

Module 2: Walking as a Disciple

A disciple walks in obedience – Part 1 **(God's Commandments)**

John 15:9-12: ⁹ "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. ¹⁰ If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. ¹¹ "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. ¹² This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹² This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

In the first chapter of module 2, we looked at how a disciple walks in authority. It is, however, just as important to understand being a true disciple means walking in obedience. For obedience is part and parcel of honouring the covenant with our Lord. After all, as disciples we FOLLOW the Master – His ways, teachings, truths and commandments – therefore to FOLLOW implies obedience.

Now, there is obedience to God's Word that applies to all disciples, and then there is obedience to God's word personally that directs your life daily.

In this study, we will first look at the former, which is obedience to God's Word, therefore His commandments. We need to remember from the outset our God is not a lawless God. When we think of commandments, we tend to think Old Testament. The Church has argued and debated tirelessly against the validity of the Old Testament and the validity of laws and commandments, and in the end the Church has thrown the baby out with the bath water.

Problem is, we want to be a free loving Church, basking in the grace and mercy of God, soaking up His love, enjoying His blessings, and love that feel of a community where there is no judgement or condemnation. Yes, this is indeed the God whom we serve. A loving God who is full of mercy and love and hope and kindness. He has blessed us with all he blessings (Ephesians 1:2), and indeed, there is no condemnation for who are in Christ (Romans 8:1). But, at the same time, according to Jesus, to abide in Him means to love Him and to love Him means to follow His commandments. John 14:15 says (Jesus speaking): *If you love me, keep my commands.*

It is therefore clear. If we say we love the Lord, then we need to obey. Obey what? His commandments. You see, there are two sides to the coin regarding Romans 8. If there is no condemnation when we are in Christ, what then if we are not in Christ? Then surely we walk on dangerous ground. And we are only in Christ when we obey the Lord's commandments, for this is love.

Do we truly follow His commandments anymore? Is it not that we choose to rather follow doctrines without laws or commandments because we lack knowledge, understanding and wisdom regarding His laws? We have hardened our hearts and we have set ourselves to eventually resist commandments, for we argue it is legalistic and out of date. We are so afraid of entering the domain of the Old Testament that we would rather avoid it completely. This is a dangerous route to take.

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A disciple must obey the Lord's commandments. Note, not the truth of man but the truth of the Lord. Obedience to God's truths and His commandments is a characteristic of a disciple; ignorance is not an excuse for our lack of obedience.

We know the greatest laws - **Matthew 22:35-41:** ³⁵ *Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying,* ³⁶ *"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"* ³⁷ *Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."* ³⁸ *This is the first and great commandment.* ³⁹ *And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'* ⁴⁰ *On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."*

Few would argue with these commandments. But do we know that there are roughly between 40 and 50 commandments issued by Jesus [depending on how you view duplications]. The fact remains Jesus made numerous commandments, and He expects us to follow them. If this was not the case, then explain *Matthew 28:19-20:* ¹⁹ ***Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*** ²⁰ ***teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*** Amen.

We must go and make disciples, but in order to make disciples, we need to teach all that Jesus has commanded. He in fact taught His disciples to follow numerous commandments, which **spiritually** upholds the commandments as taught to them by the Father through the old physical laws. Take note, we are not to follow the 613 Laws of Moses in a physical sense, but we need to follow them in a spiritual sense. Let us explain.

Jesus said in Matthew 5 that He came to fulfil the Laws of God. *Matthew 5:18-20:* ¹⁷ *"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill."* ¹⁸ *For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.* ¹⁹ *Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.* ²⁰ *For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*

Therefore, in Him is the fulfilment, not the cancellation, of God's commandments. I believe we can all agree on this truth, for this is what Matthew 5 explains. So therefore, let us understand the LAW and the COMMANDMENT has been fulfilled in Jesus. So to obey means to obey Jesus fully, for He is the LAW and the representation of Kingdom's order.

