



Ten Commandments 5: Keeping the Commandments

Jesus and the rich young ruler

Note: Scripture used in this Bible Study is from the New King James Version.

The Ten Commandments are more than a rule book. They reveal the principles by which God expects His people to live. As we have seen, these principles often are more profound and comprehensive than a superficial glance might suggest. The essence of the Ten Commandments can be summed up as loving God supremely and loving others as we love ourselves...

Matt 22:36-40 - "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "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 neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Although Jesus approved of living by the Ten Commandments, He made it clear that no one can receive eternal life by keeping them. After Jesus had blessed some children (Mark 10:16), a distinguished man approached Him...

Keep the Commandments (Mark 10:17-21)

Mark 10:17-27

17 Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

18 So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.

19 "You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'"

20 And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth."

21 Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."

22 But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

23 Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!"

24 And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!

25 "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

26 And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, "Who then can be saved?"

27 But Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."

What do we know about the man who asked Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life?

- According to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, this man was a young official, possibly the head of his local synagogue...

Matt 19:20 - The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?"

Luke 18:18 - Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

- He also was very affluent (Mark 10:22).
- By most standards he was extremely successful. In a society that venerated the oldest men he was a leader while still in his youth. In a region that abounded with poverty he had great riches.

How did the young man approach Jesus? (v17)

The young man "ran up to" meet Jesus.

Why did the man run to meet Jesus?

- He did not want to miss an opportunity to talk with this Teacher.
- Running was not something rulers did, so his act implied an extraordinary reverence for Jesus.
- The man made a genuine effort to find the answer to a question that greatly disturbed him.
- The man's respect for Jesus was reinforced by addressing Him as "teacher".

Why did the man refer to Jesus as "Good Teacher"?

The addition of "good" was a compliment, showing the deep impression Jesus' teachings had made on the young man.

Why did Jesus reply to the man's question by asking another question?

By replying with another question, Jesus forced deeper contemplation on the inquirer. He directed the young man's attention to God.

How did the question that the man asked reveal what he meant by addressing Jesus as a good teacher?

The designation "Good teacher" related to human achievement and merit. The ruler considered Jesus to be a teacher of great reputation. He desired instruction from such a notable source.

How did Jesus attack the man's entire rationale?

Jesus made it clear that if He was merely an eminent "teacher," He was not qualified to answer the question.

Why can't a mortal teacher answer this question?

All people have sinned. Thus no mere mortal could be "good." Only God possesses absolute goodness. Hence only God can set forth the condition for eternal life.

Wasn't how the man addressed correct then? Jesus was God in the flesh, wouldn't that qualify Him to be a good teacher? Does this mean that Jesus was denying He was God?

Jesus knew why the man called Him good and it was for the wrong reason. Jesus' question did not imply He was not God. Rather it demanded closer examination of Jesus' identity. Subsequent words reveal that Jesus considered Himself to be deity!

John 10:30-33 - "I and My Father are one." Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?"

The Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God."

What did Jesus give the man as conditions to have eternal life?

Jesus further directed the young man's attention to God by referencing several of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:12-16). Everything He said except "do not defraud" is almost word for word from the Ten Commandments. This phrase is from Leviticus 19. 13 and is an application of both the Eighth and Ninth Commandments.

Why did Jesus specifically mention the commandments having to do with human relationships?

How we relate to other people is one visible means of discerning our obedience to God's commands. Jesus challenged the rich young ruler to evaluate his life in light of God's Word.

Did the man really think he had obeyed the 10 Commandments?

Without doubt he was sincere in this assertion.

If the man believed he had obeyed the commandments why did he ask Jesus the question about how to have eternal life?

His obedience had not provided the security he desired in eternal matters. Down deep in his heart he knew he fell short of God's standard which was perfection...

Matt 5:48 - "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Did Jesus accept the man's claim of flawless conformance to the Ten Commandments?

Jesus didn't dispute the man's claim but He didn't agree with it either.

