other result but death, for the grand order of things has been broken. From Adam to Noah, the effects have grown apparent with each generation.

Yet at any time in history, a pillar of hope always stands unshaken. Such a pillar was Noah *(Genesis 5 and 6).* Each person had to make a choice. Only Noah and his family lived.

The Baton of Faithfulness *(Genesis 9; 22)*

Noah’s seed replenished the earth, the corrupt condition of human hearts began to descend again. People plotted to defy the very throne and seat of the Creator. They sought to destroy the truth. We, as a church, are called out of darkness to marvelous light *(Rev. 12:17; 14:12; 22:14)*

**REACT**

1. How do you relate to today’s lesson on a personal level?
2. Which part of the lesson inspires you the most, and why?

**tuesday JUNE 17**

**Testimony**

Felipe Solheiro

*Watch Out*

**Rev. 12:17; 14:12; 22:14**

Now, more than ever, we are called to be a pure people. Satan is angry with people who keep the commandments of God *(Rev. 12:17)*, and he seeks to destroy the truth. We, as a church, are called out of darkness to marvelous light *(1 Pet. 2:9)* to uphold God’s commandments. Satan wants to show the unhewn worlds that humans cannot keep the law, but when God’s love pulsates within every fiber of our being, keeping the law will be a matter of joy. As God’s church, we can show those around us that keeping the law brings us blessings, joy, and an abundant life, as God always intended that it would.

“At this time the church is to put on her beautiful garments.”

“Consider, my brethren and sisters, that the Lord has a people, a chosen people, His church, to be His own, His own fortress, which He holds in a

sin-stricken, revoluted world; and He intended that no authority should be known in it, no laws be acknowledged by it, but His own.

Satan has a large confederacy, his church. Christ calls them the synagogue of Satan because the members are the children of sin. The members of Satan’s church have been constantly working to cast off the divine law, and confuse the distinction between good and evil. Satan is working with great
power in and through the children of disobedience to exalt treason and apostasy as truth and loyalty. And at this time the power of his satanic inspiration is moving the living agencies to carry out the great rebellion against God that commenced in heaven.

“At this time the church is to put on her beautiful garments—Christ our righteousness.” There are clear, decided distinctions to be restored and exemplified to the world in holding aloft the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. The beauty of holiness is to appear in its native luster in contrast with the deformity and darkness of the disloyal, those who have revolted from the law of God. Thus we acknowledge God and recognize His law, the foundation of His government in heaven and throughout His earthly dominions. His authority should be kept distinct and plain before the world; and no laws are to be acknowledged that come in collision with the laws of Jehovah.”

wednesday JUNE 18
How-to
Michelle Sevcik
Love—The Bond of Perfection
Rom. 13:10; Col. 3:14

Again and again, the Bible expresses the theme of love. The law is an expression of God’s love, and it is His desire to see this love expressed in His church. Love is what holds the law together (Matt. 22:37-40); and it is when we have pure love for one another that we reflect God’s image. Of all the characteristics a Christian can have, such love is the greatest (1 Cor. 13:13). Such love empowers us to do the following:

Encourage one another. Encouragement goes a long way (Heb. 10:24, 25). It helps us to remember that there are people who appreciate us and that we are a valuable instrument in the hands of our mighty God. Because we are a family (Rom. 8:14-17), we need to encourage one another and remind each other that Jesus is coming soon!

By serving others, we become the type of people God would have us be.

Forgive one another. Because we’re all sinners, we at times hurt the people around us. The first steps to healing these wounds are offering forgiveness and accepting forgiveness. Forgiveness restores relationships. Just as God forgives us, we should forgive others (Matt. 6:12; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13). Forgiveness reflects love and shows that Christ’s love is in us.

Serve others. Service to others is a sign of selflessness, and it was such service that Jesus perfectly reflected during His ministry on earth. Matthew 14:14 demonstrates how He was constantly living to serve others, no matter what He was going through. When we focus on our problems, we become discouraged. However, by serving others, we become the type of people God would have us be. Use your God-given talents to help others. James 2:26 teaches us that “faith without works is dead” (NJKV). And Galatians 6:9, 10 encourages us to always do good to all people, especially those within the church. When we do good for others, we are ultimately doing good for our King (Matt. 25:40).