The word 'fulfil' in this context is the word *Pleroo* which implies "to complete," or to completely accomplish the purpose God intended. Heaven and earth have still not passed away. The word "destroy" (*kataluo* in Greek) means "to loose or unloose what was before bound" so, if Jesus somehow transformed the law so that we don't have to keep it, He loosed us from its obligation. But Jesus emphatically tells us that He did no such thing.

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Jesus concludes His statement about God's law with a solemn warning to religious teachers: *"Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (verse 19).*

Some carelessly assume and assert that "these commandments" refers to the teachings of Christ that follow in the remainder of the chapter. Not so! The wording of the Greek text simply will not allow such an interpretation. Actually, the word in verse 19 translated "breaks" (luo in Greek) is related to the word in verse 17 rendered destroy (katalu). Luo literally means "to lose." The Greek concept of destruction is to break or take apart. Loosening a part is the first step in taking apart, thus breaking or destroying an object. So Jesus' warning not only applies to anyone who disobeys even a minor detail of God's law and teaches others to do the same. Even "loosing," or relaxing, any of the requirements is forbidden, because that is the first step toward destroying the law. Jesus pronounces the severest penalty on any who would break or loosen even the least of the Old Testament commandments.

To put it simply, to follow Jesus is to follow God's Laws. But to follow Jesus means to follow the higher spiritual laws that encapsulate the old laws. To put it another way, we must keep the spirit of the law, not just the letter. This is possible only through the presence of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:7-9).

It is also true that when Jesus talks about fulfilling the Law, He is not just referring to the Ten Commandments. Remember, in the days of Moses, there were 613 Laws that expounded on the Ten Commandments. What we need to understand is that the entire LAW of the old and the new is now spiritually fulfilled [completed] in Jesus, and such Law by the Spirit is not loosened or relaxed or compromised to make way for man's interpretations.

For example, where Moses taught we shall not kill or murder, Jesus teaches that it is also murder to hate your brother. Where Moses teaches about adultery, Jesus teaches about just looking at a woman with lust is adultery. **The Law of Jesus is the higher law** – for example, abortion is also murder, but the higher law also makes room for spiritual abortion, which we commit when we lead not someone to Christ but lead them away from Jesus.

We shall not commit sexual immorality, but the higher law stipulates we shall also not commit spiritual fornication when we serve God and the world {for this is spiritual prostitution}. We are called to feed and take care of the poor and hungry and needy, but this higher law stipulates that we need to also feed them spiritually by feeding them the Bread of Life {Jesus}.

God's two greatest commandments is to love Him and then to love others. We also read that all commandments hang upon these two. After all, the first four commandments of the 10 Commandments in Exodus 20 deals with how to love God and the next six on how to love mankind. The 613 Laws of Moses then elaborates how to execute the 10 commandments so that we uphold the two greatest commandments. The Law of Jesus encapsulates spiritually all that has been said by God from the beginning of time.

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Of course, following the ceremonial rituals to the letter of the Old Testament no longer applies to the born again believer, because Jesus – who is the better way – became the great and final high priest who has once and for all died for our sins so that we have redemption by the Blood. All of the old feasts have also been spiritual fulfilled by the higher law, such as Passover being fulfilled by the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. The Feast of Weeks that follows 50 days after Passover has been fulfilled by Pentecost, when then Spirit of the Lord was poured out.

So Jesus came to show us the better and higher way. He came to show us the higher spiritual law that envelops and encapsulates the old laws. And as disciples we need to obey the spiritual LAW as fulfilled in Jesus.

In response to the young man who asked Him what to do to inherit eternal life, Jesus said, "If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:17). The verses following clearly identify the commandments He referred to as those God gave in what we call the Old Testament. He cited several of the Ten Commandments as well as the fundamental commandment to "love your neighbour as yourself" to make the point. *Matthew 19: ¹⁶ Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" ¹⁷ So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." ¹⁸ He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' ¹⁹ 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' " ²⁰ The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?" ²¹ Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." ²² But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions*

On another occasion, Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Clearly, Jesus believed in, taught and kept all the commandments of God during His earthly ministry. He also commanded His disciples to be "teaching them [new converts] to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20).

