

Ellen G. White Estate

MY JOURNEY TO LIFE

# GOD'S LAW

*The Law: Our anchor to the will of God.*

**STEP 18 OF 28**



## My Journey to Life, Step 18

### Foreword

*My Journey to Life* will give you the keys for finding peace of mind, harmony of body, and success in relationships. Every step will transform your outlook as you unpack each lesson. We pray they will help you to fall in love with the greatest Teacher this world has ever known. So together, let’s walk the pathway step-by-step to a new life in Jesus.

### Preface

Every government has rules and principles by which it operates; God’s government is no different. Let’s explore the timeless principles of God’s law, the foundation upon which His kingdom is built, and which reflects His own values and character.

## Step Eighteen—God’s Law

**The Law: Our anchor to the will of God** “The great principles of God’s law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God’s love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are the basis of God’s covenant with His people and the standard in God’s judgment. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sin and awaken a sense of need for a Savior. Salvation is all of grace and not of works, and its fruit is obedience to the Commandments. This obedience develops Christian character and results in a sense of well-being. It is evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow human beings. The obedience of faith demonstrates the power of Christ to transform lives and therefore strengthens Christian witness.” — *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 269

**Bible Discovery:** Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 28:1-14; Psalm 19:7-14; 40:7, 8; Matthew 5:17-20; 22:36-40; John 14:15; 15:7-10; Romans 8:3, 4; Ephesians 2:8-10; Hebrews 8:8-10; 1 John 2:3; 5:3; Revelation 12:17; 14:12

**Further Reading:** Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 146.2

**1. What is meant by the “Law of God?”** Although we often consider the law of God to include the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17) and the Torah (the Pentateuch), comprising the first five books of the Old Testament, the law of God is integrated throughout Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, an overarching demonstration of grace and God’s covenant with His people.

The decalogue, or moral law, is spiritual and eternal. It reveals God’s heart and shows His character of love. God’s Ten Commandments transcend time and place. Their principles are for all people and are as permanent and enduring as God Himself. Ultimately, this law must be viewed in the light of Calvary, the central event of earth’s history.

The Bible also contains other kinds of laws, such as ceremonial, civil, health, environmental and community laws. Though some of these laws were applicable to a specific time and circumstance, they were nonetheless practical extensions of the Decalogue. Whether of universal application, like the Ten Commandments, or applicable only in certain times and places, like civil law for the nation of Israel, all are *torah*: divine instruction for God's people.

**Bible Discovery:** Genesis 26:4, 5; Exodus 19:4-6; Psalm 19:7, 8, 11; Romans 7:14

**Further Reading:** Ellen White, *Bible Echo*, April 16, 1894, par. 12; *The Great Controversy*, p. 434.1

**2. How can the law of God be perpetual and enduring for all people, if it was fulfilled at the cross at the beginning of the new covenant?** The new covenant is older than the old covenant! It was given by God to Adam and Eve in Eden when they failed to obey, and God gave them the promise of the Messiah to come (Genesis 3:15). Israel promised to keep the law of God at Sinai, but unfortunately, they failed to rely on the power of God and instead relied on their own strength.

The ancient Jews focused a great deal on the law of Moses, but not in faith, and thus failed to achieve righteousness. While attempting to become righteous through the law, they did not see Christ as the One to whom the law of Moses pointed.

The new covenant did not do away with God's Ten Commandments; rather, Christ's death on the cross now becomes our motivation for obedience and His holiness becomes ours through faith. Now Jesus provides forgiveness and redemption from sin, writes His law on our hearts, and we delight to do His will by obeying His commandments.

**Bible Discovery:** Exodus 19:8; 24:3, 7; Ezekiel 11:19, 20; Jeremiah 31:33; Matthew 5:17; John 1:12; 14:15; Romans 9:30; 10:4; Hebrews 10:16

**Further Reading:** Ellen White, *Review and Herald*, February 4, 1890, pars. 4, 6; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 70.1

**3. Does Colossians 2:13, 14 mean that the Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross and are thus no longer binding for us?** The verses say nothing about God's moral law being nailed to the cross! What Christ *did* end at the cross was the *condemnation* of the law. He took the death that should have been ours because of our sin (Romans 6:23). The law condemns us, but when we accept Jesus as our Savior and Lord, we have a new heart and a new standing before God!

