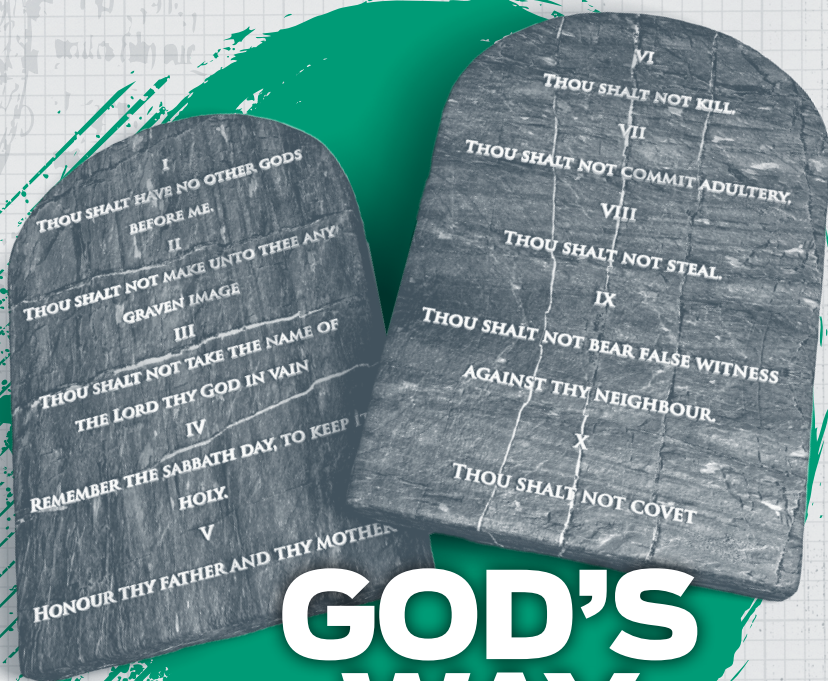


# THE GOSPEL PROJECT™ FOR STUDENTS



## GOD'S WAY

SUMMER 2014: Personal Study Guide

Ed Stetzer General Editor

Trevin Wax Managing Editor



## THE GOSPEL PROJECT FOR STUDENTS

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE, SUMMER 2014

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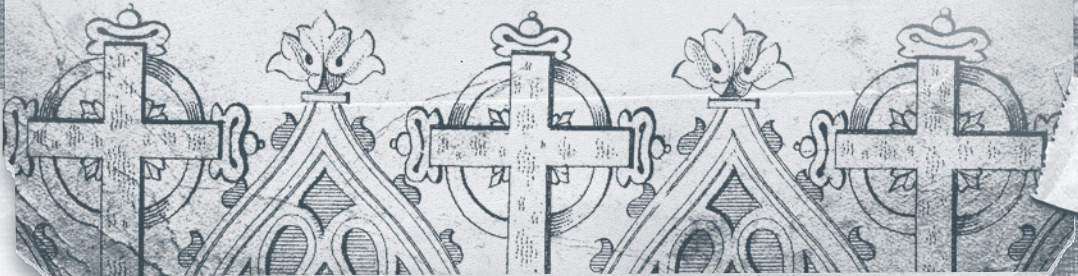
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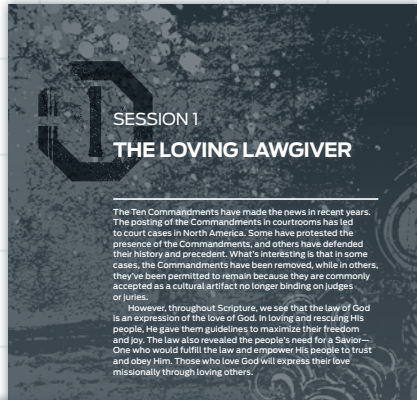
**Andy McLean** has served in student ministry for several years and currently serves as Editor for *The Gospel Project for Students*. He has earned an MA from Biola University and an MDiv and Th.M. from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Outside of the office, he enjoys spending time with his beautiful wife, Sarah, and their two sons, Isaac and Caleb.



# HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

## 1. GET STARTED.

The first page of each session is designed to give a brief introduction into what is to follow. Becoming familiar with these introductions will help navigate through the session as a whole.



**SESSION 1**  
**THE LOVING LAWGIVER**

The Ten Commandments have made the news in recent years. The posting of the Commandments in courtrooms has led to court cases in North America. Some have protested the presence of the Commandments, and others have defended their history and precedent. What's interesting is that in some cases, the Commandments have been removed, while in others, they've been permitted to remain because they are commonly accepted as a cultural artifact no longer binding on judges or juries.