REACT
1. Which of the three points above are the most difficult for you? How can you improve in each of them?
2. How can you demonstrate love to those in the church with whom you don’t get along?

thursday JUNE 19
Opinion
Fernanda Solheiro
The Church Genome
Deut. 32:46, 47

The human genome is all “the genetic information in a person. [It] is made up of the DNA in chromosomes as well as the DNA in mitochondria.” It controls cell function and indirectly controls the function of the entire body. The genome also contains hereditary information, so that the reproduction of genetic material is transmitted from one generation to the other. Once there is a complete knowledge of the genome, it is possible to collect information to identify diseases. Scientists have already used this method to find mutations which are caused by a gene that is different from the rest of the group.

We are all the same in God’s eyes.

The human genome can be compared to an “instruction manual” divided into chapters which are the genes of any one given person. Therefore, all the different cells from the same organism will contain a copy of this “manual,” but the cells, with their different functions, will follow some of the chapters and ignore the rest. That is a possible explanation for cell differentiation; even though they are genetically identical, they follow different instructions.

2. We are all the same in God’s eyes. Yet we all have different talents that serve the same purpose. Because we are all part of God’s church, we all are meant to carry the same “genetic information”—God’s law. His law is our identity, just as our own particular genome is our identity. When we follow God, His law identifies us as His loving sons and daughters (John 14:15).

The genome’s main purpose is to build the genetic information of a cell. In God’s law, we find principles that build our Christian identity. Then we can apply those principles to the church setting and to spreading the gospel (Mark 16:15). Just as the genome is an “instruction manual,” so is God’s law. It teaches us how to have victory in Jesus. The church that follows God’s law will not have the “mutations” and “diseases” that sin brings (Gal. 5:19-21).

Our main purpose is to follow all of the law in order to avoid a “differentiation” in our values and beliefs. Even though we each have different functions in the church (1 Cor. 12:1-14), our main goals are to follow Christ and lead others to Him.

REACT
Identify your “spiritual gene.” How can it help you to build the identity of other members?


friday JUNE 20
Exploration
CONCLUDE

God’s law is perfect, holy, just, and good. It isn’t a list of recommendations on how to live a good life. Instead, it’s an outline of binding principles that give us an understanding of how to live the best life possible alongside God and each other. The Ten Commandments are so important to God that He wrote them with His own finger. A central word in God’s law is “keep.” God’s desire is for us to keep His law in our hearts so that we are bound to Him in a loving relationship that will continue forever. Love is central to God’s law, yet often we think of it as just a set of rules.

CONSIDER

- Writing a drama that includes dialogue between Moses and God about His law and what it means for God’s people and future generations.
- Selecting some of your favorite songs and listening to them to hear how they relate to God’s law. How does what you hear inform you about the world that surrounds you?
- Creating a short film on God’s law of love with the purpose of helping others understand that being a Christian is partly one’s response to a loving God.
- Journaling your observations about what free choice teaches us regarding God’s character and His law.
- Writing a response to the following statement for publication in your church’s newsletter or for placement on the bulletin board in the church foyer: “Without the law, men have no just conception of the purity and holiness of God or of their own guilt and uncleanness. They have no true conviction of sin and feel no need of repentance. Not seeing their lost condition as violators of God’s law, they do not realize their need of the atoning blood of Christ. The hope of salvation is accepted without a radical change of heart or reformation of life. Thus superficial conversions abound, and multitudes are joined to the church who have never been united to Christ.”—Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 468.

CONNECT

Psalm 111:7, 8; Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14; Matthew 19:17; 22:37–40; Romans 3:31; James 2:8–13; Hebrews 8:10; Revelation 14:12.

Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 468, 469.


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"'This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people' " (Jer. 31:33, NKJV).

Think of pairs of things that seem to be made for each other. Things like peanut butter and jelly, a TV and a sofa, or adenine and guanine. These are on my list of best combinations. Yet the perfect unity of God’s law and His love is even more wondrous and more complex than any of these. Alone, each aspect is beneficial and important, but together, they are otherworldly. Together they facilitate sanctification.

