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*"But whoever listens to me will dwell safely, and will be secure, without fear of evil." —Proverbs 1:33*

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## The Law—God’s Design for Our Lives

By Derrick Dominquez

*God’s law, given to mankind thousands of years ago, has life-changing relevance today.*



**O**VER 3,400 YEARS AGO, A MOMENTOUS EVENT took place in the history of the people of God. Through mighty miracles displayed in dramatic fashion, the most powerful nation in the world, Egypt, after being broken and shamefully humiliated, let God’s people go so that they could worship at the mountain of the Lord and learn to fear their God.

On the top of the mountain, God codified the Ten Commandments with His own finger on two tablets of stone. He reminded His people of the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and He told His people what He expected from them. The way in which they lived their lives would indicate whether they really were His people or not. Their allegiance and obedience to His laws would signify that they were His, and they would find favor in His sight and be blessed.

But they were warned if they were disobedient, He would consider them rebellious and would disregard them as His own. Instead of blessings and life, they would incur curses and death.

### Fast forward to the world now

Today, most of mankind has decided to reject God’s commandments. Most of mainstream Christianity claims that the law was only for the Jews, and these Christians believe that they are free from keeping the law. They are quick to cite Romans 8:2 (“free from the law of sin and death”), Romans 7:6 (“delivered from the law”) or Romans 10:4 (“Christ is the end of the law”). They wrongly substitute a watered down idea of grace for any attempt at works, and many use the motto “Once saved, always saved.”

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*For a long time, there has been a lot of confusion over the Ten Commandments and whether or not they have been abolished by God.*

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Salvation is a free gift by God's grace, so we can't begin to earn salvation. But God will not give grace to someone who is not repenting of his sins and is not submitting to God and His laws. People who are trying to obey God's laws often give in to temptations and sin, but if they are truly sorry, God will forgive them again and again. God knows our hearts. If we are not accepting the rule of God's laws over our lives and trying to obey, God will not continue to forgive.

For a long time, there has been a lot of confusion over the Ten Commandments and whether or not they have been abolished by God.

There are two questions that need to be answered by the Bible in order to understand the remedy to the confusion. First, does the New Covenant abolish the commandments? Second, what exactly are the Ten Commandments?

### Does the New Covenant abolish the commandments?

In the booklet [The Ten Commandments](#), produced by the United Church of God, this controversy is discussed. One passage reads, "The Bible tells us that Christ came as the Mediator of a new covenant (Hebrews 8:6). The popular belief that the New Covenant abolishes God's law reflects a misunderstanding of both covenants. God tells us that He altered the original covenant and made 'a better covenant, which was established on better promises' (verse 6). But it was not established on different laws. *The law stayed the same*" (page 72).



In Hebrews 8:8, God tells us that the fault was not with the law, but rather with the people ("For finding fault with *them...*" emphasis added throughout). In verse 9, we read, "because they did not continue in My covenant...I disregarded them, says the LORD." God did exactly what He said He was going to do if they didn't obey: He was going to disregard them as His own. In verse 6, it tells us that Christ is the Mediator for the New Covenant. Let's observe Christ and see what He was proposing for a better covenant. Let's see if He was planning on abolishing the commandments.

### Christ's explicit instructions

In Luke 18:18-20, we read of a ruler who approaches Christ and asks Him what he must do to obtain eternal life. The Greek for "eternal" in this verse is *aionios*. This same Greek word is used in John 3:16 where it reads, "whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." The word "everlasting" is referring to inhabiting the eternal Kingdom of God. This man is asking Jesus Christ how he can obtain *aionios*, or eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

*If we don't keep His commandments, a relationship with Jesus Christ will not, and cannot, exist.*

In verse 20 we see the response of Christ, the Mediator of the New Covenant: "You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'" Clearly, Christ is telling him that if he wants to enter into the Kingdom of God, he must obey the commandments. Jesus Christ here lists five of the Ten Commandments as an illustration of the relevance of all the commandments, which are seen in the way He lived His life.

In 1 John 2:3-6, the apostle John gives us a crystal clear rendering of whether or not the commandments have been done away with. In verses 3-4 we read, “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

If we don’t keep His commandments, a relationship with Jesus Christ will not, and cannot, exist. In verses 5-6 we read, “By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” We know how Jesus Christ walked because of what He told that ruler about how to enter into the Kingdom.

Christ isn’t going to tell someone to go one way while He decides to go a different way. Christ said that there is only one way, and if anyone else tries to enter any another way, he will be considered a robber or a thief (John 10:1-4). He came to set the example for us to follow, as John clearly points out.

