

# BEYOND TODAY

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## Ten keys to a life of godly love

*The love most often spoken of in the Bible is an outgoing concern for others as demonstrated by our actions. God codified ten basic principles that show us how to love Him and everyone else.*

**W**hen asked to name the greatest commandment, Jesus Christ responded: “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 neighbour as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40).

Jesus here quoted Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. These two commands summarise both the Ten Commandments and the entire law of God since all God’s other instructions flow from these two greatest commands.

Scripture tells us that “God is love” (1 John 4:8-16). As God is a divine Being and not a feeling, “love” as described in the Bible is much more meaningful than mere feelings (1 John 3:18). God’s laws, particularly as summarised in the Ten Commandments, show us the actions that demonstrate love, first towards Him (as expressed in the first four) and then towards our fellow human beings (as expressed in the last six).

### How to love God

The First Commandment, “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:3), tells us that we should love, honour and respect our Creator and heavenly Father so that He alone is the supreme authority in our lives. He alone is God and we should allow nothing to prevent

us from serving and obeying Him. As our Creator and Sustainer, He has given us everything and wants us to acknowledge Him as the source of all good things and instruction in right living.

The Second Commandment, forbidding worship of idols (Exodus 20:4-6), tells us that we must not reduce God to a likeness of a physical object. To make any representation of Him distorts and limits our perception of

*The Ten Commandments show us the actions that demonstrate love, first towards God (as expressed in the first four) and then towards our fellow human beings (as expressed in the last six).*

what He is really like, and thus damages our relationship with Him. God is far greater than anything we can see or imagine and idolatry limits Him in our minds.

The Third Commandment, to not take God’s name in vain (Exodus 20:7), focuses on showing respect to our Creator. The quality of our relationship with God depends on the love and regard we have for Him. We are expected to always honour who and what He is and never disrespect Him in word or action.

The Fourth Commandment, to remember God's Sabbath day and keep it holy (Exodus 20:8-11), is a key to a right and close relationship with Him. By keeping His Sabbath, we are reminded every week that He is our Creator and the source of all good things. The Sabbath day is also a foretaste of His coming Kingdom, when all of humankind will have the opportunity to learn His way of life and experience a personal relationship with Him. The Sabbath day is a rest from normal work, a commanded assembly, a time to meet with others of like mind and to learn more about God's way of life through His ministry.

### How to love our fellow human beings

The Fifth Commandment, to honour our father and mother (Exodus 20:12), sets the tone for the last six. It addresses the importance of learning to treat fellow human beings with respect and honour. Learning to obey this commandment helps children establish a lifetime pattern of respecting proper rules, traditions, principles and laws. Honouring others should be a normal, natural habit learned during youth. This, in turn, leads to strong families and a stable society.

The Sixth Commandment, forbidding murder (Exodus 20:13), tells us that life is a precious gift to be valued and respected. Jesus Christ amplified the meaning of "murder" to include bitter animosity and contempt or hateful hostility toward others (Matthew 5:21-22). God wants us to go far beyond avoiding murder. He wants us to be builders, not destroyers, of good relationships.

The Seventh Commandment, to not commit adultery (Exodus 20:14), is designed to protect one of God's greatest gifts to humanity – the loving marital relationship. It is the foundation of strong families which are the building blocks of society. Obeying this command helps prevent the pain and suffering that comes on individuals and societies through broken relationships, broken homes, sexually transmitted diseases, poverty and other ills, all the while strengthening one of God's greatest blessings to humanity.

The Eighth Commandment, forbidding stealing (Exodus 20:15), shows that we need to respect and appreciate the rights and needs of others. God grants us many physical blessings, but they should never be our primary pursuit in life. The battle against selfishness begins in the heart and we should put giving and serving others ahead of accumulating and lavishing possessions on ourselves.

The Ninth Commandment, forbidding false witness (Exodus 20:16), helps us realise that God expects truth

to permeate every facet of our lives. Respectful, loving relationships with others are impossible without truth and honesty being the foundation of our interactions. God wants us, as His children, to commit ourselves to truth and reflect it in everything we do.

The Tenth Commandment, telling us not to covet (Exodus 20:17), is aimed at the heart and mind of every human being. As with each of the previous nine commandments, it is directed toward relationships. It specifically deals with respecting the property, possessions and spousal relationships of others, and with the covetous thoughts



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that can potentially hurt ourselves and our neighbours. It seeks to quell the desires that tempt us and lead us astray. Rather than being focused on our own wants, God wants concern for others to be the motivation for our desires.