If we love Jesus, we will keep His commandments.

But if God’s law and His love were made to complement each other, why do they so often seem divisive and mutually exclusive? Lucifer slowly started to lose the love that was to be paired with God’s holy law. His love of self caused him to go through the motions of his duties while rebellion festered in his heart. He soon succeeded in separating the two—telling himself and his fellow angels that a truly loving God wouldn’t place such restrictions on them.

The same combination is found all through Scripture. Cain offered a sacrifice. He still kept the law, but it was not pleasing to God because he did not love Him enough to make the type of sacrifice God asked for. The Pharisees added rules and regulations to the law, and made sure that everyone obeyed them. Yet they still overlooked the feelings and particular situations of others. Satan still uses this tactic today. Either he gets us caught up in details of the law, or he makes us believe we can forget about it and focus only on God’s love.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 13:2 that if we have faith but not love, we are nothing. Think about it. We can try to keep the whole law to the best of our abilities, but if we lack love, it would be the same as if we had never kept the law. In turn, if we only have love, but do not keep the law, we are equally condemned, for if we love Jesus, we will keep His commandments.

As we go through this week’s study, let’s look for the truth about the connection between God’s law and His love. Let’s challenge ourselves to show love to Christ and others through living the law, and in acknowledging our need of grace when we fall short.

I have a fantastic friend who attends a nondenominational church. We get along famously and agree on a lot of things, but religion is not one of them. I like to weigh the complexities of doctrine and look up original Hebrew texts to see if I’m missing any nuances. When I ask Brent what he thinks on any number of topics, he usually just says, “Jesus loves me, this I know.” He believes that the Ten Commandments were fulfilled for us at the Cross and that we no longer need to worry about keeping them.

Is Brent right to focus just on Jesus’ love as the platform for his Christian walk? If love is all you need, what’s with all this striving to be holy and to keep God’s law? Isn’t that an unnecessary burden? It’s not like we score “brownie points” with Him for doing right. Let’s look at a few biblical points to see if we can reconcile what we read about God’s law and His great love, and how the two of them play out in the eternal scheme of things.

Not everyone on earth has defected.

Law and Order: In the Beginning (Gen. 26:5; Rom. 4:15; 1 John 3:4)

God’s law has always existed. Even in the Garden of Eden, He instructed Adam and Eve regarding their obedience and hence their love toward Him. God’s Word defines sin as “the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4) or “lawlessness” (NKJV and NIV). Therefore, “where there is no law there is no transgression” (Rom. 4:15, NIV). The first part of the Bible lets us know there was plenty of transgression before the Ten Commandments were written in stone. When reading Genesis 26:5, we also find evidence that God’s laws were well-known to His people. Here He tells Isaac that He blessed his
father Abraham “because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws” (NKJV).

The Devil’s Advocate: Under Enemy Control (Matt. 4:8, 9)

Matthew 4:8, 9 shows Satan seemingly to claim quite a bit of ownership as he uses his position to tempt Christ. However, is it true that Satan had the ability to fulfill his bribes? When and how did he gain so much influence? Looking back at Eden, when Adam took the fruit Eve offered, He disobeyed God’s instructions. From that decision onward, our earth has been under enemy occupation. One of Satan’s most successful campaign tactics in controlling the earth is his propagation of the myth that God’s law isn’t fair or even important. He uses his influence to tell us that breaking God’s law leads to wisdom instead of death. It worked in Eden, and it continues to work today.

Covenant 2.0 (Jer. 31:33)

Because of sin, God and His people were separated, so God made a pact with His people—a sort of peace treaty that would help them and us to be reunited with Him. God spoke the treaty and the people promised that what He said, they would do (Exod. 24:3). God put the pact in stone, but before Moses could even descend from the mountain with the written tablets, the people already had broken their part of the agreement. When Jesus came, He instituted Covenant 2.0, because the people had broken the first one! We read about this covenant in Jeremiah 31:33: “This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” (NKJV). The new covenant was new, not in content for it contained the same commandments given in Exodus, and not in liable parties. God was still reconciling us (as members of spiritual Israel).