### A parable provides additional support

In Luke 13:23, Christ was asked how many would be saved. He told them a parable to answer the question, explaining, “When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open for us,’ and He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know you, where you are from’” (Luke 13:25). Christ is telling them that a relationship does not exist between those who are knocking and the Master of the house.

Christ continues in verse 26, “then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.’” They are then going to try to convince the Master of the house that He should know who they are. They are mistakenly thinking that preaching about, worship of, and service to Jesus Christ is sufficient when they are of little value if there is not first submission and obedience.

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character.*

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What Christ is telling us is that there’s something missing: there’s something that they’re not doing; there’s a reason why He doesn’t know who they are. It doesn’t say that they *acted* upon what they heard by obeying.

And finally, in verse 27: “But He will say, ‘I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.’” The Greek word for “iniquity” used here is *adikia*. This same Greek word is used in 1 John 5:17: “All *unrighteousness* [*adikia*] is sin...” And sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4).

What Jesus Christ is saying is that He will refuse to acknowledge lawbreakers—and by refusing to do what we know we should do, we are in fact breaking the law. If we deliberately continue to break the law, we will not be able to have a relationship with Him, which means we will not be able to enter into the Kingdom. This is very serious.

## The Ten Commandments remain the standard

In Galatians 5:19-21, we are given a list of the workings of the flesh, and those who practice such things will not enter into the Kingdom of God. Every single item on that list is directly related to the breaking of the Ten Commandments. Paul is telling us that there is still a penalty for breaking the law that will bring cursings and death.

The Ten Commandments teach us what should be our greatest priority in life because they show us how to love God and how to love people, which are the two Great Commandments. They are a key to a relationship with our Creator, and they provide a foundation for success. They teach us, among other things, that life is a precious gift, and to protect the marital relationship, and to practice truth as a way of life. The Ten Commandments teach us God's way of life and must obviously be kept in order to inherit eternal life.

### What exactly are the Ten Commandments?

We know what the commandments do, what their intent is, the meaning of them, and the necessity of keeping them, because we have the clear command from Christ and the apostles to obey them. But what are they?

Let's have God tell us from the Bible, His word, which is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16).

Psalm 145:17 (KJV) says that God is holy; Romans 7:12 says that the law is holy. 1 John 4:8 says that God is love; Romans 13:10 says love is the fulfillment of the law. Matthew 5:48 says that God is perfect; Psalm 19:7 says the law is perfect. John 4:24 says that God is spirit; Romans 7:14 says the law is spiritual. Psalm 145:17 says that God is righteous; Psalm 119:172 says God's commandments are righteousness. Deuteronomy 32:4 says that God is truth; Psalm 119:142 says the law is truth. Psalm 25:8 says God is good; Romans 7:12 says the law is good. Genesis 21:33 says that God is everlasting; Psalm 111:7-8 says that the law is everlasting. Deuteronomy 32:4 says that God is just; Romans 7:12 it says the law is just. 1 John 1:5 says that God is light; Proverbs 6:23 says that the law is light.

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*Those Christians who turn aside from keeping the commandments are essentially saying, "We don't want to be like God, but we want to be in His Kingdom and His family."*

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Whoever attacks God's law is attacking God's person and His character, since the law clearly is His character. Everywhere God goes, His law goes. What are the Ten Commandments? They are God's very character and His nature. God does not change; He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

### Conclusions to make for our lives

God is telling us that if we want to be in His family and in His Kingdom, we have to become like Him. His law describes Him. He wants His values to be our values; He wants us to take on His character. When people look at us, they should be able to see the reflection of Christ.

Those Christians who turn aside from keeping the commandments are essentially saying, "We don't want to be like God, but we want to be in His Kingdom and His family." The Bible gives very

strict warnings about this kind of misguided and wrong thinking. You cannot have the Kingdom of God without His commandments.

The commandments have not been abolished nor done away with; they are living spiritual laws. The apostles clearly taught this, and Jesus Christ's authority confirmed it. The word of God has made this issue incontrovertible and unmistakably clear.

Let's heed God's commandments; let's do His will. Let's follow the example of Jesus Christ, and let's keep God's holy commandments, for they will bring blessings and life to all who keep them.

### Further reading

For further details about each of God's commandments, please request our free booklets [The Ten Commandments](#) and [The New Covenant: Does It Abolish God's Law?](#)

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## Persistence Pays Off!

By Becky Sweat

*Our children need perseverance whether they are tending a garden, learning to play a musical instrument, or practicing gymnastics. Here are some tips for helping kids develop stick-to-it-iveness.*



**W**HEN I WAS 13, I BEGGED MY PARENTS to let me use a section of our field to plant a small garden. I had big plans to grow vegetables and then sell them at a roadside stand to earn money for school clothes. But a few weeks after I planted the garden, the mosquitoes arrived. The weather turned humid, and weeds started to crowd out my vegetable plants. I began thinking enviously about my friend, who was spending her summer sitting beside her family's swimming pool.

