

Journey Into Righteous Living



LESSON 1 . . . The Secret of True Happiness (Exodus 20:1-2)

Are you a righteous person? To answer that question you must know the difference between **positional** and **practical** righteousness. **Positional** righteousness refers to our justification in Christ (Rom. 1:17 & 2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus tells the story of a self-righteous Pharisee and a dishonest tax collector who both go to the temple to pray. The tax collector simply asks God to have mercy on him because he is a sinner. Then, what does Jesus say about him in Luke 18:14a?

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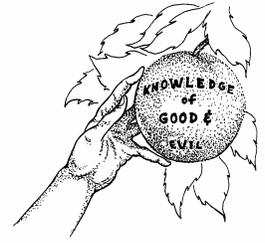
That is **positional** righteousness, which is instantaneous when we receive Christ. **Practical** righteousness is the result of **positional** righteousness and is a lifelong process called “sanctification” that we must *pursue*, or “follow after” (1 Tim. 6:11). **Practical** righteousness means we do everything we can to be right with God and right with people, which requires obeying the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:3-17).

The first four commandments reveal how we can have a right relationship with God and the last six how we can have right relationships with people. The commandments relating to God come first because when we are right with God, our other relationships will begin to get right. It doesn’t matter how much money we make, how successful we are, or where we live, if our relationships are bad, we will be unhappy. The only way we can find true happiness is to obey God’s commandments about relationships. The Ten Commandments contain **the secret of true happiness** for at least **four** reasons . . .

1. They are positive.

The Ten Commandments are not negative. When some people think of the Ten Commandments, they picture a God who hems them in or a grumpy God who doesn’t want them to enjoy life. This is all part of Satan’s original, often effective strategy to lead us into sin. In his very first temptation, Satan comes to Eve in the form of a *serpent*, the shrewdest of all the animals God created. He suggests God is too strict and confining by asking Eve what question in Genesis 3:1b?

In other words, he says, “Eve, I can’t believe God would be that strict with you.” The Tempter wants Eve to think negatively about God’s commandments, so he suggests God is holding out on her and denying her happiness and pleasure. He wants Eve to think God is so narrow-minded He forbids legitimate enjoyment. However, God’s command actually isn’t negative; it is positive. God says to Adam and Eve, “*You are free to eat from **any** tree in the garden*” (2:16, emphasis mine) with only one exception. Then, in Genesis 2:17, what does God tell them is the one exception, and why?



Satan hasn’t changed; he still tries to get us to think negatively about God’s commandments. He wants us to believe they are designed to rob us of happiness and cause us to lead dull, boring lives. Don’t let the Tempter influence you into thinking negatively about God’s commandments!

Every command in the Bible is given because God loves us and wants three traits to be true in our lives: He wants us to be **happy, healthy, and holy**. Anything we do that produces one of those traits in our lives without taking away from the other two is OK. That is why Psalm 84:11c reveals what truth about God?

In the Garden of Eden, Satan got Adam and Eve to think negatively about God’s commandments, and he continues to tempt us in the same way today because only then can he draw us into sin. He wants us to consider the Ten Commandments as harsh, confining, and negative, but **they are positive** and . . .

2. They are passionate.

By “passionate” I mean loving. The Ten Commandments are really ten passionate statements of God’s love for us. God hates sin because all sin hurts people He loves. If we keep them in context, the Ten Commandments are one of the strongest expressions of God’s love in the Bible.

The Evil One knows most people believe the Bible is the Word of God. Therefore, to be effective in his tactics, Satan tries to get us to read the Bible out of context. If he can’t get us to disbelieve the Bible, he will try to get us to interpret it out of context, out of its proper setting. The context of the Ten Commandments is God’s love for us.

In Exodus 19, the Lord calls Moses to meet Him on Mount Sinai. There God tells Moses what to say to the Israelites and gives him the context for

the Ten Commandments. In Exodus 19:4b, what does God instruct Moses to tell the Israelites to remember?

The Lord tells Moses, “Before you give the Israelites the Ten Commandments, I want you to remind them I carried them *on eagles’ wings*.” That is a strong statement about God’s love. He wants His people to remember how He rescued them from brutal slavery in Egypt and how He saved them with the Red Sea miracle. He wants them to remember the water and manna He provided in the desert. He wants them to remember He always provided for them because of His love.



What does God mean when He says He carried His people *on eagles’ wings*? The Israelites knew what it meant. How does Deuteronomy 32:11 explain the phrase *on eagles’ wings*?