The differences in the covenants are fairly simple. We get another chance with a better High Priest, a better promise, written on a better surface—our hearts (Heb. 8:6–8). We now have Jesus mediating for us in the actual, heavenly sanctuary. He has promised to be our God and to help us keep His law through the love He instills in our hearts.

A New Covenant: The Rest of the Story (1 Cor. 6:9–11; Col. 1:10–14; Rev. 14:12; 22:14, 15).

There always has been a group of loyalists who allow God’s law of love to perfect their character. A Bible-based faith shows us how central God’s law is to our Christian walk, and that we, despite what we see others doing, must lead a life worthy of the Lord (Col. 1:10–14). Not everyone on earth has defected. Many Christians strive to please God by turning from sin (1 Cor. 6:9–11) and keeping His law (Rev. 14:12; 22:14, 15). Though we still struggle here on earth, the day will come on the earth made new when obeying God’s eternal laws will be as natural and easy for us as it is for the unfallen angels.

But back to Brent. Is love all you need for a saving relationship with God? I say this carefully, but yes. If that love is true, it will be the motivational force to enter into a covenant with God because we desire to be obedient citizens of His kingdom.

REACT

1. How are God’s covenants like peace treaties? Why do we need a treaty with God?
2. How does Jesus’ example of taking communion explain the transition from the old to the new covenant?

monday JUNE 23

Testimony

Izhar Buendia

The Kingdom of Others

 Isa. 27:5; Luke 10:25–37

“Among the Jews the question, ‘Who is my neighbour?’ caused endless dispute.”

“This question Christ answered in the parable of the good Samaritan. He showed that our neighbor does not mean merely one of the church or faith to which we belong. It has no reference to race, color, or class distinction. Our neighbor is every person who needs our help. Our neighbor is every soul who is wounded and bruised by the adversary.”

“Love is the basis of godliness.”

“Many today . . . separate their duties into two distinct classes. The one class is made up of great things, to be regulated by the law of God; the other class is made up of so-called little things, in which the command, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,’ is ignored. This sphere of work is left to caprice, subject to inclination or impulse. Thus the character is marred, and the religion of Christ misrepresented.”

“Love is the basis of godliness. Whatever the profession, no man has pure love to God unless he has selfless love for his brother. But we can never come into possession of this spirit by trying to love others. What is needed is the love of Christ in the heart. When self is merged in Christ, love springs forth spontaneously. The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within—when the sunshine of heaven fills the heart and is revealed in the countenance.”

“It is fellowship with Christ, personal contact with a living Saviour, that enables the mind and heart and soul to triumph over the lower nature. Tell the wanderer of an almighty hand that will hold him up, of an infinite humanity in Christ that pities him. It is not enough for him to believe in law and force, things that have no pity, and never hear the cry for help. He needs to clasp a hand that is warm, to trust in a heart full of tenderness. Keep his mind stayed upon the thought of a divine presence ever beside him, ever looking upon him with pitying love. Bid him think of a Father’s heart that ever grieves over sin, of a Father’s hand stretched out still, of a Father’s voice saying, ‘Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me, and he shall make peace.’ Isaiah 27:5”

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 382.
4. Ibid., p. 384.
5. Ibid., p. 388.

 broaden the issue. The Kingdom of Others

 Isa. 27:5; Luke 10:25–37

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2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 382.
4. Ibid., p. 384.
5. Ibid., p. 388.

 tuesday JUNE 24

Evidence

Andrew Greenwood

Cutting Covenants

Gen. 15:9; 10; Jer. 31:33; 34:18–20

Unfortunately, we’ve lost the significance associated with the word covenant. Some call it a promise, or a treaty—but in our self-interested society, promises are broken with unapologetic regularity. The closest example to a covenant that we have is marriage, and though recent studies show that the often-quoted 50 percent American divorce rate quote is a myth, we’re still a long way from being committed to covenant-esque relationships.1 Take...
Glynn “Scotty” Wolfe, for example. This former Baptist minister held the Guinness Book of World Records on marriages. He was married 29 times. His shortest marriage was 19 days, and his longest lasted 7 years. He was proud of his marriage record. However, when he died at age 88, none of his 29 wives, 19 children, 40 grandchildren, and 19 great-grandchildren claimed his body. 2

He was proud of his marriage record.