One aspect of God's laws that culminated at the cross was the ceremonial law. All the sacrifices Israel made were to help them look in faith toward the Messiah to come, the Lamb of

God, a sacrifice planned from the foundation of the world in the event of humanity's sin. The ancient sacrifices pointed *forward* to the cross of Christ. The spiritual ritual that helps us look *backward* to the death and resurrection of Jesus is baptism (1 Peter 3:20, 21).

Nowhere does the Bible state that Christians saved by faith no longer need to keep the law. The Ten Commandments reflect God's character of love. They were known as the Tree of Life to ancient Israel, a transcript of His will for all areas of life. Just as a colossal, well-rooted tree offers protection, so the Ten Commandments root the people of God in covenant relationship with its Author forever.

**Bible Discovery:** Romans 3:31; 6:3, 4; 8:1; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Hebrews 13:8; Revelation 13:8

**Further Reading:** Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 365.1; *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 394.1

**4. Did the law exist before God wrote it on tables of stone at Sinai?** The law existed long before God gave the Decalogue to Israel. If it did not, there could have been no sin before Sinai, "for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4, KJV). That Lucifer and his angels sinned gives evidence of the presence of the law even before Creation.

When God created Adam and Eve in His image, He implanted the moral principles of the law in their minds, making it natural for them to do His will. Their transgression introduced sin into the human family.

Here are some examples of the Law before Sinai from the book of Genesis:

- Genesis 35:1-4 (first and second commandment)
- Genesis 2:1-3 (fourth commandment)
- Genesis 18:19 (fifth commandment)
- Genesis 4:8-11 (sixth commandment)
- Genesis 39:7-9 (seventh commandment)
- Genesis 3:6-17 (eighth and tenth commandment)

God said of Abraham, well before Sinai, that he "obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws" (Genesis 26:5).

Perhaps the strongest argument for existence of law before Sinai is the existence of death, which exists only as a consequence of sin (Romans 5:14, 16). There could be no sin or judgment if law did not exist. Yet clearly, there were sinners before Sinai!

**Bible Discovery:** Exodus 16:28; 18:16; Romans 4:15; 5:12; 2 Peter 2:4

**Further Reading:** Ellen White, *The Signs of the Times*, April 15, 1886, par. 14

**5. Did Jesus replace the Ten Commandments with a new commandment based on love (Matthew 22:37-40)?** In this passage, Jesus summarizes the Ten Commandment law written by His own finger on stone at Sinai. The first four of the Ten Commandments focus on how to demonstrate our love for God (Deuteronomy 6:5) and the last six show how to love our neighbor (Leviticus 19:18). Jesus “fulfilled the law” by demonstrating through His earthly life how we can love God as well as our neighbor through living out the Ten Commandments.

Interestingly, rabbinical tradition taught that wherever two commandments conflicted, obedience to the greater would release the person from obeying the lesser. In contrast, Jesus held to no hierarchy within the law. It is as important to keep the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11) as it is to refrain from murder (Exodus 20:13). It is as important to love our neighbor—even the outcast and the foreigner—as it is to love God.

Such an encompassing love that requires from us heart, spirit, and mind—indeed, total submission—can only be carried out through the power of Christ living in us.

**Bible Discovery:** Isaiah 42:21; Jerimiah 31:3; Matthew 25:37-40; Romans 13:10; Colossians 3:2, 9; James 2:10

**Further Reading:** Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 307.4 - 308.1

**6. If we are saved by faith, is keeping the law of God still necessary?** It is not our faith that saves us; it is God’s grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). Paul adds that we are not saved “by works” (v.9), but “for good works” (v.10). No one is saved by their works, even their good works in keeping God’s commandments, but only through Christ (Galatians 2:16). We keep God’s commandments in response to the incredible grace God extends to us as we accept His sacrifice on Calvary on our behalf.

