

LESSON 4 God Gives You Rules for Living

To get a driver's license, you must first pass a test on the signs and rules which car drivers need to know. If we follow the rules of the road, we will not have as many accidents. We also may not have problems with the policemen who make sure that the laws of the country are obeyed. Sometimes we might wish to drive faster than the speed limit, but the rules on speeding are made to discourage us from doing what could be dangerous.

We also have rules that govern our family. For instance, children need rules. They will feel more secure if they know what is expected of them. And if they disobey a rule, they can expect to be punished. Discipline is good if it is done in love.

God, the Creator of all people, has rules too. He desires that His children follow all of His rules. That is why He revealed His rules through Moses and through His Son Jesus Christ.

The Plan

- A. Rules of Men
- B. Commandments of God by Moses
- C. Teachings of Jesus
- D. Apostles' Directions

The Goals

1. State the Christian's responsibility to the rules of his or her country.
2. Show the importance of God's commandments.
3. Tell why the law of Christ is called the law of love.
4. List ways in which Christ's law of love can be applied in practical daily living, as presented in the apostles' teaching.

A. RULES OF MEN

Goal 1. State the Christian's responsibility to the rules of his or her country.

God's rules have to do with order in society. God desires that people and families live together in peace and harmony. He has allowed humanity to develop political systems. We may live in a tribe with a chief, a monarchy with a king, or a republic with a president. There are leaders who make the rules, or laws, which govern our society. Not all leaders or laws are good in God's sight, but He wants us to respect them.

The apostle Paul tells us this in Romans 13:1–3:

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the

authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you.

Authorities exist to control evil and to punish those who break the laws. Paul says that because laws punish evil, they act as God's servants. We must obey them not only out of fear but "because of conscience" (Romans 13:5).

Paul then talks about paying taxes as a matter of conscience:

This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. (Romans 13:6–7)

Christians owe their first duty to the kingdom of God. However, as free citizens of the heavenly kingdom, we must be good examples to unbelievers in our obedience to the authorities by paying our taxes. Peter encourages us, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men" (1 Peter 2:13).

Jesus is a wonderful example of obeying authority. Though He was King of kings, He paid taxes so as not to offend people (see Matthew 17:24–27). When enemies tried to trap Him with a question about taxes, Jesus advised, "'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's'" (Matthew 22:21).

Application

1 Circle the letters before all the TRUE statements about the Christian's attitude toward government.

- a) The Christian should not pay taxes because he is God's child.
 - b) She desires to obey the laws of the country.
 - c) He pays taxes out of conscience.
 - d) He respects human authorities.
 - e) She puts the law of God above human laws.
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B. COMMANDMENTS OF GOD BY MOSES

Goal 2. Show the importance of God's commandments.

Human laws may be good or bad. They serve the society for which they were made. But God's law is perfectly good and suited for all people everywhere. The psalmist exclaimed, "Righteous are you, O LORD, and your laws are right. The statutes you have laid down are righteous; they are fully trustworthy" (Psalm 119:137–138).

God gave laws to His people through His servant Moses. God then revealed His perfect law to the Hebrew nation whom He had chosen when He gave the commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai. Read Exodus 19–31. Some of the most important rules of God are in the Ten Commandments.

In Deuteronomy 5, Moses told these rules to the people so that they would learn and obey them (verse 1). He wanted the Hebrew nation to know that these commandments were the basis of God's covenant with them. God would continue to bless them if they did not disobey the laws (verses 32–33).

Even though we are God's people of the new covenant through Jesus' death, we should still keep the Ten Commandments. They are for all people. Without them we cannot have healthy, prosperous, and good societies. Let us review these commandments briefly:

1. Worship no god but the Lord.
2. Make no images to worship.
3. Do not use God's name for evil purposes.
4. Observe God's day of rest.
5. Respect your father and mother.
6. Do not commit murder.
7. Do not commit adultery.
8. Do not steal.
9. Do not accuse anyone falsely.
10. Do not desire another man's wife or what he owns.

God gave these rules to help us live in peace and prosperity. He gave them because He is a kind and loving Father.

Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you. Observe the commands of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and revering him. (Deuteronomy 8:5–6)

The nation of Israel did not always follow these laws, and they were punished. But they were no worse than other people. Every man and woman has sinned against God by breaking one or more of the Ten Commandments. Even the most religious people have failed at some point.