### God's way of love

Each of the Ten Commandments reveals the attitudes and actions that show us how to love God and our neighbour. This is why the apostle John tells us that "whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him" and "by this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments" (1 John 2:5; 1 John 5:2).

Those who argue that the Ten Commandments are somehow abolished or done away have to answer one crucial question: Why would God abolish a law that defines for us how to love Him and our fellow human beings?

The Ten Commandments sum up God's law of love. To understand more fully how they teach us to truly love God and our fellow man, be sure to request or download your free copy of our booklet *The Ten Commandments*.

Excerpt from  
The New Covenant: Does It Abolish God's Law?

# “And who is my neighbour?”

*The recent elections for Members of the European Parliament have shown just how polarised and disunited the “United” Kingdom has become. How would Jesus have us approach those with different views or backgrounds to our own?*

Going back fifty years or so, it was considered impolite in Britain to discuss politics or religion in company, for fear of causing unseemly arguments. Today there are many more topics on which it is better not to voice an opinion if one wishes to keep the peace. With the vote for Brexit in 2016, division and argument seem to have become a way of life across the United Kingdom. Adults express their anger against politicians who take a different view to their own. That can be done peaceably at the ballot box, but there have been some who demand harm be done to those who disagree with their viewpoint.

Why are individuals and our societies so thoughtless and selfish in their approach to their fellow human beings? How did God intend it to be? He says in Leviticus 19:18: “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord.”

On one occasion a lawyer asked Jesus Christ what he should do to inherit eternal life. Christ asked him if he knew the commandments. The lawyer replied saying, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself” (Luke 10:27). Christ affirmed his answer was correct, but the lawyer “wishing to justify himself” then asked, “And who is my neighbour?” (verse 29). One can only wonder about his tone of voice as he spoke these words.

## **A friend in need**

Knowing the racial tensions between the Jews and the Samaritans, Christ answered in the form of a parable. “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And

when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.’ So which of these three do you think was neighbour to him who fell among the thieves?” And he said, “He who showed mercy on him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:30-37).

In this parable Christ challenged the human tendency towards prejudice, and taught that it’s not who you are,

***“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself” (Luke 10:27).***

or what you know, but what you do and how you treat others that is essential. His instructions included praying for those perceived as enemies and even loving them (Matthew 5:43-48). The apostle Paul reiterated this in his letter to the disciples in Rome. He wrote, “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse” (Romans 12:14).

Far from gloating over the Jewish man’s misfortune, the Samaritan in Christ’s story followed the Golden Rule, “Treat others as you wish to be treated,” or as God states it through Matthew, “Therefore whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

The exchange between Christ and the lawyer teaches us that we are to love God, to know and to live by His laws and commandments and we are to love our fellow human beings – all of whom are our neighbours – as ourselves.

*Frank Jarvis*

# Real or imagined: Are we influenced by illusions?

*One of the most fascinating things about the human mind is its ability to find and cling to something in a time of great need. That clinging can become so deeply rooted in us that it affects all we do. But are we clinging to truth and reality, or to deception and shadows?*

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**T**here is no doubt that the human mind is the most intriguing and incredible part of God's creation. It takes many years for the mind to develop and mature, during which time countless experiences imprint themselves. Sometimes the imprints are not driven by fact but by some strong emotion. For example, we can develop phobias of things, places and animals for no obvious reason.

An illusion is essentially something that is in our minds but has little support in reality. It is defined as a deceptive appearance or impression, an apparition, a false conception, delusion, misperception, false appearance, pretence, or sham.

In scripture, illusions are prophesied to be prevalent at the end of the age just before the return of Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:7-11; Matthew 7:21-23). (For more information on end-time events, please request or download our booklets *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*.)

The point is that an illusion is neither true nor real, yet we can react to it as though it were. That can be dangerous because it removes the ability to react correctly and make wise decisions. We can have an illusion of family togetherness, for example, and at the same time neglect to do the things that build a strong family.

## **Conceptions conjured by fear**

An illusion can become especially strong and real to us when it appears at a time of great need. One example is that of a person who is struggling to survive in a hot and dry desert. When his strength seems weak and hopelessness looms, his mind may conjure up an oasis where none actually exists. That oasis can seem so real that the person feels encouraged and full of hope, but it is false. It is a mirage but to some it appears real. It does not exist in reality, but the thought can be so strong that no amount of persuasion or evidence can make us change our mind.