However, throughout Scripture, we see that the law of God is an expression of the love of God. In loving and rescuing His people, He gave them guidelines to maximize their freedom and joy. The law also revealed the people's need for a Savior—One who would fulfill the law and empower His people to trust and obey Him. Those who love God will express their love missionally through loving others.



**The Law of God...**

**Begins With Love**

Rules get a bad rap sometimes. We tend to think of regulations as unnecessarily confining and restricting, often pointless, and always annoying. But rightly understood, rules do not oppose freedom; they make freedom possible. A home without any rules would mean that the loudest, strongest-willed child would rule the roost, leaving everyone else to no longer have the freedom of a happy, well-balanced home. We may hate it when we reach an intersection and the light turns red, but consider how a city without any traffic signals would cause chaos on the roadways, robbing us all of freedom to drive in safety. In the same way, God's people needed guidelines for their life in the Promised Land.

**Deuteronomy 10:12-13**  
After you, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you except to fear the Lord your God by walking in all His ways, to love Him, and to worship the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul? Keep the Lord's commands and statutes as I am giving you today, for your own good.

God's design is for the law to guide the life of His people so that they would become a particular kind of people. Israel could not be the light to the nations without standing out from the world. The laws are given in love from the Father who rescued them and who continued to form them in His image.

**Why do you think some people see Christianity as joy-suppressing rather than joy-enhancing? How should Christians respond to this way of thinking?**

**Loving Boundaries**

My oldest son is nearly two and a half years old and has always been quite energetic. Given that he was the first to come along, my wife and I were pretty shocked to see the dare-deviling stunts kids attempt at that age. For instance, he is notorious for jumping on and off the couch, bed, and pretty much everything else from an elevated position. As a result, we have tended to a number of bumps and bruises along the way.

Along with these bumps and bruises, however, have come rules on what he is allowed to do and not do. In other words, because of the scratches and scrapes that have resulted from jumping on and off the couch, he is now only allowed to sit on the couch. The same goes for the bed as well. My wife and I implemented these rules not to hurt my son or to be a killjoy during his play time—there are lots of places where he can run and jump without facing immediate danger. We implemented these rules because we love him and want to protect him from danger that he is completely unaware of.

When you think about it, the same principle applies to God giving us the Ten Commandments. Think about it: God gives us these Commandments not because He is a killjoy, but because He loves us and wants the best for us. He wants to see us thrive, prosper, and grow in our joy in Him, and because of that, He speaks directly into our lives and tells us how we are to live and conduct our relationships. Like a loving parent giving rules to a young child, so is God with us when it comes to His Commandments.

The Gospel Project for Students 12

## 2. DISCUSS IT.

This section is for you to use for both group and personal time. These pages contain the main points of each session, as well as questions for personal reflection and/or group discussion. In addition, each of the pages contains a story illustrating some aspect of the session, helping you to connect with the message in a personal way.





## Demands Perfection

Two words in this verse ought to strike fear into your heart. The first is love the Lord your God. We know from Jesus' words, that obedience is the sign of love. We are to do the right thing with the right heart. And that leads us to the other scary word—always. We are to always keep His mandate and statutes, ordinances, and commands. God demands total obedience from a loving heart.

It's no wonder, then, that the law of God immediately shows us our sinfulness, because it accurately reflects God's holiness. The law of God is like that. It's brilliant in its beauty, and we're thankful for what it reveals about God. And yet, it quickly shows us how we don't measure up. We understand our imperfection in light of God's perfection, our sin in light of His holiness, and our cold, dark hearts in light of His blazing, fiery love.

That's where Jesus comes in. He meets the demand of the law. He lived the perfect life we could not live, upheld the law at every point we failed, and loved God and others the way humans were always intended to.

### Deuteronomy 10:1

*Therefore, love the Lord your God and always keep His mandate and His statutes, ordinances, and commands.*

What is your reaction to the command of perfect obedience? Does it make you want to be more disciplined, or does it make you despair? Why?

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Explain that God's commandments reflect His holy character. What can we learn about ourselves when we reflect on God's perfection?

## Corrective Lenses

While growing up, I always thought that my vision was as good as it could be. Even though I never had a professional eye exam, I didn't actively go to sports and other activities that do partly why I never thought twice about the eyes I had until I actually went to the eye doctor. I had imagined it to be. During the exam, I was in need of some sort of corrective lenses. Literally, what an eye-opening experience it was. My vision was simply perfect. I could see things to be. How I never noticed that my vision said that most people don't notice it because



## Ends With Love

Love is the point of everything. To love is to fulfill the law. Paul turned to several of the Ten Commandments to show how love will lead us to keep these commands. When we love God, we love our neighbor. When we love God and neighbor, we delight in keeping the Commandments.

