

SESSION 2

Our Commitment to Christ



QUESTION 1:

What's something you've really enjoyed being committed to?

THE POINT

Commit your whole life in trust and obedience to Christ.

THE PASSAGE

Mark 10:13-22

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Reality TV has been among us now for twenty years, and considering that 39 percent of Americans tune in¹, it's not likely to go away anytime soon. One popular reality TV show has contestants tackling challenging, complex obstacle courses to earn the title of *American Ninja Warrior*. It's clear—these athletes have been in intense training for months. It's no small commitment.

We may not be vying for any kind of title, but our lives revolve around our commitments just the same. A quick look at a typical week will reveal our commitments and how committed we are to those commitments. Family, friends, a job, honing a new skill, practicing a hobby, and working out at the gym all call for a level of commitment. And all of them will face an “obstacle course” of challenges.

Our commitments reveal what we love. Our commitments also reveal *whom* we love.

In the Bible, we read about commitment, and specifically God's love for us. He is fully committed to us. The real question is, how will we respond to that commitment?

Mark 10:13-16

13 And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.

14 But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

15 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

16 And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus gave us a tangible picture of what commitment and obedience to Him looks like. He had been teaching and healing, and people brought their children to Him so that He could touch and bless them. His disciples didn't like it. In fact, they "rebuked those that brought them."

When you look at this event from the disciples' perspective, their rebuke made sense. Jesus was doing really important things, right? He was teaching, healing, and building the kingdom of God. This was work with an eternal impact, so Jesus surely wouldn't have time to play with little kids.

The disciples weren't the only ones doing some rebuking that day. Jesus did too—but He leveled His rebuke squarely at His disciples. He scolded the disciples for rebuking the people. In His reprimand, He made two fascinating statements.

1. "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." The kingdom of God belongs to people who are like those little children.
2. "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." This statement must have blown away the disciples because the common assumption

was that those who were the most learned, educated, and advanced in the things of God would certainly make it into God's kingdom. Yet Jesus said people must be like "little children" to enter the kingdom.

When my oldest son was preparing to leave for college, it was an extremely difficult time for his mother and me. He's a great kid and we would miss him terribly. The day before we dropped him off at college, we were going through his stuff and happened to find some old videos from when he was about three years old. I hadn't seen these videos in fifteen years. The videos showed him dancing and singing songs. At one point, his mother said, "Your daddy will be home soon. Do you want to say anything to him?" His face lit up and he began to squeal with delight. "I love you, Daddy! I can't wait to see you! Please come home soon! I miss you!" When I saw those videos, I absolutely lost it. I began to cry uncontrollably, and it took fifteen minutes before I could get it together.

I thought about why watching those videos impacted me so profoundly. And here's what I realized: I miss that three-year-old little boy. He is an adult now, and I still love him as much as I did all those years ago. But our relationship is different now. He grew up. He still loves me, but he doesn't scream with delight and run to me when he sees me coming in the door after work like he used to. At best, I get a "What's up, Pop?" as he breezes by me on the way to his girlfriend's house. It hit me that I miss that little boy whose one desire in all the world was to be with and please his daddy.

For most of us who are believers, there was a time when we loved our heavenly Father like that. We came to Him in faith, and we loved nothing in the world more than being with and pleasing our heavenly Father. But we grew up, didn't we? We got a little busy here, became a little distracted there, and now we might say, "What's up, God?" on the way to doing whatever it is we do.

That's the heart of Jesus' meaning here. Unless we come to God like a child—a child who isn't yet caught up in the worries of the world, but simply wants to be with and please his Father—then we

can't enter the kingdom. Entering into God's kingdom has nothing to do with position, power, education, or social standing; entrance into His kingdom has everything to do with the posture of our hearts. The posture we need is the delighted, adoring posture of a child.

QUESTION 2:

When have you seen someone come to Christ with a childlike faith?

Mark 10:17-20

17 And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.

19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

20 And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

Immediately following the account of the little children, Mark related another event that helps us see what actual obedience to Christ looks like. This story ought to make even the most ardent follower of Christ among us pause and evaluate his or her heart and relationship with God. This encounter involved a man who was rich (Mark 10:22); the other Gospel writers also described him as young (Matt. 19:20) and a ruler (Luke 18:18).

His was a universal question, one even you may have asked at some time: "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" This

young man was trying to secure his way into heaven by practicing good deeds. I picture him standing next to Jesus and the disciples, writing instrument in hand, waiting for Jesus' profound answer. He was primed and ready for his "Get into Heaven To-Do" list.

The problem comes when we think we can be good enough to gain a right standing with God. We donate to charities. We give our last dollar or a water bottle to the homeless man on the corner. We volunteer our time, resources, and energy to reputable organizations. Overall, we are kind and good people. But we're sadly mistaken if we do these things in our own version of the "Get into Heaven To-Do" list." None of these things is bad, but they also aren't what it takes to answer the man's question: "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

Jesus gave the young man the checklist he was seeking, making the point that he already knew what the law prescribed:

- ▶ Do not murder.
- ▶ Do not commit adultery.
- ▶ Do not steal.
- ▶ Do not lie or defraud.
- ▶ Honor your parents.