Fear and uncertainty concerning death is one area where metaphorical "oases" are imagined. Misunder-

standings and false doctrine breed erroneous after-death illusions. Some envisage life continuing in a different body, the persons themselves being immortal and just living on in another life. Some picture themselves in a paradise they have never seen. Some think they'll drift away into a sort of never-never land. In crises such as approaching death desperate people will grasp at straws in a bid to find some hope.

It seems that people have developed a host of illusions about death, revealing a strong yearning for something beyond the grave. It is God who has "put eternity" into

***Satan the devil excels at planting illusions in the minds of mankind.***

the hearts of men (Ecclesiastes 3:11). The Bible explains how God offers the true gift of eternal life to His human creation. Such knowledge eases the fear of death and dying.

## **Satan influences illusions**

Satan the devil excels at planting illusions in the minds of mankind. Jesus said of him ". . . there is no truth in him." His first lie to humankind was in the Garden of Eden when he told Adam and Eve what they wanted to hear – that God would not be angry should they sin and, furthermore, that the penalty for sin would not be death (Genesis 3:4-7). Truth and reality struck quickly when they were confronted by God. They discovered that He was indeed angry, the penalty was death and their sin estranged them from His presence and blessings.

What a terrible price mankind has suffered ever since. It is astonishing that after some 6,000 years of believing various sorts of illusions, mankind still strives to avoid disillusionment, which is the process of removing illusions from our hearts and minds and replacing them with reality and truth.

## False expectations about the Christ

One of the greatest recorded events in history was the life and death of Jesus Christ. The Holy Scriptures relate the extraordinary miracles and events that Jesus did in order that people might believe that He was who He said He was (John 20:27-31).

Yet some of His closest followers had false expectations of the promised Messiah so that it shook them to the core when the ignominy of His suffering and death shattered that illusion. The Bible records the occasion after Jesus' resurrection when two of His close followers were walking away from Jerusalem – no doubt in sorrow and

### *Illusions fade when truth is sought.*

confusion – discussing the events that had just happened a few days earlier. When Jesus met and spoke with them, they explained their illusion that the Redeemer they were looking for was one they had conjured up in their minds and hearts (Luke 24:14-24). They were not looking for a Redeemer who had been crucified and then resurrected, and even though certain of the women and disciples who had actually looked into the empty tomb clearly confirmed this totally unexpected event, these two men could not shake their illusion of a different outcome.

No doubt their misplaced hope was driven by what the Jews endured under the heavy hand of Rome and corrupt leaders. It is not easy to move away from an illusion that seems to fill our deepest needs, and that is exactly the problem with illusions – they prevent us from seeing reality. Even when Jesus stood in the midst of His dearest followers, they were terrified and frightened, supposing they had seen a spirit (Luke 24:36-37).

Each of Jesus' followers had an illusion about what Jesus could or would do and who He really was. It was painful for them to become disillusioned when their preconceived ideas were unfulfilled.

## We must seek and follow truth

Jesus Christ delighted in opening the understanding of the two disciples on the road, and later gave understanding to all of His followers so that they might “comprehend the Scriptures” (Luke 24:31, 32, 45).

Just as He was completing His work among His disciples, He promised them a great gift. He said that the Spirit of truth, which the world does not have and cannot see or know, would dwell with them and be in them. God has worked through His Spirit in man since the beginning, although not in exactly the same way as He does now. Jesus

promised that the Father and Son would dwell within a converted person through that Spirit (John 14:23-26), and in this way they would be guided “into all truth” (John 16:13).

The Scriptures tell us that the word of God is truth and that converted people would be sanctified by the truth (John 17:17-21). This is not an illusion. It can be verified by God's word as He opens one's mind to understand His purpose for His creation. Illusions fade when truth is sought.

We have all grown up in a world of darkness and shadows controlled by Satan. It is remarkable that, even in this age of enlightenment, higher education and intense search for true scientific knowledge, mankind continues to lean towards Satan's illusions. Mirroring Satan's lie to Adam and Eve, some want to believe that the commandments of God were erased by Jesus Christ, relieving perpetrators of any guilt.

Paul encouraged people to recall the truths that took them from darkness into light (Hebrews 10:31-35). Satan's aim is to provide illusions that will blind people to that spiritual truth, whereas God offers enlightenment with the provision that a person learn to love His laws and thereby Him (1 John 2:3-6). (To study Satan's origin, why he seeks to thwart God's purpose and ways to avoid his deceptions, please request or download our booklet *Is There Really a Devil?*)

God gives all the help and direction that we need if we learn to recognise illusions and love truth. John stated that the presence of God in us is far greater than the wiles of Satan (1 John 4:4-6). Amazingly enough, children of God know who is of the spirit of truth because they hear and know each other. God offers truth but we must seek and want that.

