

The New Covenant Series: How Can We Obey God's Commandments?

By Daniel Deininger - Based on the UCG Study Guide, The New Covenant

<https://www.ucg.org/learn/bible-study-tools/bible-study-aids/new-covenant-does-it-abolish-gods-law/how-can-we-obey-gods-commandments>

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Many sincere religious people lament, "Oh, I wish I could live up to the Ten Commandments, but I know I can't." In their minds, keeping God's commandments is an unattainable goal. Underlying this perception is a major misunderstanding of the nature and purpose of God's Ten Commandments.

Today we're going to look at how we can obey God's commandments, and how He wants us to reach a higher level of righteousness.

These commandments *can* be obeyed, at least in the outward letter of the law, by ordinary people even if they have not yet received God's Holy Spirit. For example, any human being is capable of not worshipping an idol, treating parents with respect, not murdering another person, not committing adultery or not stealing what belongs to someone else.

This is the level of obedience that God expected from ancient Israel and He now expects in repentance even before one is baptized and receives the Holy Spirit.

A higher level of righteousness

But from the beginning, God desired more from human beings. He is more interested in what comes out of the heart and whether what is in the heart is enthusiastically demonstrated by one's actions. It is in the heart and mind that He wants to write *the full intent and meaning* of His laws.

Q. Is what's in your heart being enthusiastically demonstrated by your actions? Are you zealous of God's ways or lukewarm?

Revelation 3:15 NLT - 15 "I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other!"

Jesus Christ addressed this in a parable about a servant who does *only* what his master demands ([Luke 17:7-8](#)).

*Luke 17:7-8 NKJV - 7 "And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'?
8 "But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'?"*

Jesus posed this question to His disciples: *"Does he [the master] thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do'"* ([Luke 17:9-10](#)).

Jesus pointed out that there is a *higher* level of righteousness that goes beyond the limited written demands of the Ten Commandments—a *spirit* or *spiritual intent* of the law that goes beyond the mere *letter* of the law (2 Corinthians 3:5-6).

2 Corinthians 3:5-6 NKJV - 5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as [being] from ourselves, but our sufficiency [is] from God, 6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Jesus summarized that standard: *"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" (Matthew 22:37-40). Those two great commandments summarize the ultimate righteousness that God is creating in His children.

God doesn't want us to be "lukewarm"!

That level of love for God and our fellow human beings exceeds what any person is capable of having and expressing fully without the divine help that God makes available to us through the power of His Holy Spirit. It is a level of love that is in direct opposition to the selfish tendencies of our fleshly nature (James 1:13-15; James 4:1-3).

James 1:13-15 NKJV - 13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

James 4:1-2 NKJV - 1 Where do wars and fights [come] from among you? Do [they] not [come] from your [desires for] pleasure that war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

To receive the Holy Spirit, each of us must first *repent* of transgressing the Ten Commandments of God, which we should have been striving to obey already.

Basic steps to real repentance

So what are some of the basic steps to that real repentance that God requires before He will give us His Spirit?

First, we must **acknowledge that God's commandments are *spiritual* in nature** (Romans 7:14) as well as being holy, just and good (Romans 7:12).

Rom 7:12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Rom 7:14 For we know that **the law is spiritual**: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

We must recognize also that God will not establish an eternal relationship with one who willfully chooses to continue transgressing His law (Isaiah 59:1-2).

Isa 59:1 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: 2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

We need to recognize and acknowledge that His laws are wonderful and endure forever ([Psalm 119:129-160](#)).

*Psa 119:129 KJV PE **Thy testimonies are wonderful:** therefore doth my soul keep them.*

130 The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

131 I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.

132 Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.

*133 Order my steps in thy word: and **let not any iniquity have dominion over me.***

134 Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts.

135 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes.

*136 **Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.***

137 TZADDI. Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments.

138 Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful.

139 My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.

*140 **Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.***

141 I am small and despised: yet do not I forget thy precepts.

142 Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.