DIGGING DEEPER

JESUS' TEACHING ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

For a deeper explanation of Jesus' teachings about the Ten Commandments, see the article on pages 104-107.

Jesus used these particular commandments because they would have been familiar to this Jewish man. Out of the Ten Commandments, these involve other people. When it came to outward behavior, the man had done well. The young rich guy probably thought to himself, "Sweet! I've done all those things since I was a little kid! I've got this. I'm in!"

It's true; the man's actions did demonstrate a certain level of commitment. We demonstrate our commitment as we strive

for obedience, but this young man was only showing partial commitment. That may sound out of place in light of the man's declaration: "All these have I observed from my youth" (Mark 10:20), but the limits of his obedience were about to be fully exposed.

Jesus was about to drop a bomb on this man's thinking.

QUESTION 3:

Why was this man's obedience not good enough?

Mark 10:21-22

21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

Jesus laid a big demand on the young man. He said in essence, "That's right, you've done pretty well, but there's one thing you lack. You still love money. Give all your money away to the poor, and *then you can follow me.*" That may sound pretty radical, but it's not a blanket statement we are all called to follow.

Giving up our possessions is not the point of this story. The Gospels record no other time Jesus called anybody to do that. Zaccheus gave away half of all he owned to the poor and paid others four times what he owed them (Luke 19:1-10). In His parable of the minas, Jesus called us to use what we have wisely for His kingdom (vv. 11-27). So why did Jesus make such a radical demand of this man? Jesus knew the man loved his possessions more than

anything. Jesus knew that money sat on the throne of the young man's heart, not God. So Jesus looked past his surface obedience and went straight to the one thing the man loved most.

Let's not miss what preceded this radical demand. "Then Jesus beholding him loved him." The young man wanted eternal life, and Jesus wanted that for Him too. The young man wanted a rich, full life, and Jesus wanted that for him too. Jesus loved him and wanted the best for him, but Jesus knew the route to both those desires was an "all in" commitment to follow Him.

The young man heard an answer to his question, but it was not the answer he wanted or expected. "He was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions." This man had said with his mouth he wanted eternal life, but he was not willing to do the one thing Jesus said he needed to do. He loved his money more than he loved Jesus. He wanted what Jesus had to offer more than he wanted a genuine relationship with the Person of Jesus.

QUESTION 4:

What obstacles keep some people from total commitment to Christ?

After the man walked away, Jesus remarked, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:25). It can be very difficult to get worldly things like money off the throne of our hearts, but unless Jesus has first place in our hearts, we simply can't enter the kingdom of heaven. God wants our hearts—*all of our hearts*.

How then are we saved? Can we only be saved by first being perfectly committed to Jesus with all our hearts? No. We are saved by grace through faith. We enter the kingdom of God like little children who come to our heavenly Father, desperate for His love and presence. The heart of what Jesus is getting at is that the *evidence* of our salvation is that we will have hearts fully committed to that heavenly Father we love so much. In

other words, committed hearts do not grant us entrance into the kingdom of God. Rather, committed hearts are the proof that we have already been granted access to the kingdom of God. The evidence that we have trusted Christ and have genuinely received the love of God is when we are totally committed to loving Him in return.

QUESTION 5:

How would you describe a life wholly committed to Christ?

ENGAGE

What does it mean to accept God's kingdom like a child? Use the acronym below to record different ingredients of a child-like commitment to God. (An example has been provided.)

C

H — Humility

I

L

D

LIVE IT OUT

How will you show your commitment to Christ this week?

- ▶ **Trust.** If you've been trying to be good and moral to gain a good standing with God, acknowledge the futility of it. Trust Christ and be obedient to His Word as a response to His grace in your life.
- ▶ **Examine.** Examine your heart and see if, like the rich young ruler, you have things that sit on the throne of your heart other than the Person of Christ. Maybe it's money, power, comfort, control, safety, approval, or recognition. Ask Him to reveal those things to you and give Him His rightful place on the throne of your life.
- ▶ **Renew.** If you've lost your first love for Christ and are not coming to Him on a daily basis like a little child, rekindle that relationship with Him. Write down some of the ways or things that have kept you from a childlike faith in God and ask Him to help you return to that place again.



END NOTES

1. Claire Tiley, "The Reality TV Habit," *One Poll*, February 2016, onepoll.us/the-reality-tv-habit.



JESUS' TEACHING ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

By Randall L. Adkisson

With debate about displaying the Ten Commandments in courthouses and schools, one might conclude the Commandments play an overt role in the New Testament and specifically in Jesus' teachings. A survey of the Gospels reveals a different reality.