So I decided to let the weeds take over and to give up on the garden. But then when I walked into the house to break the news to my mom, I overheard her talking on the phone to my Aunt Mary. “Becky has been working every day on her garden, even in the hot sun,” I heard my mom say. “I am sure proud of her.”

Whether my mom knew it or not, her confidence in me gave me just the push I needed to hang in there and finish the project I’d started. From that point on, I was determined to not let the weeds and the bugs get to me. I was going to keep working at my garden, and do at a good job at it. And truly, it stayed watered and weed-free the rest of that summer. Proverbs 31:28 gives us insight into this, which says, “Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.”

Stick-to-it-iveness is the quality that keeps a person from quitting even when obstacles come along and the natural instinct is to give up. For a child, this could mean practicing the piano, even if it’s the same melody over and over again. It could mean getting up early every morning to take the new puppy on a walk, even though it would be lot more pleasant just to sleep in.

Parents don’t want their kids to be quitters, but perseverance is not something that comes naturally. So how can we help our children stick it out in challenging or tough times? How can we help motivate our children to work hard to achieve important goals and not quit?

Remember how God acted with Moses when he repeatedly asked to be relieved of what God asked of him? “But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?’” (Exodus 3:11). And again, “But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, ‘The LORD has not appeared to you’” (Exodus 4:1). And, “Moses said to the LORD, ‘O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue’” (Exodus 4:10). God never gave up on Moses, and, eventually, Moses was willing to go forward.

### Set reasonable goals

The first step is to sit down with your children and agree on a realistic length of time for them to participate in an activity. Help kids make a commitment that is appropriate for their age. “The younger the child, the shorter the attention span and the less clear the sense of what time is about and what a time commitment is,” says Toni Potenza, associate professor of education at Roosevelt University.

For example, if you tell your 8-year-old that she can have a puppy if she feeds and walks it every day, she’s not going to fully grasp that “every day” could last 10 years or longer. But the same 8-year-old should be able to understand the time commitment for a music clinic that lasts three weeks.

Don’t expect your children to do more than they’re capable of doing. “Kids need to feel that what they’ve done is okay, but a

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*Parents don't want their kids to be quitters, but perseverance is not something that comes naturally. So how can we help our children stick it out in challenging or tough times?*

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lot of times parents have an adult standard for what they want the child to accomplish, and that is very frustrating for the child because he or she can't do it," cautions Potenza. So accept the fact that your 5-year-old may not sweep the floors as well as your 12-year-old.

### Break tasks down

Some projects seem so overwhelming that your child may not know where to begin. When my son, Danny, was about 5 or 6, he used to let his room get so messy that it looked as though a tornado had passed through. The bed was unmade. Toy boxes were dumped over. Books were scattered. Clothes were piled all over the floor. When I would ask Danny to clean up his room, he would look at me as if I was asking the impossible.

A good way to get your child to stay with a difficult project is to break it down into smaller tasks. So rather than telling Danny simply to clean his room, I would ask him to make his bed. That didn't seem too bad to him. Once the bed was made, Danny felt good because he accomplished something. Next, I would ask him to pick up the books, and so on. Danny was proud that he'd accomplished several tasks, and in the process, the big project was completed.

### Challenge yourself

Do you have a lot of projects that you started but never finished? When was the last time you learned a new skill? One of the best ways to teach children perseverance is by taking on a challenge yourself. I have a friend who makes a point of working out on her exercise bike after her kids get home from school. Another friend does a home-study foreign language course while her children work beside her doing their own school assignments.

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*Many times children worry about something unrealistic, but you can put their fears to rest.*

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"Kids enjoy seeing their parents learn new skills, yet a lot of adults don't do that. Whatever we mastered when we were 22 is what we do the rest of our lives," Potenza says. Instead, set an example for your children. Enroll in a class at your local college and study hard. Finish the oil painting project you put aside. Get those fitness DVDs out of storage. Your children will be impressed by your determination.

Proverbs 20:11 says, "Even a child is known by his deeds, whether what he does is pure and right." This is true of walking a godly life, but also in showing a good work ethic.

### Draw out fears

In any difficult endeavor, most children come to the point when they get discouraged and want to quit. They're afraid to keep going because they don't want to fail. The best thing you can do in such cases is to draw out your child's fears, says Tom Cahill, a child psychologist in LaGrange, Illinois. Many times children worry about something unrealistic, but you can put their fears to rest.