What did Jesus' response to the man indicate what He was trying to do? (v21)

Jesus wanted the man to acknowledge that in his heart he had broken certain Commandments. Jesus certainly considered the command to love one's neighbor as the true meaning of the Commandments He quoted...

Matt 22:39-40 - "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Why did Jesus give the man such specific instructions for what he needed to do to inherit eternal life?

Jesus perceived the man's sincerity and replied to him in love. Because He loved the rich young ruler, Jesus wanted him to receive eternal life.

What did Jesus tell the man he had to do to correct his condition?

Jesus did not specify what was missing in this man's life. Instead He told what must be done to correct the situation. Jesus commanded the man to make three decisive moves.

- First he was to sell all his possessions.
- Second he must take the profits and distribute them among the poor.
- Last but most important he was to follow Jesus. God then would give to him the eternal security he was seeking.

What was the heart of the rich young ruler's problem?

"Treasure in heaven" was a first century Jewish idiom that referred to the things God considers consequential...

He and God had different values. His concept of success was defined by his wealth. It provided his identity and he trusted in it for security. God desired for him to rely on God for his identity and security.

Use Your Wealth Appropriately (Mark 10:22-25)

How did this man's wealth prevent him from having eternal life?

He relied on his wealth to provide both his needs and his pleasures in life.

Was Jesus saying that works are necessary to be saved?

No, but if you are saved works would surely follow...

James 2:20 - But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

What would the man have to do if he followed the specific steps Jesus gave him to have eternal life?

- It would require absolute trust in God.
- The rich young ruler was forced to choose between his wealth and trusting God.

What did the rich young ruler's response to Jesus' steps to salvation indicate?

That his money meant more to him than eternal life.

Does this mean that for anyone to be certain of eternal life, they would have to follow these steps?

Jesus does not require every person to sell his or her possessions. This condition concerns this specific case.

What is the general principle here that does apply to everyone?

That trusting God is essential to receiving eternal life.

Why is it difficult for the wealthy to trust in God?

The difficulty here was not the wealth but the person's response to wealth. The rich rarely want for the necessities of life because they can purchase them. This ability gives them a false sense of security. They think their wealth can provide every need.

Is the old adage true that money cannot buy happiness?

Yes, genuine inner peace cannot be bought with money. It is the free gift of a loving God. But receiving this gift requires ultimate trust in God alone.

How did the disciples respond to Jesus' words? (v24)

They were shocked.

Why were Jesus' words such a surprise to them?

They had been reared under a philosophy loosely based on certain Old Testament passages that wealth is a blessing from God...

- The disciples thought if someone was wealthy, God had blessed that person.
- But if an individual was impoverished, they thought sin had hindered God's blessing.

Why is this idea a gross misunderstanding of Scripture?

God blesses certain individuals (as He had Job and Abraham) by giving them great wealth. This does not imply every rich person is righteous. Nor does it suggest every poor person is an infidel...

Matt 5:45 - your Father in heaven... makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

Why did Jesus call His disciples children as He repeated His statement concerning wealth (v24)?

This episode immediately followed a lesson for Jesus that the only way to enter the kingdom of God is through childlike faith (v15).

What then is the only prerequisite for having eternal life?

Christ wants us to understand that putting one's ultimate trust in God is the only prerequisite for eternal life.

Why is it so difficult for the wealthy as well as those who wish to be wealthy to trust in God?

It means they must transfer dependence on physical assets to trust in an unseen God (faith).

What illustration did Jesus give to emphasize His point about the dangers of seeking after wealth? (v25)

He was talking about an ordinary sewing needle and an animal. The eye of a needle was the smallest opening familiar to the average person of that day. The camel was the largest creature common to the region.

How did the rich young ruler's response to Jesus differ from that of Zacchaeus?

Using wealth to help others shows it does not have priority in our lives and it shows love for others. Zacchaeus realized that a personal relationship with Christ was more valuable than money. The rich young man failed to see this reality.

Depend on God for Salvation (Mark 10:26-27)

Why were the disciples astonished in verse 26?