*Robert Berendt*

## God's word is truth!

Misquoted, misrepresented and marginalised in today's world, the Holy Bible claims to contain the actual words of God. Some would like to see the Bible banned. Others, claiming to speak for God, may discourage people from checking out the scriptures for themselves.

For proof the Bible is the word of God, and an overview of the great themes in it, please request or download our twelve-lesson Bible Study Course. Lessons are sent monthly and there is an optional test paper.

# Gratitude: A believer's response to God's blessings

*Ingratitude risks taking God's generosity for granted. Greater awareness will bring to mind the many physical and spiritual blessings we enjoy.*

**Y**ears ago, my father told us that we had a lot to be thankful for. He was right! Living on the peaceful, prosperous and beautiful Isle of Man conferred many blessings. Indeed, the entire western world is greatly blessed when compared with other societies. Things taken for granted such as clean running water, plentiful food and adequate clothing would seem like unimaginable luxuries to many in today's suffering world.

God created a beautiful planet for us to live in, and it remains beautiful despite mankind's damaging efforts to wrest as much wealth from it as possible. Psalm 104 lists many wonders of God's creation and is a good starting point for considering our blessings.

The apostle Paul told the disciples in Ephesus to be "giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20). We should certainly be grateful for our physical blessings and often praise and thank God for them.

There is great danger if we fail to recognise our heavenly Father's generosity because a lack of appreciation can lead to discontent and the sin of covetousness. Paul warned about this and said to be content with "such things as we have" (Hebrews 13:5). Jesus said, "Beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15). A desire for physical prosperity should not overwhelm our recognition of the physical blessings already given to us.

## Counting spiritual blessings

Perhaps harder to quantify, spiritual blessings should be a Christian's first consideration. Above all else, God the Father sent Christ to take upon Himself the death penalty for sinners who repent of their disobedience and turn to Him. Without this sacrifice there could be no access to our Heavenly Father. As it is we can pray to Him knowing He hears our petitions. Prayer is a great privilege. It is an honour to be able to contact the Ruler of the entire universe and through Christ to enter the very throne room of heaven. The apostle Paul advised that prayer should never be neglected, with the instruction to "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). He continued: "In everything

give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (verse 18).

God's gift of the Holy Spirit provides a sound mind which reflects that of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 1:7; 1 Corinthians 2:16). This is an enormous benefit in a confused and fearful world. Elsewhere peace, joy and other positive attributes are enumerated as further blessings.

God holds out to his people the promise of even greater blessings in the future. The mind of Christ working in us is our hope of future glory (Colossians 1:27). To those who are faithful, obedient and appreciative God promises



Port Erin, Isle of Man

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what Paul was inspired to write: "When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:4). This glory equates to eternal life and true belief mitigates the fear of death. (To study this topic further please request our booklet *Why Were You Born?*)

If we strive to follow Jesus Christ, have His mind in us and are building a relationship with Him and the Father, then we certainly have many blessings to count and much for which to be thankful. In the words of King David, in Psalm 68:19, "Blessed be the Lord, Who daily loads us with benefits." It should be an honour and a joy to thank God daily for all His blessings.

*Philip Perry*

*Beyond Today Supplement*



**Q** The literature that I've received from you says we should repent. Please tell me, to whom should a person repent?

*Reader from Birmingham*

**A** When we sin, we break the laws God established, so it is to Him we should repent. King David expressed this thought after he had committed two grave sins. His wrongdoing seriously impacted others, but the sins broke God's law and it was to Him he had to go to repent (Psalm 51:1-4). Other psalms also reference the fact that we must confess our sins to God Himself (for example Psalms 32:5; 79:8-9; 103:3).

In scripture the word "repent" doesn't mean being merely sad, sorry or regretful. The apostle Paul refers to a godly sorrow that produces genuine change and a worldly sorrow that does not produce the right result (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Thus the word "repent" refers to regret producing a turnaround in one's life. The New Testament Greek word often translated "repent" is *metanoia*, referring to a change of thinking. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew term *shuv*, meaning "turn" or "return," is often used for repentance

## Let the Bible Answer...

### What does the Bible say about the hallmarks of a Christian?

Guidance on how Christ's followers should conduct themselves is found in Matthew 5, 6 and 7; Romans 12:9-21; Colossians 3:1-17; 1 John 2:1-17.