For instance, your child may be nervous about taking swimming lessons. Remind him how scared he was when he rode his bike for the first time. Ask him to tell you how it turned out. Cahill says, “Remind your child that he’s done hard things before and succeeded. Let him know it’s normal to feel scared or discouraged now and then. The important thing is to not let our fears and disappointments get the best of us.”

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*Give your children the chance to explore a variety of interests, and respect their wishes if their interests don't always coincide with yours.*

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### **Be your child’s cheerleader**

Let your child know that you believe in her abilities and that you expect her to succeed. Tell her that you appreciate her effort and are impressed by her determination. Your confidence and enthusiasm will be contagious.

But be careful not to overdo praise. If you say, “That’s the most beautiful picture I’ve ever seen!” every time she brings artwork home from school, your compliments won’t mean much. Instead, pick out something specific that is noteworthy: “You did a good job drawing the trees in your picture,” or “I like the way you made the clouds in your painting.” Save “That’s really terrific!” for accomplishments that really are terrific.

### **Know what your child is interested in**

Know when a pursuit is something your child really wants to go for, versus something he or she really doesn’t have her heart in. Give some allowances for when it’s the latter. Remember: it’s a lot easier for your children to stick with endeavors when they’re truly interested in them.

A friend shared the story of when she enrolled her 8-year-old daughter, Claire, in piano lessons. “Claire had showed some interest in my brother’s piano, so I signed her up for music lessons,” my friend related. “She stuck it out for a year. The whole time I kept pushing and pushing, but she never seemed enthused. Finally I realized that *I* wanted her to learn the piano, but she didn’t. The following year Claire enrolled in ballet lessons, and she has kept with it for five years, never missing a class and having a ball.”



Of course, there are plenty of things that our kids will need to persevere in, whether they enjoy them or not—homework, chores, difficult classes that are required at school, a job they had agreed to do for someone, or perhaps a diet or exercise program. One way to prepare them for that is to remind your children that you too, had to persevere with challenges when you were growing up, and still do. We all have tasks we have to finish, that we’d rather walk away from.

At the same time, Potenza says it’s important to teach your kids that “perseverance is also part of doing something you do like to do, so that it’s not always something being forced on them; it’s something they willingly discipline themselves for.” In other words, allow them to learn stick-to-it-iveness not just when it’s a difficult chemistry class they have to get through, but also with endeavors they choose to do and are really interested in.

For instance, my 13-year-old, Brandon desperately wanted to play on his middle school's football team. My husband and I told him that before we paid the fees for him to be on the team, he had to make a definite commitment (and he was certainly old enough at his age to understand a 9-month time commitment). We reminded him that even though football was something "fun" to be involved with, it would require him to get up at 6 am every day of the school year to go to a one-and-a-half hour football practice every morning before school. His coach also wanted him exercising and working out for a half hour every day at home. It was a lot of work, but Brandon endured it, and developed some perseverance in the process.

Give your children the chance to explore a variety of interests, and respect their wishes if their interests don't always coincide with yours. My son, Brandon, wanted to play the trumpet at the start of fifth grade. A few weeks into the school year, he didn't want to do it anymore. We knew that, but we didn't want him reneging on a commitment either, so we had him stay with the trumpet in band class the whole school year. We did respect his wishes, though, and the next year we let him choose a computer class for an elective at school, instead of band. That was something he could excel in—and truly liked.

The bottom-line: Stay attuned to the types of activities your children want to pursue, and let them know that you're behind them all the way. After all, their interests can be indications of God-given abilities, and you want to motivate them to make good use of the talents God has given them.

### Further reading

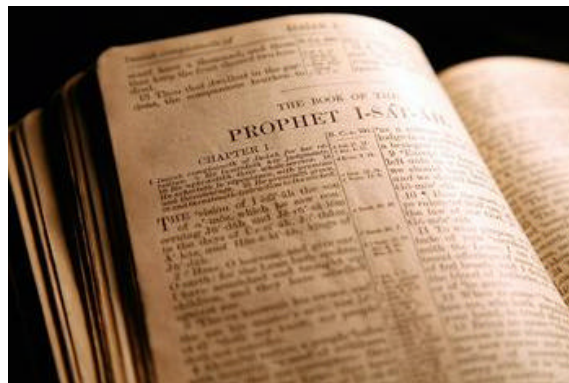
Download or request our free booklet [Marriage & Family: The Missing Dimension](#).

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## YHWH

By Robert Berendt

*Studying how God reveals Himself in the Bible can be enlightening.*



**A**LTHOUGH GOD HAS MANY NAMES that reflect His majesty, position, power and authority, the four Hebrew letters that correspond to "YHWH" are the most common portion of His name in the Hebrew Scriptures. These four English letters are transliterated from a Hebrew word (*Strong's* Hebrew #3068). Sometimes it is transliterated as *JHVH* or *YHVH*, but

the most common is *YHWH*. This name occurs thousands of times in the writings of the Old Testament.