Because of society’s lackadaisical view of the marriage covenant, we can get an accurate picture of what God meant to have with us only by going back to the Bible to see what the original version looked like. The Hebrew word for covenant is pronounced beriyt in English. It comes from two root words, beriy, which means “fat”, and bar’ah, which means “meat”. These words deal with slaughtering livestock because they refer to the animal that is fattened and slaughtered for the covenant ceremony. Our English translations read that God “made covenants,” but in Hebrew, the text would read karat beriyt, meaning “to cut” a covenant. In these ceremonies, participants walked a path in the shape of a figure “8” between the halves of a slain animal, then stopped in the middle of the pool of blood to pronounce the blessings and the curses of the covenant. This agreement said, “The one who breaks this covenant will die just like this animal has died.” A pledge was also made that said, “Just as this animal gave its life so I will give my life for you if necessary.” (Gen. 15:10; Jer. 34:18–20).

Israel’s breaking of their covenant was a serious error, which could have ended their lives immediately. Their nation had a history and a vocabulary rich in covenant culture. Yet they willfully broke their agreement with God. Even then, God was merciful and offered them a new covenant to help them gain an internal standard for seeking righteousness.

4. Ibid.

**Wednesday June 25**

**How-to Joshua Grant**

**Gangster’s Guide to God’s Laws**

**Ps. 119:18**

Check yo’ self, before you wreck yo’ self! Even a simple check would have told me not to go through with it. Had I analyzed my position, launch velocity, projected trajectory, and impact angle, it would have been clear: the laws of physics were just not set up to safely make the jump. But I hurled myself and my skis through the air anyway, and my knee paid the price!

“Oh, how I love your law!”

We are often just as foolish when we neglect to study God’s law. Obedience to these laws is the natural extension of our love for Christ (1 John 5:3). Just as obeying the laws of physics could have protected me from pain, obeying God’s law is able to protect us from suffering. He is glad when we follow His law, and He promises to bless us when we do so (Ps. 1:1, 3; James 1:25). But how do we use God’s law?

We’ve got god’s law. All of us. We use the law to show us our sins. God gave us the law so we can identify our sins (Rom. 3:20). Take your thoughts and actions and overlay them on the principles of the Ten Commandments. Do you see your sins? Good! Acknowledge your weaknesses and begin working with Christ to remove the sins and repair yourself. Keep a low profile. Stay away from people and places that might cause you to sin. God makes it clear what things are unacceptable for citizens of His kingdom. In a society where nearly everything seems to be acceptable, we must continually look to His law to reduce the influence of sin in our lives. Do what’s good. The Ten Commandments show us positive things we should be pursuing, such as putting God first, honoring the Sabbath with reverent observance, and respecting our parents. We also can infer how we should behave from commandments that expressly tell us how we should not behave. We should respect human life, be grateful for the things the Lord has provided us, guard our tongues, and respect God’s name.

I can’t wait for the day when we are able to experience the perfect beauty of God’s law and, like David, sing, “Oh, how I love your law!” (Ps. 119:97, NIV).

**React**

1. What can God’s law free you from?
2. What has sin done to pervert God’s law?

**Thursday June 26**

**Opinion Lovemore Gororo**

**God’s Singular Permanence**

Daniel 2

There are some things in life that seem to last forever: a cough from that cold you had three weeks ago, the Monopoly games your ultra-competitive roommate ropes you into, and the awkward silence when your first date starts to go poorly. There are very few things that actually last forever though, which is why we find it nearly impossible to wrap our minds around the everlasting kingdom of Christ. We are used to working with finite things, but Christ’s kingdom is beyond the finite. Moreover, we fall victim to the modern concept of instant gratification. The good news is that God provided His love-driven law to serve as a daily reminder of His kingdom. As we live each day, we can receive visions of God’s kingdom of love by reflecting on His law and by drawing on the distinctions between His kingdom and the devil’s kingdom.

The law of the kingdom . . . brightly reflects God’s love.

The Bible is full of distinctions between God’s kingdom and Satan’s kingdom. Daniel draws one of the sharpest contrasts between God’s everlasting kingdom and the impermanence of everything else (Dan. 2:44). God’s law, His love, and His kingdom are all marked with permanence, a trait only He possesses.