For godly unity and love read John 17; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

Godly worship is described in John 4:21-24 and Philippians 3:3-11.

(the noun form being *teshuvah*).

More than just turning away from sin, repentance requires that we turn toward God, that we do our best to live as He expects us to live (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

When we come to the New Testament, nothing has changed. In outlining what should be included in prayer, Christ told us to address the Father. Following on from this, we are to request forgiveness of our sins. It is not wrong to address Christ also, since as our High Priest we can ask Him to intercede with the Father on our behalf (1 John 1:8-10; 2:1-2). The apostle Paul tells us that there is "one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). It did not go well for those who did not want to repent before God and tried to use a human mediator, for example King Saul (1 Samuel 15:22-28) and Simon the magician (Acts 8:18-24).

To study further please request our booklets *Tools for Spiritual Growth* and *Forgiveness Is Possible*.

**Q** I do not hear the voice of God when I am praying, nor do I see visions and heavenly signs. Others claim they do. Am I spiritually deaf and blind?

*Reader from London*

**A** It is impossible to verify the claims of what others say they have heard, seen or dreamed. Such claims can be a source of boasting and leave those who do not have such experiences feeling spiritually inadequate. That fruit is not good and is unlikely to be of God.

It is true that God spoke to specific individuals in the past but now that the Bible is complete, people are able to "hear" the voice of God when they read His Word or have it read to them.

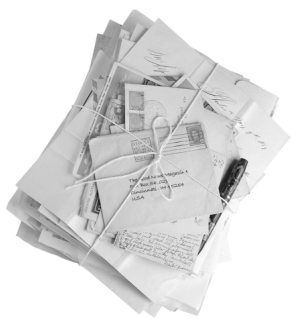
Thus today there is no need for us to literally hear the voice of God. His revealed Word has been preserved for all generations in what we call the Holy Bible. We see God's will within its pages, so there is no need for anyone to hear God speaking to them audibly or see a vision.

The Bible makes it plain that the most important thing in a Christian's life is to "live by every word of God." This was true in Old Testament times (Deuteronomy 8:3) as well as in New Testament times (Matthew 4:4).

**Q** Can you suggest why the school I went to decades ago told us not to read the Bible? In fact it was forbidden.

*Name and address supplied*

**A** Much of what both churches and schools teach about Christianity is not found in the Word of God. If it were, there would be no reason to forbid reading the Bible.



## Letters From Our Readers

### **Beyond Today renewal requests**

Please keep sending your magazine. It is very informative and is always passed on to other people after I have read it.

*Reader from North Yorkshire*

Please renew *Beyond Today*. It helps me when I feel poorly.

*Reader from Newton Abbott*

Very inspiring and refreshing magazine, fully explaining the true word of God.

*Reader from Corby*

Please don't stop sending *Beyond Today* magazine. I find it very educational and encouraging.

*Reader from Belfast*

Could you please renew my free subscription. I enjoy reading your magazine and look forward to receiving them.

*Reader from Leicester*

### **Beneficial resources**

I found your *Spiritual Growth* booklet very helpful.

*Reader from Glasgow*

As a single mum things can be tough but my son and I love God. Do you have resources on godly parenthood, and God's perspective on a partner and marriage?

*Name and address supplied*

*Editor's comment: We have sent you a copy of our booklet Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension which covers these topics. We have*

*also sent you a compilation of articles called Successful Parenting.*

### **Help in difficult times**

I have so many questions but I know with God's word and a little help from your literature, it will all make sense. Thank you for your kind help. It has been a great source of inspiration in dark times.

*Reader from Plymouth*

A big thank you for the magazines you send me. It's nice to know where the world is going.

*Reader from Hull*

### **Comments from Bible Study Course students**

It's a fantastic foundation for someone like me who read no Bible until I was in my 60s.

*Student in Manchester*

I am finding the course most helpful and very interesting. I am eager to continue the study.

I found Lesson 3 most helpful in answering "Who am I?" I also found the "Points to help with your Bible study" sheet to be particularly helpful.

*Student from Bedford*

I would like to thank you for the Bible Study lessons and magazines. I'm learning a lot and it's opening my eyes to a new way of thinking.

*From the Internet*

I have found the course very thought-provoking and a re-codifier for some of my behaviour and a change in my thinking.

*Student from Peterborough*

## How this work is supported

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