So when a disciple walks in God's commands, and he worships in spirit and truth, he thus walks in God's higher spiritual laws and ways. But this does require obedience unto God's laws as upheld by Jesus, such as considering the higher ways of spiritual adultery and idolatry.

If the two greatest commandments are to love God and to love others, then a disciple needs to walk in such commandments. We need to love God above all, and we need to love others without being jealous, envious, bitter, cruel or unkind. To love others means to walk in the Spirit of the Lord, manifesting the fruits of the Spirit to the glory of God.

If we truly uphold God's commandments, there will no idolatry in our life, no sin, no immorality, no wickedness and no evil. If we love and obey the Lord, we will stop justifying our immoral ways and repent, for this is what it means to serve the Lord. If we truly uphold God's commandments, we will begin to love others – caring for them

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spiritually and physically. We will not lust, or cheat them or trick them or deceive them. We will tame our tongue (James 3) and we will tame our heart.

To obey is the way of the disciple. We also cannot choose what to obey and what to ignore. We obey God's Word as upheld by Jesus. Therefore we need the guidance of the Holy Spirit to show us the true way of obedience.

If we obey, we will walk as disciples of God as stipulated in Ephesians 4 and 5 and also Colossians 3. If we follow God's ways, we walk not walk in strife, anger, discord, disunity, but in faith, love and hope. To love the Lord, means to obey, and this means to walk in His commandments.

We read often how the Lord *commanded*, for to command implies authority. We read for example in *Matthew 11:1-3: **11 Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities.***

If we ask anybody today what are the commandments of God, we will probably mention the two greatest commandments, but what about the others? Are we mindful of God's higher laws that uphold and fulfils the old laws that deal with morality and our behaviour towards God and each other? Are we aware that we are called to walk in God's Truth, seeking a holy and blameless life where we walk in His Shalom to His glory and for His glory?

This is what it means to walk as a disciple. We need to become mindful again of what God said in the Old Testament, how it operates and functions within the spiritual laws of Jesus and we need to know how to apply such commandments so that we stay true faithfully unto the Laws. This requires the guidance, wisdom, counsel and knowledge of the Holy Spirit, as mentioned by Jesus in John 16 when He promised to send a helper. Why do we need a helper? So that by the Holy Spirit – who is the Spirit of wisdom, might, knowledge, counsel and wisdom, (Isaiah 11:2) – we may be led to walk in Truth, know Truth and apply Truth within the context of God's commandments.

Do we really understand that the higher law of murder is spiritual murder, meaning turning to people to a religion instead of God, as what Jesus accused the Pharisees and Sadducees of in Matthew 23? He accused them of shutting up the heavens and leading people astray. That is spiritual murder.

What about theft? We know what it means to steal, but have we considered that even in church doctrines we actually encourage the idea of robbery, such as the teaching of tithing. After all, this is nothing more than stealing from the people because we manipulate for own gain. The New Testament Covenant is about freely giving as the Spirit leads, but not the legalistic and erroneous modern day doctrine of tithing, which remains an Old Testament law that is directly tied to the Promised Land of Canaan.

Consider also how we steal from someone when it comes to time, and how we can steal someone's attention and energy and even joy. Satan does this well, but mankind also excels in such art. There is therefore a higher law we need to be mindful of, but because we lack the understanding and wisdom we would rather ignore it and seek an easier path. A

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disciple of the Lord is required to walk in wisdom, and by such wisdom comes understanding and knowledge of how to obey Jesus (note not man) so that He may be glorified and exalted.