The Bible translators used the English the word “LORD” (with the “-ORD” in smaller-sized capital letters) almost every time that *YHWH* appears. The word lord in lowercase is used when references are made to a mere man, and usually it is translated from other Hebrew words.

Some “sacred names” groups insist on certain pronunciations and English spellings for this Hebrew name of God. Some insist on using Yahweh. Some insist that the correct name is Jehovah. Biblical scholars will tell us that since Hebrew writing had no vowels, the correct pronunciation of this name has been lost. Many Jews have such reverence for God’s name that they will not even try to pronounce it. In the Septuagint, the Hebrew letters “*YHWH*” were translated as the Greek word “*Kurios*.”

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### God introduces Himself

Although God worked on a personal level with many of His chosen followers in the Old Testament, it seems there were periods of time when the relationship was tenuous and somewhat limited. That was made clear when, at the time of Noah, only one man and his family were judged worthy to survive the flood that *YHWH* orchestrated for the destruction of almost all of mankind. Only eight survived.

Many decades later, God was well known to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and others. Moses appeared about 400 years after Joseph and the relationship between God and man was again strengthened. It is clear that Moses did not know God’s name or who God really was at the start of the work God had prepared him for.

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Exodus 3:13-14 records Moses’ question to God. He asked, “When I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?’ And God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

In verses 15 and 16 God refers to Himself as “the LORD God of your fathers.” The name “*I AM*” is related to the personal name for God in the Old Testament. “*I AM* and the related *YHWH* are the names of God that infer absolute timeless self-existence. Although impossible to translate accurately and directly into English, *YHWH* conveys meanings of ‘The Eternal One,’ ‘The One Who Always Exists’ or: ‘The One Who Was, Is and Always Will Be’” (see our booklet [Jesus Christ: The Real Story](#), p. 8).

Isaiah was inspired to record a direct statement from God about His name. “I am the LORD, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another” (Isaiah 42:8). Putting in the Hebrew word, this reads: “I am *YHWH*, that is My name.” The reason the Jews wanted to stone Jesus was because He said He was the “I AM” (John 8:58)—which the hearers related to the *YHWH* that Israel knew and the Jews considered his statement to be blasphemy.

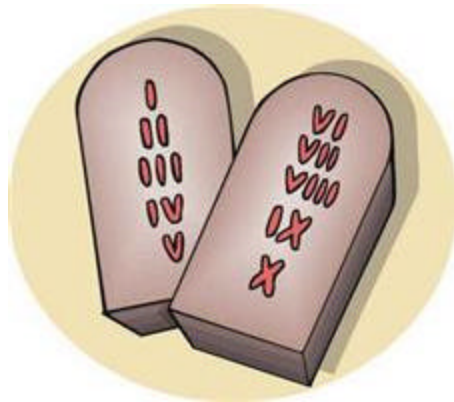
The name of God gives meaning to all that He is. God knows that He and only He is God, the Almighty and therefore everything becomes His responsibility. He consistently works within that realm as He interacts with the human race. Even those specially chosen by Him are dealt with from the position of His love and mercy as a Father and Creator and His justice and responsibility to maintain the order He has decreed in all of His creation.

God explains, “For My name’s sake I will defer My anger, and for My praise I will restrain it from you... For My own sake, for My own sake, I will do it; for how should My name be profaned? And I will not give My glory to another” (Isaiah 48:9-11).

God is what His name declares Him to be, and nothing can change that. It declared the way that God thinks and operates in all things. In verse 12, He declares, “I am He, I am the First, I am also the Last.”

### Who was the *YHWH* of the Old Testament?

The *YHWH* of the Old Testament who interacted with mankind was not God the Father, although God the Father was always involved and present in the Word (John 17:21). Jesus Christ clearly said that no person had ever seen God the Father and nobody had heard His voice (John 5:37). Yet, Jacob declared that he saw God “face to face” (Genesis 32:30). Jacob had asked for His name, but it was not given, apparently (verse 29).



Note that in the Ten Commandments Moses recorded, “For I, [*YHWH*] your God” (Exodus 20:5). We also know that Moses was blessed and strengthened for his work with Israel when God allowed Moses to have a short glimpse of His glory. The story is found in Exodus 33:18-23. Moses was allowed to see God’s back, but not His face. God said He talked with Moses “face to face” (Exodus 33:11), but we realize God’s full power was turned way down. What an awesome thing to contemplate! No doubt God had to do something to make Himself visible to the limitations of Moses’ eyesight. Moses was satisfied by what he saw.