*143 Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: **yet thy commandments are my delights.***

144 The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.

*145 KOPH. **I cried with my whole heart;** hear me, O LORD: I will keep thy statutes.*

146 I cried unto thee; save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.

147 I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word.

148 Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word.

149 Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness: O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment.

150 They draw nigh that follow after mischief: they are far from thy law.

*151 Thou art near, O LORD; and **all thy commandments are truth.***

152 Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.

*153 RESH. Consider mine affliction, and deliver me: **for I do not forget thy law.***

154 Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.

*155 **Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes.***

156 Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments.

157 Many are my persecutors and mine enemies; yet do I not decline from thy testimonies.

158 I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word.

*159 **Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness.***

160 Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.

So the first act of repentance is to **willingly choose to obey God's commandments** as the only acceptable *foundation* for a right relationship with Him and Jesus Christ ([Matthew 19:16-19](#); [Luke 6:46](#)).

Mat 19:16 KJV And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

*17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: **but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.***

18 He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

19 Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Luk 6:46 KJV And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

47 Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like:

48 He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.

49 But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

From David Guzik:

a. But why do you call Me “Lord, Lord,” and do not do the things which I say? Outward conformity is not enough. **You must be a doer of the word, not only a hearer. Calling Jesus “Lord” is an empty statement if it never makes a difference in your life.**

b. He is like a man building a house: In Jesus’ illustration, **both houses looked the same from the outside; but they were far different because of their foundation.**

c. And when the flood arose: **The flooding stream is a display of trials or judgment. We should be thankful for the flooding streams in our lives now, because it is better for us to find out now what kind of foundation our lives are on than at judgment before God.**

Interesting!

d. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation: A mere hearing of God’s word isn’t enough to provide a secure foundation. **It is necessary that we are also doers of His word. If we are not, we commit the sin that will surely find us out, the sin of doing nothing** (Num_32:23), and great will be our fall.

Num 32:23 KJV But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.

Guzik, continued:

b. But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out: And if they failed to do as they said, they could be sure that your sin will find you out. While it is true that any sin may find us out, the sin specifically spoken of here is the sin of doing nothing!

i. If the tribes of Reuben and Gad did nothing - if they stayed at home while their brothers were battling for life and death to take possession of the Promised Land - then their sin of doing nothing would surely find them out.

ii. **Sometimes, doing nothing is a great sin** - and it is a sin that will certainly become evident, and will find us out.

Accepting Jesus Christ's sacrifice as payment for our past sins through baptism so that we may receive the Holy Spirit is the next major step. *"Now . . . they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of*

you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" ([Acts 2:37-38](#)).

When this happens—with genuine spiritual understanding and sincerity—a whole new level of righteous development begins. This is the kind of righteousness that God wants us to strive to develop with the help He makes available through His Spirit.

As Paul expressed it: *"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world" ([Philippians 2:12-15](#)).*

In this way God raises the relationship we have with Him through Jesus Christ from obedience to just the letter of His law to a deep, selfless love for Him and His way of life and our fellow human beings. The history of mankind makes it clear that this level of righteousness has never and can never be attained by human effort alone.

But if we **repent** of our selfish ways that lead us into sin and **surrender our lives unconditionally** to our heavenly Father, we can accept Christ's sacrifice for our sins and receive forgiveness.

So we see there is indeed much more to receiving God's holy spirit than just accepting Christ.

God then promises that we "may participate in *the divine nature* and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires" ([2 Peter 1:4, NIV](#)).

2 Peter 1:1-4 NIV - 1 Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:
2 Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

3 His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, **so that through them you may participate in the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

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### Discussion Questions:

Have you had the perspective and belief that you could keep God's 10 commandments without His holy spirit?

Is it possible for us, with the help of God's holy spirit, to perfectly obey God?

How faithful have we been in our commitment to surrender to God unconditionally? Is it something we will continually fight as long as we are in the flesh?

How do we maintain that attitude and approach?

How does God speak to us through the holy spirit? Is it sin not to yield to the holy spirit's direction? How do you know it is God's spirit motivating you versus your own desire?