An example of how Jesus fulfilled the higher laws, we read John 5:18 where Jesus was accused of breaking a command: *Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.* Did Jesus break the Sabbath commandment in the law of God (Exodus 20:8-11, Deuteronomy 5:12-15)? Clearly not, for Jesus said in *John 15:10*: ¹⁰ *If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.*

Why did Jesus say that He obeys the commandments when it appeared He transgressed the Sabbath Law? Remember, Jesus was dealing with the Higher Law. We read in Luke 6: *Now it happened on the second Sabbath after the first that He went through the grainfields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their hands.* ² *And some of the Pharisees said to them, "Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?"* ³ *But Jesus answering them said, "Have you not even read this, what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: ⁴ how he went into the house of God, took and ate the showbread, and also gave some to those with him, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat?"* ⁵ *And He said to them, "The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath."*

Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath. So one uphold the Law of the Sabbath by following Jesus in Spirit and Truth for He is the Lord of the Sabbath! Did Jesus destroy the law? Fortunately not even though many think He did just that. Even though they don't say it in those exact words, the result is still the same. Some say Jesus transformed the law, meaning that, by accepting Christ as Saviour, a Christian is somehow credited with the righteousness of Christ. They assume this means we don't need to keep the law, because Jesus allegedly kept it for us, and the law really doesn't apply to us after all. This, however, is not true. We are called to follow God's higher 'spiritual' laws.

Jesus was, however, opposed by those who were holding onto the traditions of man. It says in Matthew 15:9: ⁹ *And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.* Jesus quoted this statement from Isaiah 29:13 and applied it to the "tradition of the elders" (Matthew 15:2) as taught and practiced by the hypocritical, self-righteous scribes and Pharisees who sat in judgment of Him.

These "commandments of man" were also known to the Jews as the "oral Torah" or the oral law. It was this distorted interpretation of the law that Jesus sought to correct in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus therefore was never attacking the Old Testament – how can He for the Laws came from His Father - but the understanding many of his hearers adopted. We must therefore be careful when we add our own commandments, or when we subtract from God's commandments as we will without the guidance and wisdom of the Spirit. Once we do so, we step over into tradition, which is nothing more than a man-made set of rules and regulations that have become habit passed down from one generation to the next.

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Jesus thus taught on the proper application of the commandment upon which the particular tradition was based. He thus fulfilled the Law in its entirety by restoring it to its complete original meaning and intent. Our righteousness must therefore exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20) in that we must keep the law of God in its proper intent. This therefore means following the higher Law of Jesus that spiritually encapsulates all laws.

When the Jews charged Jesus with breaking the Sabbath (John 5:18), they were accusing Him of violating their misguided human traditions regarding the Sabbath. The Gospel accounts contain many such confrontations during which Jesus' conduct on the Sabbath was condemned by the legalistic scribes and Pharisees (Mark 2:23-28; Mark 3:1-6).

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus offers to live in us. But He does not live our lives for us. We must all repent and yield ourselves as servants of righteousness, with the realisation that God is working in us "both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). Love is the basis of God's law, and one cannot claim to love God apart from obedience to His commandments (1 John 5:2-3, 1 John 2:4).

By replacing the laws and commandments of God with human traditions – meaning our interpretations of God's Laws – then we walk in deceit and are in danger of being swallowed by such deception like the Scribes in the days of Jesus.

Now, in conclusion, let us be reminded of 1 John 2:

3 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. 6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. 7 Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. 8 Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.

There is a great truth in this writing by John, which places emphasis on the great importance of obedience to God's commandments. Take note when he writes: *The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning.* Who is the Word? *John 1: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.* You see, God has always been the author of all the commandments, and the old commandments are now fulfilled in the new, yet have not been passed away. This is why John also says he is not writing a new commandments but an old commandment. Why? Because the author remains God; it is just that the higher spiritual law fulfilled in Jesus – pertaining to the Gentiles as well - supplants the laws that were specifically focussed upon the Jewish people.

If we truly want to follow God in Love, we must obey in Love. We cannot teach His commandments if our human traditions override the Truth of God. We can thus only be true and real disciples of God when we allow His commandments in accordance to the Spirit to work in our lives. Then only can we follow and teach as Jesus commanded.