Salvation was also by grace through faith for the Old Testament people. God does not have two methods to save! Before Christ’s death on the cross, believers looked forward to His sacrifice by faith. Today faith looks backward to Christ’s sacrifice. Jesus has and will always be the only means of salvation.

However, the act of faith in reaching out to accept the salvation freely offered by Jesus does not negate His law. Paul says, “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid” (Romans 3:31). The cross of Christ itself is the greatest proof that the Ten Commandments have not been abolished. If the Commandments were not still valid, there would be no sin (1 John 3:4), and no need for a Redeemer. At the cross, Christ paid the demands of the law. Thus, He did not come to take away the law, but rather the condemnation of the law.

**Bible Discovery:** Acts 4:12; Romans 2:13; 3:20; 5:6-21; 6:1, 14, 15; Titus 3:5

**Further Reading:** Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 308.3

**7. What does it mean to be free from the condemnation or curse of the law?** Scripture teaches that the wages, or consequences, of sin is death. Jesus took the death that should have been ours in consequence of our sin, that we could have the life that is His. It is not the law itself that

is cursed, or even disobedience to it, because Jesus Himself became “a curse for us” in that He took upon Himself the divine judgment for sin. He died in place of the accursed ones.

Christ did not remove the law or obedience to the law by His death; He removed the curse, the “wages of sin,” which is eternal death. In this way, He provides us with freedom from the curse of the law. When we accept His death on our behalf, we are liberated from the curse of the law, become adopted into the family of God, and receive everything that belongs to God as His “heirs.”

**Bible Discovery:** Leviticus 18:1-5; Deuteronomy 27:26; Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 6:23; Galatians 3:13; 4:5-7

**Further Reading:** Ellen White, *Signs of the Times*, September 5, 1892, pars. 3, 4

**8. What is the purpose of the Ten Commandments?** The triune God created humanity to participate in their fellowship, acceptance, and holiness. That oneness is based on the principles of love that are the very fabric of God’s Ten Commandments.

As the expression of God’s character and love, the Ten Commandments reveal His will and purpose for humanity. They are the basis of God’s covenant—His promise to be our faithful God if we will be His faithful people. The law regulates our conscience and sets the standard of righteousness. This is important, because our conscience can become warped or seared if it is not set by God’s great standard—His law.

The law, then, points out sin in our lives, shows us our true condition, and serves as an agent to lead us to Jesus, our Savior. The law becomes the instrument the Holy Spirit uses to bring us to conversion.

**Bible Discovery:** Deuteronomy 9:9; Psalm 19:7; Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14; Matthew 19:17; Romans 7:7; James 1:23-25; 1 Corinthians 8:7, 12

**Further Reading:** Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, August 5, 1886, par. 2

**9. In Old Testament times God often blessed nations and individuals in proportion to their obedience to His law. Is that principle still true today?** Scripture pronounces “blessed” are all “who walk in the law of the Lord,” not just those from a certain time period. “Righteousness exalts a nation,” Scripture says, and a “throne is established by righteousness” (Proverbs 14:34; 16:12). In contrast, those who refused to obey God’s commandments encountered calamities. Though no one can earn salvation by obedience to the law, there are nevertheless blessings given to those who obey.

Let’s consider some of these blessings:

- A transformation into the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:7, 18)
- Insight and wisdom (Psalm 119:98, 99)

- Peace (Psalm 119:165)
- Righteousness (Deuteronomy 6:25)
- A pure and moral life (Proverbs 7:1-5)
- Knowledge of the truth (John 7:17)
- Protection against disease (Exodus 15:26)
- Longevity (Proverbs 3:1, 2)
- Assurance of answered prayer (1 John 3:22)
- Liberation and freedom from sin (2 Corinthians 3:7, 16, 17)

**Bible Discovery:** Leviticus 26:3-10; Deuteronomy 28; Psalm 66:18; 89:31, 32; Psalm 119:1, 45; Proverbs 3:33; 4:10, 22; Isaiah 48:18; James 2:8-12; 1 Peter 2:2

**Further Reading:** Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 308.1

**10. What is the relationship between the law and the gospel?** The law is an agency that leads us to recognize our need of a Savior. It points out our sin and selfishness and provides a solution in Jesus. The law can be compared to a mirror. The mirror shows us where we are dirty, but it doesn’t clean us up! In the same way, we discover our sinfulness by looking into the law of God, but we look for cleansing to the cross of Calvary, “the blood of the Lamb.”