Who did Moses see? It was *YHWH*; God. John 1:18 tells us that no man has ever seen God the Father. Thus we know it was not the Father, but the Word (John 1:1-4).

The Father was not revealed to ancient Israel, but He was always there. Jesus said He would tell us plainly about the Father (John 16:25), but His plain talk was still often confusing because of the inner barriers we (and the disciples) have.

In John 17:5, Jesus made a profound statement. He asked God the Father in prayer to “glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” John also wrote that when Jesus was asked to reveal the Father, He didn’t hesitate to say that if a person has seen Him, he has seen the Father (John 14:9).

Putting all of this and many more biblical accounts together, it is clear that the Word that became Jesus Christ the man was the *YHWH* men knew in the Old Testament (John 1:1, 14). It seems that awesome fact was not fully realized or known until His resurrection. The Bible says that if those who put Jesus to death had known who He was, they would never have killed Him (1 Corinthians 2:8). This understanding only adds to the precious blood that was shed for our reconciliation with God.

One further point to ponder—Jesus said He would have a new name (Revelation 3:12). Then we will know the name of God and the new name of the Word. Until then, let us be satisfied with that which God has revealed. It is enough.

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*The YHWH of the Old Testament who interacted with mankind was not God the Father, although God the Father was always involved and present in the Word (John 17:21).*

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### Further reading

For more about God's name, see our Frequently Asked Question: ["What is the correct name for God? Is there a special sacred name God wants us to use?"](#)

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## Loving God's Law

By John Elliott

*What prompted David to make his enthusiastic statement, "Oh, how I love your law"?*



**D**AVID MADE THE INCREDIBLE STATEMENT, "Oh, how I love Your law!" (Psalm 119:97, New King James Version). This seems foreign to our human nature, which relishes the "freedom" of self-determination. David's early life was, in part, an example of one who had sampled "freedom" from God's law and lived life to the full with fame, fortune and power. What prompted David to make his enthusiastic statement about God's law?

It is easy to assign David to a class of spiritual "untouchables" who are "holier than thou." One might presume him to be on some unreachable spiritual plane because he was called a "man after God's own heart." Legendary individuals such as Abraham, Moses, and the apostles were surely on an exalted level far above you and me, right? Or, could it be we invent such notions to excuse

ourselves from the work accompanying righteousness? With closer inspection, we discover they were just like us, no different. Their examples are given as down-to-earth proof we can grow like they did, if we want to. "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example" (Philippians 3:17, King James Version throughout).

When you are meditating on God's Law and conscientiously applying it to your life, you are then doing the very best you can at that time. On the other hand, if your mind is immersed in materialism without focus on applying God's Law, not-so-good things will result. Scripture is full of such examples by those whose repentance would later become legendary. In Matthew 16:23, "But [Christ] turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." We see Paul in Acts 9:1, "yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." The lesson from these great people of the Bible is we constantly reap what we sow and what we sow on our own is not pretty.

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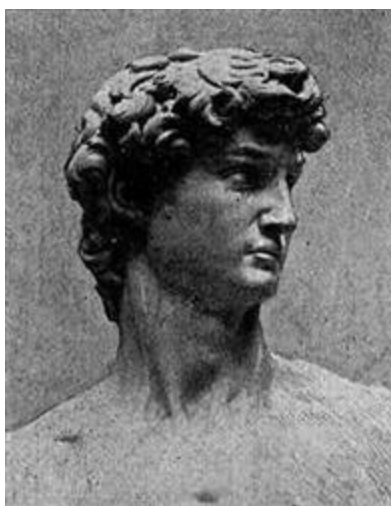
*Legendary individuals such as Abraham, Moses, and the Apostles were surely on an exalted level far above you and me, right?*

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Peter found advancing himself actually accomplished the opposite, while godly humility and loving others garnered respect and admiration. Blindness put Paul in position for repentance, which resulted in a new zeal for killing off his old nature, instead of killing people.

### Focus on God's Law

David's affirmation of God's law can become personally meaningful if you read it in the context of the verses around it. He is saying that he had arrived at his conclusion through experience, that is, "Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction. I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me" (Psalms 119:92-93). Likewise, your life is filled with choices providing you with experience. What you "love" depends in large part on whether God has given you His Holy Spirit to sample a way that most humans have not experienced.



David lived and served in a unique era where he had God's Spirit, yet led carnal Israel and its armies into battles of all sorts. It was a constant issue in David's life and he had many enemies without and within. The old adage, "He who lives by the sword, dies by the sword" was probably derived from Matthew 26:52, which reads, "Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Yet, notice how God's Law remained David's central focus amidst the constant turmoil of his life. In Psalm 119:109-110, he says, "My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law. The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts."