We do live according to the moral laws, not because they were not fulfilled by Christ, but because they are rooted in God's character and are the expression of our love for neighbor. The end of the law is love. And love leads us back to laws that help us uphold our love for others as an expression of our love for God.

What is the relationship between our love for God and our love for others? How should love for others impact our motivation for evangelism and service?

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### Romans 13:8-10

*Do not owe anyone anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments do not count against us, if we love; and whatever other commandments are summed up by this: Love your neighbor as yourself.*

What does it say about our belief in Christ if we continually break God's laws?

## GOD'S STORY, YOUR STORY

Have you ever felt that rules and regulations were designed to restrict your freedom? Have you ever felt that rules were intended to minimize your joy and happiness? Hopefully you don't believe that good and healthy rules or standards were intended to work against you in any way. In fact, as this session points out, once you think about it, you begin to realize that rules and commands can actually come from the motivation to live, with the intention to protect, and to increase freedom and joy.

Have you ever had the impression that God's commands are restrictive and burdensome? Why or why not?

By understanding that God's law begins and ends with a heart of love, we begin to repair the distorted image we may have regarding God and His commands. Instead of seeing God's commands as suppressive and restrictive, this session helps us to see how God's commands are a way to love and bless His people.

How does this session change the way you see the Ten Commandments? Why is it important to understand God's purposes behind them?

God's commands are not only a way for God to love and bless His people, but are also a reflection of the moral character of God Himself. By seeing the beauty reflected in God's laws, we get to be exposed to the beauty of the One who created them. Seeing His beauty not only gives us a better understanding of who He is, but also a greater love for Him as we seek to walk in His ways.

Why is it important to see God's commands as flowing from His character? How does this change the way we see them?

how their current vision falls in comparison to standard vision. Both of these made sense to me. I could certainly understand how the vision could do that, and I could see how it could

## Joyful Obedience

I once heard a pastor tell the following story to illustrate the difference between doing something out of love versus doing it out of duty. He told us to imagine that he, after being married for 50 years, decided to do something special for his wife for their anniversary. For starters, he would get off work a little early, stop by the florist, and pick up 50 red roses, one for each year of marriage. He then would go home, ring the doorbell, and wait for his wife to answer. When she opened the door, there he would be holding all of these flowers, and with a moderate grin across his face, he would say, "Happy anniversary, sweetheart." Now, at this point in the story imagine that the responded by saying, "oh, wow! They're beautiful. You shouldn't have." To which he would say, "but it's my duty as a husband."

While there is certainly nothing wrong with duty per se, I'm sure you can imagine that if you were handed a gift by someone who told you they merely bought the gift out of obligation, I'm guessing you wouldn't feel that honored by it. However, re-imagine that instead of saying that he bought the flowers out of duty, he responds to her statement by saying, "I know I didn't have to, but I couldn't help myself. I love you, and I cherish you and the years we have been married. And because of that, I want to find ways to show that love and joy I have in our marriage. In fact, you get distressed because I have dinner reservations and there is nothing I would rather do than spend the entire evening with you."

Now think about it: in the same actions were performed in both scenarios, but the actions came from two different sources of motivation—one from a sense of duty, the other from love and joy. Again, there is nothing wrong with doing things from a sense of duty, but the goal is to reach the point where we are doing them from a happy and joyful heart. In fact, this relates to God's commands. We should follow the commands not merely out of a sense of duty, but as an overflow of a love for God and our neighbors.

# 3. GOD'S STORY, YOUR STORY.

The final page of each session is intended for personal interaction. It is here that we want you to see how each and every session connects with your life by giving points of application and questions that are engaging and interactive. It is encouraged to not overlook these pages, but to use them for personal growth and discipleship.

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The background of the page is a grayscale image of a weathered, perforated metal surface, possibly a screen or grate. The surface shows signs of wear, including scratches, scuffs, and some dark spots. A horizontal band of vibrant green color runs across the middle of the image, partially overlapping the metal texture. The word "UNIT 1" is written in large, white, sans-serif capital letters across this green band.