The book of Mark records that a religious young man came to Jesus one day and wanted to know what he must do to receive eternal life. Jesus questioned him about the last five commandments and this man proudly said he had kept them all. Then Jesus challenged him to give away all his wealth and to follow Him. The young man went away sad because he was very rich. (Read Mark 10:17–22.) We imagine that he loved riches more than obedience to God's Son. Without realizing it, he was breaking the first commandment.



Indeed, God has high standards of conduct for His people. None of us can fulfill all the laws of God by ourselves. The apostle Paul expresses our problem in Romans 7:21–25. Though we know God’s laws to be right and desire to do good, we find it difficult to overcome our human nature. Happily, God has the answer!

For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:3–4)

Jesus, Son of Man and Son of God, fulfilled all God’s commandments (Matthew 5:17). Through His death we are forgiven for our failures, and through His Spirit we learn to obey God’s laws.

Application

2 Write out Psalm 119:35–37 in your notebook. Learn it and make it your personal prayer.

Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight. Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain. Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word. (Psalm 119:35–37)

3 Circle the letters before the statements which describe the laws of God.

- a) God's rules are perfect.
- b) All the laws given to Moses were only for the Hebrews.
- c) People can easily obey all the Ten Commandments.
- d) God gave His rules to help us live right.
- e) The Ten Commandments are out-of-date.
- f) Jesus obeyed all God's laws.
- g) We need the Holy Spirit to help us obey these rules.

4 If you have not already learned the Ten Commandments, write them in your notebook and memorize them. As you are learning them, ask the Holy Spirit to help you obey them.



C. TEACHINGS OF JESUS

Goal 3. Tell why the law of Christ is called the law of love.

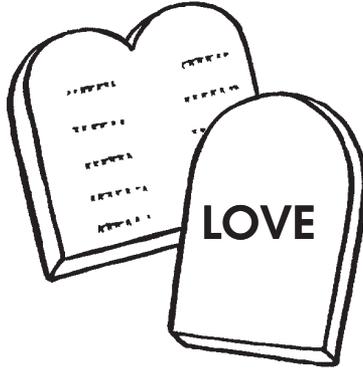
A teacher once came to Jesus and asked Him a difficult question about God's laws: "Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" (Matthew 22:36). Jesus did not choose one of the Ten Commandments. Instead He chose from the Old Testament a command of God which includes the first four commandments: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deuteronomy 6:5).

If you love God, you will worship Him only, you will not misuse His name, and you will please Him. Love will be the motive behind your obedience to all the laws. Jesus, in His answer to the teacher, added a second great command found in the Old Testament. This command includes the last five commandments: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). Loving your neighbor involves wanting the best for him or her. This is the love of the Spirit.

As Jesus prepared to leave His disciples, He instructed them, "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15).

He promised to send a Helper, the Holy Spirit, to teach them how to obey (John 14:16–17, 26). Then He said,

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:12–13)



The love of Jesus is practical: He gave His life to save us. Now He demands that we do something too. The apostle Paul understood that when he wrote, “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).

We are to show love for our Lord by doing good deeds for others. You remember in Lesson 1 that the intention of God for His children was that they do good deeds? Now we see that it is the commandment of Jesus.

Love that works is a central rule of the kingdom of God. But we saw that the character of God is more than love. He is also righteous. Love that works must be directed in the right way. Jesus taught much on love and righteousness. The Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew 5–7, tells about some of this teaching.

In this sermon, Jesus told His disciples about the high standards of righteousness at which they were to aim. They were not just to refrain from evil actions but also from evil thoughts. For example, refraining from adultery is not enough. We are not even to have adulterous thoughts (Matthew 5:27–28). Also, Jesus is not

satisfied if we do good things for our friends. He commands us to love, also, our enemies and pray for them so that we may be true children of our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:43–45).

The commandments of Jesus are positive and produce a new way of life. Our giving and praying must be done privately, not to show off. We are to do everything for God’s sake, not for the praise of people. We must not be hypocritical, that is, good only in appearance. Jesus tells His disciples repeatedly that God is interested in motives and attitudes as well as deeds.

Application

5 What Jesus tells us to do is sometimes different from what our human nature wants. Circle the letter before each commandment given in the Sermon on the Mount for which you need the help of the Holy Spirit.