Think of a time when someone verbally attacked you. Could you study or pray very well during that assault? At such times, our carnal minds can become self-consumed with rebuttal and vindication. Yet, with God's Spirit helping us we can have a different response, just as David continued, "I will never forget Your precepts; for by them You have given me life. I

am Yours, save me; for I have sought Your precepts. The wicked have waited for me to destroy me, but I will consider Your testimonies” (Psalm 119:93-95, New King James Version).

One might say, “Well, that sounds like a noble resolve.” But, when it is you or I in that situation, such intentions can be lost among the distractions. How did David keep his focus? Was it because he had super-Bible-hero status? Or, was there something else?

David’s final statement before exclaiming his enthusiasm for God’s Law shows he put life’s events into a bigger perspective. He stepped back from a formidable tree until he viewed it in context with an entire forest. “I have seen an end of all perfection” (Psalm 119:96). It is easy to skip over this phrase, which translates rather clumsily into English. What David ponders here is something his son would later describe in elaborate detail in the book of Ecclesiastes.

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*The lesson from these great people of the Bible is we constantly reap what we sow and what we sow on our own is not pretty.*

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One excerpt states, “I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove... So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem” (Ecclesiastes 2:4-6, 9, NKJV). “Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit” (Ecclesiastes 2:11).

David then contrasts “all perfection” (the apex of human deeds and achievements) with this: “But Your commandment is exceedingly broad” (Psalms 119:96).

Again, you have to contemplate this statement to fully appreciate it. The Hebrew word translated “broad” means “roomy in every direction” (*Strong’s*). God’s Law encompasses every event, every matter, every issue experienced everywhere throughout eternity. In comparison, our biggest human issues become petty and will dissolve without recall.

After considering all the above, David now announces his new direction and its merits. “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts. I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Your word. I have not departed from Your judgments, for You Yourself have taught me. How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through Your precepts, I get understanding; therefore, I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalms 119:97-105, NKJV).

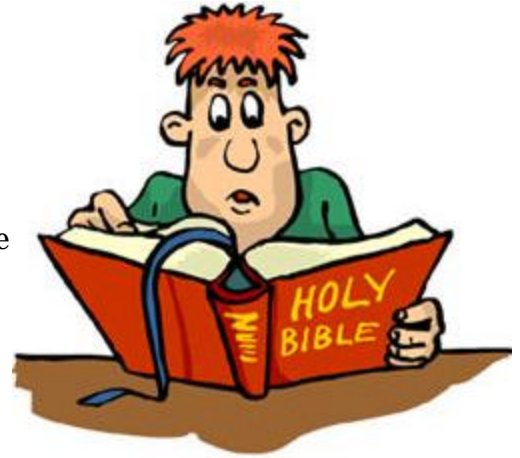
### **Setting a Godly Example**

We all experience various tests, trials and general commotion in our lives at times. What can be done to resolve such situations? David’s “Oh how I love your law” passage speaks in part to that very issue. Its conclusion is that we should stay focused on God’s law of obediently loving others in all situations! As David found, that is not always easy to do. Jesus taught us the extent that we are to go to in loving others. “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you



may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:44-45, NKJV).

Paul told New Covenant Christians that “the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Romans 7:12). Jesus defined the law as loving God and one’s fellow man beyond self. However, applying God’s law can be a powerful challenge to our human nature and without God’s help, we are powerless. We all know a few who set excellent examples of godly response in challenging situations.



The legends of the Bible aren’t presented as untouchables or “supermen” at all. Their legacy shows us carnal humans can repent and be changed with the influence of God’s Holy Spirit. They led human lives just like you and me. We all make mistakes and need to repent of them and grow, but we are to be examples of lives being transformed by God’s Holy Spirit, just as theirs were.

If you raise your eyes to God and His Kingdom, if you “seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33), then the “big” events of your human life will fall into perspective. Becoming godly and seeking to become of God can captivate your thoughts and become the focus of your ponderings, just like David. And just like David, Paul and others, individual trials are dealt with appropriately as children of God.

If you love God’s law and make it the lamp of your path like David did, you will be charting a good course to the Kingdom. And as the fruits of God’s Way enrich your life and the lives of those around you, your conclusion will inevitably become, “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.”

### Further reading

For more on God’s Law request or download a copy of [The New Covenant: Does It Abolish God’s Law?](#)

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## Successfully Navigating the Seasons of Life (Part One of Three)

By Mike Bennett

*Why did an eternal God create so many intricately woven temporal patterns to our universe? What are we, His creation, to learn from the cycles of life?*



**T**HERE ARE TIMES that bring the seasons of our lives to the forefront of our minds. As I write this, snow is falling and we are just days away from my younger daughter's eighteenth birthday. Our baby will be officially an adult!