# UNIT 1

## UNIT 1

# God First

### ☞ MEMORY VERSE ☞

*“Therefore, love the LORD your God and always keep His mandate and His statutes, ordinances, and commands.” —Deuteronomy 11:1*

Because we often see the Ten Commandments plastered on billboards or engraved in stone in public places, we can begin to think of the Commandments as standing alone—as a portion of the Bible isolated from the rest of the story line. Instead, we ought to see the Commandments within their context of the Old Testament law. The first five books of the Bible are the home of the Ten Commandments, which recounts God’s law for His people.

Is the law still relevant for Christians? Is it a good thing or a bad thing? The apostle Paul said it is good—when used in the right way (1 Tim. 1:8). Pastor Randall Grossman sees the purpose of the law as a map, a muzzle, and a mirror. It’s a map because it guides our behavior and shows us how to live in light of God’s salvation and for His glory. It’s a muzzle because it restrains evil and bad behavior in society. And it’s a mirror because it reflects us and shows us our sin, leading us to recognize our need for our Savior.<sup>1</sup>

As we examine each of the Ten Commandments as well as the purpose of God’s law in general, we’ll see how this law guides our conduct, restrains us from sin, and points us to Jesus. The law is good, Paul said, so let’s see just how good it is and grow in our love for the good God who gave it to us.

*What is your impression of the Ten Commandments? Do you see the law as relevant to your life today?*

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1. Philip Ryken, *Written in Stone* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003), 27.





# SESSION 1

# THE LOVING LAWGIVER

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The Ten Commandments have made the news in recent years. The posting of the Commandments in courtrooms has led to court cases in North America. Some have protested the presence of the Commandments, and others have defended their history and precedent. What's interesting is that in some cases, the Commandments have been removed, while in others, they've been permitted to remain because they are commonly accepted as a cultural artifact no longer binding on judges or juries.

However, throughout Scripture, we see that the law of God is an expression of the love of God. In loving and rescuing His people, He gave them guidelines to maximize their freedom and joy. The law also revealed the people's need for a Savior—One who would fulfill the law and empower His people to trust and obey Him. Those who love God will express their love missionally through loving others.



# The Law of God...



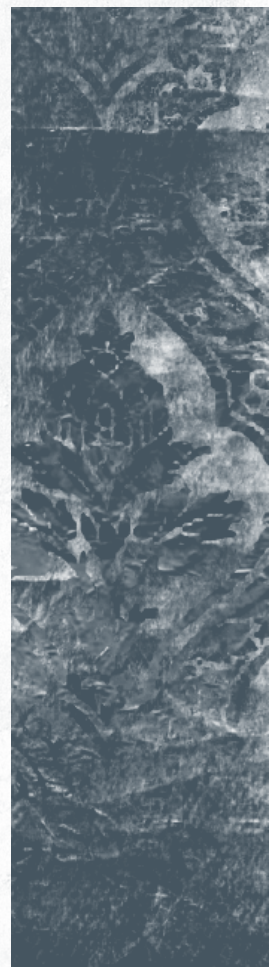
## Begins With Love

Rules get a bad rap sometimes. We tend to think of regulations as unnecessarily confining and restricting, often pointless, and always annoying. But rightly understood, rules do not oppose freedom; they make freedom possible. A home without any rules would mean that the loudest, strongest-willed child would rule the roost, leaving everyone else to no longer have the freedom of a happy, well-balanced home. We may hate it when we reach an intersection and the light turns red, but consider how a city without any traffic signals would cause chaos on the roadways, robbing us all of freedom to drive in safety. In the same way, God's people needed guidelines for their life in the promised land.

The law of God goes beyond His actions for us. It shows us how we are to live in light of God's character. It's not just what He has done, but who He is that guides us.

► What are some examples where rules or laws are given for our good and protection?

► What are the dangers of focusing on God's law apart from His love?





### **Deuteronomy 10:12-13**

*And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you except to fear the LORD your God by walking in all His ways, to love Him, and to worship the LORD your God with all your heart and all your soul? Keep the LORD's commands and statutes I am giving you today, for your own good.*

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## **Loving Boundaries**

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## Corrective Lenses

While growing up, I always thought that my vision was as good as it could be. Even though I never had a professional eye exam, I didn't have any apparent problems with seeing. I was active in sports and other activities that constantly required decent vision on my part, which is partly why I never thought twice about the need for corrective lenses.