In the Gospels, Jesus seldom referenced the Ten Commandments (also called the Decalogue). John's Gospel does not mention them at all. The Synoptics, though, record Jesus' conversation with a young ruler; the

Persons descending from the peak of Mount Sinai. According to tradition, this was the path that Moses took when he met the Lord and received the stone tablets.

story includes five of the ten (Matt. 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-23). While one may rightly assume Jesus was steeped in the Torah and that the Gospels record only a portion of His teachings, simply reading the Gospels might lead one to assume Jesus did not come to negate the Ten Commandments but to neglect them. The lack of direct citations of the Ten, though, is not a sign of their unimportance but of a culture saturated by their knowledge of them. First-century Judaism was steeped in studying, dissecting, and discussing the Torah. The Decalogue was foundational in the Law and was always in the background of New Testament events.

The Heart of God

Still, one is caught off guard by Jesus' limited citation of the Ten Commandments. Besides the five mentioned above, which prohibit murder, adultery, theft, false witness, and call for honoring one's parents, Jesus directly cited the Commands only one additional time. Jesus used the Commands regarding

murder, adultery, and false witness in His discourse on the Law (Matt. 5). But instead of directly referencing the other seven, He mingled these three with regulations concerning divorce, revenge, and loving one's neighbor.

Jesus did not debate the Law; He explained it. He did not teach the Law but used it to teach the heart of God and demand a righteousness that transcended mere law keeping. He confronted and challenged the false but legalistic righteousness of the times. Teaching a deeper application of the Law, He revealed Himself as One greater than Moses (Heb. 3:1-3).

When asked which was the greatest commandment, Jesus did not mention the Ten Commandments but focused instead upon the Shema and on loving one's neighbor (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18). All three Synoptics record Jesus quoting these two, the great commandments. Only Matthew's Gospel records the comparative "you have heard it said" statements, which incorporate three of the Ten Commandments.

The Whole Law

Believers cannot separate Jesus' understanding of the Ten Commandments from His understanding of the entire Old Testament. His using the Torah, Prophets, and Writings showed He accepted the Old Testament as the authoritative Word of God.

Matthew emphasized Jesus' relationship to the totality of the Old Testament, quoting: "Don't assume that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For I assure you: Until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass from the law until all things are accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches people to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:17-19, HCSB).

Fulfilling the Law did not mean the first-century Jewish understanding of the Law remained intact. Jesus quoted the Law as a demarcation from

the standard interpretation to a new understanding leading to the Law's original intent. "What is going on in the passage—and in the antitheses—is not a countering or suspending of the Old Testament (OT) law, but an exposition of the will of God that starts from the OT law but goes behind and beyond it and that certainly goes far beyond the Jewish leaders' interpretation of the OT."¹

Thus, Jesus expanded "You shall not bear false witness" to demand truthfulness in all interactions. He explained "You shall not murder" by prohibiting hatred that might lead to murder. The absence of adultery was not the intent of the Law; fidelity in all aspects of marriage was. New Testament scholar Craig Blomberg argues: "Jesus' person and ministry so fulfill the purposes of all the Old Testament that he alone now has the authority to dictate how his followers must obey those Scriptures in the new age he has inaugurated."² In this sense, Christ's followers were no longer to interpret the Law legalistically.

A New Era

The faith community established at Pentecost was not to ignore the Law. The New Testament clearly explains that while ceremonial and cultural laws of the Old Testament, which defined and set apart the Jewish nation, were no longer relevant to the church, the moral law the Ten Commandments summarized was to be expanded.

Jesus' answer to the inquisitive lawyer revealed that the whole Law could be narrowed to two principal commands. If one would love God fully with heart, soul, and might, and if one would love his neighbor as himself, that person would achieve the Law's full intent (Matt. 22:37-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28). Loving God covers the first four of the Ten Commandments and loving one's neighbor covers the final six.

At times, people have used the Law to justify a minimum of behavioral standards. Jesus used the Law as a starting point for righteousness, not its end. The believer, for instance, who argues over whether one should

tithe or if getting a divorce is permissible has missed the intent of Jesus' teaching on the Ten Commandments and the Law. A believer is not to focus on legalistic ways to skirt the Old Testament prescriptions of holiness and relationships but rather on how to fulfill God's intent through a relationship with Him in Christ.

Only One has ever kept the Law's requirements completely. Faith in Him brings rescue from the Law's condemnation and grace to grow toward the Law's obligation. "What the law could not do since it was limited by the flesh, God did. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending His own Son in flesh like ours under sin's domain, and as a sin offering, in order that the law's requirement would be accomplished in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:3-4, HCSB). 💧

1. David Wenham, "Guelich on the Sermon on the Mount: A Critical Review," *Trinity Journal* 4, no. 2 (Fall 1983): 99.
2. Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22 in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 30.

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