God calls us to choose life. His law is the law of love. His law provides us an opportunity to choose life. In a world where relativity and balancing tests rule the day, we have bright line rules. On top of the information we need to make good choices, we also are given the consequences of failing to do so. It is fascinating that the law, by drawing a distinction between who we were and who we are when we become God’s children, reveals the love we
find in Christ. As such, it is hard to think about the law of His kingdom without thinking about the love of the kingdom. The law of the kingdom, couched in warnings of the consequences of disobedience, brightly reflects God’s love. The law contextualizes our relationship with Him and the world around us. When we consider where we used to be before we accepted God’s law, it’s easy to see God’s love written all over it. With this in mind, how much more should we be pressed to seek others to seek God’s kingdom?

**REACT**

1. Observation and experimentation are the most basic tools used to prove the existence of something. How can these tools apply to proving God’s existence?

2. How does Nebuchadnezzar’s quest to make his kingdom permanent remind you of yourself?

**friday JUNE 27**

**Exploration**

Sergio Torres

*Written on the Heart*

*Heb. 8:10*

**CONCLUDE**

Through the Holy Spirit, God is able to write His law on our hearts. The law can be internalized only through the abiding presence of Jesus in us. He is the personification of the law. He incarnates all the principles, words, and deeds of God’s law. We can understand His law only to the extent that Christ lives in us. The Savior fulfills the commandments in us when we trust Him daily. Let us delight in Him, for our “delight is in the law” (*Ps. 1:2*, NIV).

**CONSIDER**

- Eating a spoonful of honey. As you enjoy the sweet smoothness, think about how God’s law is “sweeter . . . than honey from the honeycomb” (*Ps. 19:10*, NIV).
- Researching the cost of a diamond or emerald ring or what the price of gold happens to be. Then consider that God’s law is “more precious than gold” (*Ps. 19:10*, NIV).
- Illustrating through sketches or paintings how God’s law revives “the soul” (*Ps. 19:7*, NIV), makes “wise the simple” (*Ps. 19:7*, NIV), and gives “joy to the heart” (*Ps. 19:8*, NIV).
- Looking up the story of the hymn “Trust and Obey.” How does this hymn inspire you to trust and obey?
- Following the Hebrew alphabet as you meditate on Psalm 119. This psalm is an acrostic poem. Each stanza begins with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In addition, the verses of each stanza begin with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Meditate on a different letter each day until you have completed the psalm.
- Keeping a journal of your daily meditations on Psalm 119.

**CONNECT**

*Psalm 19:7–10; Psalm 119; 1 Corinthians 13.*


**next quarter’s lessons THIRD QUARTER 2014**

**The Teachings of Jesus**

If you have not yet received a copy of CQ for third quarter 2014, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

**Lesson 1 Our Loving Heavenly Father**


**Memory Text:** “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him” (*1 John 3:1, NKJV*).

**Key Thought:** According to the Gospels, Jesus applied the name Father to God more than one hundred thirty times. Traditionally, a “father” means love, protection, security, sustenance, and identity for a family. A father gives a name to the family and keeps its members together. We can enjoy these and many other benefits when we accept God as our heavenly Father. Though it is essential for us to know the Father, our aim should not be just intellectual and theoretical knowledge. In the Bible, to know someone means to have a personal, intimate relationship with him or her. How much more so will our heavenly Father?

**Lesson 2 The Son**


**Memory Text:** “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (*Mark 10:45, NKJV*).

**Key Thought:** Jesus asked His disciples: “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” (*Matt. 16:13, NKJV*). It was not difficult for them to report what they had heard people saying about Jesus. More challenging, however, was Jesus’ next question: “But who do you say that I am?” (verse 15, NKJV). Now it became a personal issue. This required the disciples to express their individual faith. Sooner or later, everyone has to decide who Jesus is. The answer must reflect your own personal belief. And on that answer your destiny depends.

There are no comments.

Anonymous

Name: 
Email: 

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http://www.cqbiblestudy.org/article/600/cq-april-june-2014-lessons/archi...