It wasn't until I actually went to the eye doctor that I discovered that my vision wasn't quite the 20/20 I had imagined it to be. During the eye exam, it became apparent that I was definitely in need of some sort of corrective lenses. When the contacts finally arrived, I remember, quite literally, what an eye-opening experience it was for me. For the first time in a long time, my vision was nearly perfect. I could see things with such clarity and precision that I was unable to before. How I never noticed that my vision was getting poor was beyond me. The doctor said that most people don't notice it because 1) it is a slow process, and 2) they haven't seen



► **What is your reaction to the command of perfect obedience? Does it make you want to be more disciplined, or does it make you despair? Why?**

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► **Explain that God's Commandments reflect His holy character. What can we learn about ourselves when we reflect on God's perfection?**

how their current vision fails in comparison to standard vision. Both of these made sense to me—I could certainly understand how the process could be slow enough to go unnoticed, and I could certainly identify with what it felt like to put corrective lenses on and realize that my current vision failed to meet the standard.

With new lenses came new clarity and precision. They were able to show just how far my eyesight fell short of what it should have been. Likewise, God's commandments are much the same way. They function very much like corrective lenses in that they allow us to see more clearly where we have failed and the standard we were intended to live according to. In short, they offer a more precise picture of reality and of ourselves, as well as the holy character that is reflected in God's law.





## Ends With Love

Love is the point of everything. To love is to fulfill the law. Paul turned to several of the Ten Commandments to show how love will lead us to keep these Commands. When we love God, we love our neighbor. When we love God and neighbor, we delight in keeping the Commandments.

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► **What is the relationship between our love for God and our love for others? How should love for others impact our motivation for evangelism and service?**

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### **Romans 13:8-10**

*Do not owe anyone anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments: Do not commit adultery; do not murder; do not steal; do not covet; and whatever other commandment—all are summed up by this: Love your neighbor as yourself.*

► **What does it say about our belief in Christ if we continually break God's laws?**



► **Why is it important to obey God out of a heart that wants to and not merely out of a heart that has to?**

## Joyful Obedience

I once heard a pastor tell the following story to illustrate the difference between doing something out of love versus doing it out of duty. He told us to imagine that he, after being married for 50 years, decided to do something special for his wife for their anniversary. For starters, he would get off work a little early, stop by the florist, and pick up 50 red roses, one for each year of marriage. He then would go home, ring the doorbell, and wait for his wife to answer. When she opened the door, there he would be holding all of these flowers, and with a moderate grin across his face, he would say, “happy anniversary, sweetheart.” Now, at this point in the story imagine that she responded by saying, “oh, wow! They’re beautiful. You shouldn’t have.” To which he would say, “but it’s my duty as a husband.”

While there is certainly nothing wrong with duty per se, I’m sure you can imagine that if you were handed a gift by someone who told you they merely bought the gift out of obligation, I’m guessing you wouldn’t feel that honored by it. However, re-imagine that instead of saying that he bought the flowers out of duty, he responds to her statement by saying, “I know I didn’t have to, but I couldn’t help myself. I love you, and I cherish you and the years we have been married. And because of that, I want to find ways to show that love and joy I have in our marriage. In fact, go get dressed because I have dinner reservations and there is nothing I would rather do than spend the entire evening with you.”

Now think about it: the same actions were performed in both scenarios, but the actions came from two different sources of motivation—one from a sense of duty, the other from love and joy. Again, there is nothing wrong with doing things from a sense of duty, but the goal is to reach the point where we are doing them from a happy and joyful heart. In fact, this relates to God’s Commands. We should follow the Commands not merely out of a sense of duty, but as an overflow of a love for God and our neighbors.



# GOD'S STORY, YOUR STORY

Have you ever felt that rules and regulations were designed to restrict your freedom? Have you ever felt that rules were intended to minimize your joy and happiness? Hopefully you don't believe that good and healthy rules were intended to work against you in any way. In fact, as this session points out, rules and commands actually intend to protect you and increase your freedom and joy.

*Have you ever had the impression that God's commands are restrictive and burdensome? Why or why not?*

By understanding that God's law begins and ends with a heart of love, we begin to repair the distorted image we may have regarding God and His Commands. Instead of seeing God's Commands as suppressive and restrictive, this session helps us to see how God's Commands are a way to love and bless His people.

*How does this session change the way you see the Ten Commandments? Why is it important to understand God's purposes behind them?*

God's Commands are not only a way for God to love and bless His people, but are also a reflection of the moral character of God Himself. By seeing the beauty reflected in God's laws, we get to be exposed to the beauty of the One who created them. Seeing His beauty not only gives us a better understanding of who He is, but also a greater love for Him as we seek to walk in His ways.

*Why is it important to see God's Commands as flowing from His character? How does this change the way we see them?*