- a)** Be glad when you are persecuted.
- b)** Avoid taking revenge when someone wrongs you.
- c)** Love your enemies.
- d)** Make your gifts of charity a private matter.
- e)** Forgive others when they offend you.
- f)** Refrain from judging other people.

6 Which of these commands do you have the most problem with? Write it in your notebook and pray for God’s help to obey Jesus’ command. Leave a space to write how the Holy Spirit helps you to obey the command this week.



D. APOSTLES’ DIRECTIONS

Goal 4. List ways in which Christ’s law of love can be applied in practical daily living, as presented in the apostles’ teaching.

After Jesus went to be with the Father, His apostles went out to preach the good news of salvation everywhere. Some of the

people they met were Jews who understood that God was holy and had given the laws to help them avoid sins. These learned easily the law of love that Jesus gave. But other people did not understand the character of God. The apostles gave them more basic teaching. These people had their own religions and needed to learn a new way of life. Their old ways did not please God, so the apostles taught them the commands of Jesus.

The teachings of the apostles are in the Bible. They taught as Jesus taught and told the people how the commands of the Lord could help them with their problems. For example, John the apostle taught the command to believe in Jesus and love one another. He wrote, “Let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth” (1 John 3:18).

James had the same concern. He encouraged everyone to do the right thing by obeying “the royal law found in Scripture” (James 2:8), which is the command to love our neighbors. He advised, “But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as law-breakers” (James 2:9). Discrimination—liking or hating a person because of race, gender, or social status—is against the law of love. Christianity changes our attitudes toward people. The book of James says:

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. (James 1:27)

The apostle Paul had been a slave to the rules of men before he became a Christian. He realized that they could not save him, for salvation is not the result of human efforts. (Read Ephesians 2:8–9.) Yet when we have accepted the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, we are responsible for living a new kind of life. Paul warns us:

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are

darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. . . . to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:17–18, 23–24)

Paul gives many words of advice in Ephesians. Here are a few of his directions for living the Christian life by the power of the Spirit. You can find them in Ephesians 4, 5, and 6.

1. Be always humble, gentle, and patient.
2. Show your love by being tolerant with each other.
3. No more lying! Tell the truth.
4. Stop stealing and start working.
5. Help the poor.
6. Do not use harmful words but only helpful words.
7. No bitterness or anger; be kind and tender-hearted.
8. Forgive one another.
9. No sexual immorality or indecency or greed
10. Learn what pleases the Lord.
11. Do not get drunk with wine but be filled with the Spirit.
12. Always give thanks for everything to God.
13. Submit yourselves to one another.
14. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.
15. Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church.
16. Children, obey your parents.
17. Parents, do not treat your children in such a way as to make them angry; raise them with Christian discipline and instruction.
18. Put on the armor of God.
19. Pray on every occasion, as the Spirit leads.

What wonderful directions! This is not a list of what not to do. It is a positive and active list of good deeds. Doing better things will not only make us happier, it will make us more like our heavenly Father. That, as Paul reminds us, is the purpose of living by the law of love:

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (Ephesians 5:1–2)

Application

7 Circle the letter before each action that obeys the law of love.

- a)** Beating your child because he walks slowly
- b)** Feeding the hungry
- c)** Helping a man find a job
- d)** Cursing a driver whose car almost struck you
- e)** Praying for your pastors
- f)** Respecting the elders of your community

8 All of us have areas in our lives where we do not obey the law of love. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where you have not obeyed the law of love. Allow Him to help you change.

9 In your notebook, draw the chart below and fill in the columns as shown. For two weeks, write the ways in which you obey the law of love. The second week should be easier than the first.

Living with Myself	Living with My Family	Living in My Community	Living in My Church



Now that you have completed the first unit, you are ready to answer the questions in Unit One Evaluation. Review the previous lessons, then follow the directions on the Unit One Answer Sheet. Complete and send your answer sheets to your instructor for corrections.

Check Your Answers

- 5** All are beyond our natural ability, and so all require the help of the Holy Spirit.
- 1** Statements **b)**, **c)**, **d)**, and **e)** are true.
- 6** Your answer
- 7** Phrases **b)**, **c)**, **e)**, and **f)** are correct.
- 2** Your answer
- 8** Your answer
- 3** Statements **a)**, **d)**, **f)**, and **g)** are correct.
- 9** Your answer. As you continue to obey the law of love, God will make you happier.
- 4** Your answer