Just a few days after that will be the third anniversary of my mother's death. The following week will be my fifty-second birthday.

Joy. Sorrow. Anxiety. Peace. Time seems to be going faster and faster. My daughter, in the spring of her life, will someday experience those predictable passages of life that I, and my mother before me, have experienced.

### A time for everything

As wise King Solomon put it:

"There is a time for everything, a season for every activity under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to harvest" (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2, New Living Translation throughout).

Why did an eternal God create so many intricately woven temporal patterns to our universe? What are we, His creation, to learn from the cycles of life?

Exploring that question, and the highs and lows of the rhythm of life, is something I've been thinking a lot about. I have been blogging about the [Seasons of Life](#). I am even considering writing a book about them, someday...



Why are the seasons of our lives important? I believe that God has a

vast eternal plan. And I believe He has designed this space-time continuum, its sunrises and sunsets, its plantings and harvests, its births and deaths, to prepare us for something beyond this realm.

“God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart...” (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

### Learning lessons at every stage

Okay, enough of the philosophy. What do the seasons of our lives mean on a practical level?

One fascinating passage by the apostle Paul examines the responsibilities of life based on our age—how “seasoned” we are! Paul was teaching Titus, a younger minister, how to help Christians at various stages of their lives.

“But as for you, promote the kind of living that reflects right teaching. Teach the older men to exercise self-control, to be worthy of respect, and to live wisely. They must have strong faith and be filled with love and patience” (Titus 2:1-2).

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*Why did an eternal God create so many intricately woven temporal patterns to our universe?*

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Why start with Titus himself as the minister and the older men? In God’s book, they were expected to be the leaders and the examples to the others. They have had life experience to temper the lack of self-control and lack of wisdom we all had in our youth. Even as their physical strength begins to decrease, their faith, love, and patience should be getting stronger.

Paul continued with advice on encouraging the mature women. “Similarly, teach the older women to live in a way that is appropriate for someone serving the Lord. They must not go around speaking evil of others and must not be heavy drinkers. Instead they should teach others what is good” (Titus 2:3).



Again, the older women have a purpose for developing godly character—to prepare to teach others. Our experiences, tests and trials prepare us for the next stage, and at every stage, we can be fulfilling God’s purpose.

Paul continues to describe some of that training, with the students being the younger women. “These older women must train the younger women to love their husbands and their children, to live wisely and be pure, to take care of their homes, to do good, and to be submissive to their husbands. Then they will not bring shame on the word of God” (Titus 2:4-5).

In modern society, we train people to make a living, but somehow expect everyone to naturally figure out how to live and how to fulfill the new roles we move into. But we don’t naturally know how to be a wife or husband or how to be a parent. Training for these roles is vitally important, and God provides for this education through our own families and through those who are older than us in His Church.

Next Paul addresses the younger men and Titus himself: “In the same way, encourage the young men to live wisely in all they do. And you yourself must be an example to them by doing good deeds of every kind. Let everything you do reflect the integrity and seriousness of your teaching” (Titus 2:6-7).

The *Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary* says: “The requirement for the young men is brief but comprehensive: self-control... Since young men are inclined to be somewhat impetuous and unrestrained in conduct, their basic need is to be ‘self-controlled’ (GK 5404), cultivating balance and self-restraint in daily practice.”

### More passages

Obviously, there is much more to the story of the seasons of our lives and what we are to learn through the predictable challenges of life. Some of you may be familiar with the best-selling book *Passages*, which was subtitled *Predictable Crises of Adult Life*. The author, Gail Sheehy, covered everything from leaving home to midlife crises.

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*Our experiences, tests and trials prepare us for the next stage, and at every stage, we can be fulfilling God's purpose.*

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Her book is fascinating, but I think other “passages”—the ones in the Bible—will give us even more help and inspiration. I plan to make this biblical study a part of the rest of my life.

Where will this study lead? I can't wait to find out. But I have a hint that it will come full circle. We start out as little children, and God tells us that when we complete the cycle of seasons in this world, we can look forward to an awesome future.

“See how very much our heavenly Father loves us, for he allows us to be called his children, and we really are! But the people who belong to this world don't know God, so they don't understand that we are his children. Yes, dear friends, we are already God's children, and we can't even imagine what we will be like when Christ returns. But we do know that when he comes we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is” (1 John 3:1-2).

### Further reading

What an incredible plan God has for His children! You can read more about it in the inspiring booklet [What Is Your Destiny?](#)