The *pinions* are the outer, boney sections of a bird’s wings. A mother eagle builds a cozy, comfortable nest for her future babies, called “eaglets.” The nest is made from twigs, leaves, and feathers. When it is time for the eaglets to fly, the mother eagle must force them out of their comfy nest. Therefore, she stirs the nest by fluttering her wings, forcing one of the eaglets out of the nest. As the eaglet plummets toward the ground, the mother is watching closely. Just before the fluttering eaglet hits the ground, she flies underneath, catches the eaglet on her outstretched wings, and deposits it back in the nest. She forces the eaglet out of the nest again and again, each time swooping down to catch the eaglet on her wings until it learns to fly.

That is what God tells Moses to convey to His people. Before Moses gives them the Ten Commandments, God wants him to tell His people how much He loves them and how He has always been there to rescue them *on eagles’ wings*. To keep the Ten Commandments in context, we must remember they were given in the context of God’s love. After telling Moses to remind His people of all the times he carried them *on eagles’ wings*, what does God say in Exodus 19:5a?

Can you look back on your life and see a situation similar to that of the Israelites? Were you heading for disaster, but God swooped down and carried you *on eagles' wings* to safety? When we forget those times, we begin to take God's Word out of context.

God's plan for the Israelites included all kinds of trials because He was preparing them for the Promised Land. God also has a plan for you and me, and it includes trials that prepare us for heaven (Jas. 1:2-4). At times we may feel we are all alone, but like that mother eagle, God is watching us. When our trials seem more than we can bear, He will swoop down to catch us and carry us *on eagles' wings*. He does this because He loves us, and that is what the Ten Commandments are all about—revealing God's love. The Ten Commandments contain the **secret of true happiness** because they are **positive, passionate**, and . . .

3. They are protective.

The Ten Commandments are basically God's boundaries, and boundaries are for our protection. How many of you were taught by your parents not to play with fire or not to play in the street? Why did they tell you not to do those things? Because loving parents give us boundaries.

We are all free to choose, but we are not free to choose the consequences of our choices. God knows this; that's why He gives us the Ten Commandments. He knows the consequences of not putting Him first in our lives. He knows the consequences of not honoring our parents, of adultery, stealing, coveting, etc. He gives us the Ten Commandments, and all His commands, to protect us. How does Psalm 119:130 express this fact?

The Ten Commandments give us light so we can see our way in a dark world. They give us moral light and protect us from hurt and harm. God has a purpose for all of us, and He has given us the Ten Commandments to protect us and keep us on course for His purpose. What is God's plan for us, as revealed in Jeremiah 29:11b?



God doesn't want us to miss His purpose for our lives. He has great plans for us, but if we are to realize these plans, we must obey His commandments. God does not give us the Ten Commandments to make our lives miserable; He gives them to us to protect us from misery.

The Ten Commandments contain **the secret of true happiness** because they are **positive, passionate, protective**, and . . .

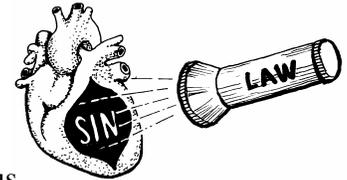
4. They are personal.

They are personal because they reveal so much about us. They expose the changes we need to make in our lives to have great relationships with God and people. They are personal in at least **two** ways:

First, they reveal our love for God. The Ten Commandments were first given to Moses on Mount Sinai and are repeated almost 40 years later in Deuteronomy 5:6-21. After repeating the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy 5, what does God say through Moses in Deuteronomy 6:5?

In Matthew 22:36, Jesus is asked what the greatest commandment of all is. Do you remember how He answers? He quotes Deuteronomy 6:5 and says that is the greatest of all the commandments. Why? We don't show our love for God by having a warm glow or walking on a cloud. We show our love for God by obeying His commandments. Therefore, the Ten Commandments are like a spiritual thermometer that gives a clear reading of the degree of our love for God.

Second, they reveal our sin. Do you look in a mirror before going to church? Why? To make sure you look right on the outside. The Ten Commandments are a spiritual mirror that reveals what we are like on the inside and makes us *conscious* of our sin (Rom. 3:20b). They cause our sin to "jump out" at us, but they were never intended to save us. How does Galatians 3:24 describe the purpose of God's Law?



Like a mirror, the Law causes us to see our sin, but it is powerless to do anything about it. It reveals the filth of sin, but it cannot cleanse us. The Ten Commandments cause us to see our need of the Savior, Jesus Christ.

The Ten Commandments contain **the secret of true happiness** because they are **positive, passionate, protective**, and **personal**.