Because of their philosophy they identified wealth with the blessing of God. They concluded if it was impossible for

those whom God blessed to be saved, then no one qualified and salvation is impossible.

What was the basic mistake in what the disciples were thinking?

Like the rich young ruler who considered salvation as something that can be achieved by human effort, Jesus' disciples did not grasp it is entirely the opposite...

Salvation is a gift of God and can be received only as a gift. We must rely solely on God for salvation. We do not hold the resources for salvation. God alone can save!

Eph 2:8-9 - For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

How can a rich man be saved?

God certainly can save a rich man. God will save anyone with complete trust in Him.

What does trusting in God entail?

Total self-sacrifice, dying to self:

Matt 10:38-39 - "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

Trusting in God comes from an honest evaluation of one's condition as God sees it.

- Physical things such as wealth and mental ability have only a temporary existence. This existence is very unstable. The value of gold, stocks, bonds, and other forms of wealth all fluctuate. A sudden economic recession can wipe out a fortune. A tiny unseen virus can ruin personal health.

Why is it unwise to measure success in life by worldly standards?

In contrast the eternal life God gives can never be diminished or taken away. In the end it alone has true value.

So what should we conclude about how we may inherit eternal life?

We need to place our ultimate trust in a God who loves us.

If we are trusting in God, what has priority in our life?

We are trusting in God when we give Him priority in our lives.

Love God and Love Others (Matt. 22:36-40)

Jesus taught that people live by the principles of the Ten Commandments when they love God supremely and love others as they love themselves. After Jesus had outwitted the Sadducees, the Pharisees then attempted to refute Him and His teaching. They selected an expert in the study of the law of Moses. The test question he chose reflects the popular notion that the law contained 613 separate commandments. Each of these was given certain weight, some more important than others. Thus the Pharisee sought Jesus' opinion about the greatest commandment.

Matt 22:36-40

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."

How did Jesus respond to the Pharisee's question?

Jesus used Deuteronomy 6:5 to respond. This Old Testament passage is the highest expression of God's uniqueness... Note that the prior verse was well known to the Jews since it provided the basic formula for Israel's absolute monotheism...

Deut 6:4-5 - "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."

How can Deut 6:4 be right if God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

The Hebrew word translated "one" which often means a compound rather than simple unity. Example:

Gen 2:24 - Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

What does it mean to love God?

To love God is to have a personal relationship with Him, to obey Him, and be grateful for what He has done for you.

Why is loving God the most important commandment?

Such commitment keeps the law in its proper perspective. If this commandment about loving God is observed, the rest follows automatically.

What are the distinctions between heart soul and mind?

The terms "heart," "soul," and "mind" are used together to emphasize one's whole being. In Hebrew thought the heart is the place of decision. It is the seat of human

consciousness and reason, especially to hear the Word of God. The soul was an idiom for life itself or the individual person living that life. Mind refers to one's intelligence.

What is the second most important commandment?

To love your neighbor as yourself.

Who is your neighbor?

Jesus defined "neighbor" with the parable of the good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. "Neighbor" in His teaching designates all of humanity, those who God brings into your life.

Why is loving your neighbor the next most important commandment after loving God?

These two commandments sum up all of God's Law. If you love God, it follows that you will love your neighbor and keep God's Law.

When Jesus said, "love your neighbor as yourself," was He condoning selfishness?

No, He was merely acknowledging the truth that people do love themselves. It is our nature to love ourselves.

Can "loving your neighbor as yourself" also be stated as, "before you can love others you must first learn to love yourself"?

No. This is new age philosophy that overlooks the truth that people by nature already love themselves.

So what does God expect His people to do?

God expects His people today to love God supremely and to love others as we love ourselves.

What does it mean that "on these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets"?

Jesus indicated these two principles related to loving God and others were not only the most important but also were the basis for the remainder of the Scripture. At the time of Jesus the Old Testament was organized into three major sections: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The Law and the Prophets became an idiom for the Scripture in its entirety.