Imagine all of us as sinners gathered figuratively at the foot of Mount Sinai. As we hear God Himself declare in peals of thunder the Ten Commandments as the standard of righteousness, we come under conviction of sin and realize that our hopeless condition will lead to eternal death.

Then Jesus leads us figuratively to Mount Calvary, where we find the Good News of salvation through faith in the atoning life and death of Jesus. Hope fills our souls, and in faith we reach out to our Savior, who extends to us the gift of everlasting life. No wonder we are then eager to obey, to respond in grateful obedience to God’s amazing grace and unfathomable love!

**Bible Discovery:** Psalm 19:7; Zechariah 13:1; John 3:16; 14:15; Galatians 3:24; Revelation 7:14

**Further Reading:** Ellen White, *The Review and Herald*, September 2, 1890, par. 6

**11. What role does God’s law play in end time events?** The Bible reveals that God’s law is the object of Satan’s attacks throughout human history, and his war against it will reach its climax just prior to the second advent. Prophecy reveals that Satan will lead the vast majority of people to disobey God’s commandments, particularly the Sabbath commandment (Exodus 20:8-11). This attack is evidence of the law’s continuing significance in the plan of salvation. The attacking power will not, however, succeed in eliminating the law, because the judgment will

destroy that power.

When John describes the remnant, the faithful Christians of the end time, he points specifically to their keeping the commandments of God through their faith in Jesus. In preparation for the second advent, God’s people proclaim the gospel, calling others to worship the Lord as Creator and honor the memorial of His creation, the seventh-day Sabbath. Those who worship God in love will obey Him; as John said: “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).

Prior to God’s final judgment and plagues against the disobedient (Revelation 16), the temple in heaven will be opened. There the ark of God’s covenant, the theme of the Scriptural narrative, is opened to reveal the original of the Ten Commandment law. This is a fitting picture of the magnification of God’s law as the standard of judgment. The timing of God’s final judgments on the world relates to the opening of the heavenly temple with its focus on the Ten Commandments, a final witness to humanity of divine will.

**Bible Discovery:** Daniel 7:11, 25, 26-28; Revelation 11:18, 19; 12:9, 17; 14:6, 7, 12; 15:5; 21:7, 8

**Further Reading:** Ellen White, *Signs of the Times*, March 12, 1896, par. 4

**12. How can I love God’s Law?** David speaks of the Law being a delight, and the subject of his meditation day and night (Psalm 1:2). As we come to understand how much Christ valued the law and magnified it in His life, we will be eager to follow His example. Increasingly, we will see the beauty, perfection, and expressions of God’s love in His commandments. The law, while pointing out our sin, invites us to come to Jesus who enables us to joyfully obey His commandments. Christ offers to be yoked together with us. The yoke is His law which binds us to the will of God. As He writes the law on our hearts, obedience becomes a delight and privilege.

The law calls us to personal commitment, not to a legal institution, but to God Himself. The commands of the law are themselves also promises of what God will do for us if open our hearts to receive Him. His glory, His holiness, His love are all embodied in the commandments. As we come to know Him as He is and see how He lived out the principles of the law in His self-sacrificing earthly life, we long to enter an ever-deepening fellowship and connection with Him. The law’s unique task is to safeguard and maintain this vital connection with our heavenly family—the Father, who loves us, the Son, who died for us, and the Holy Spirit, our Guide through life.

**Bible Discovery:** Psalm 40:8; Matthew 11:29, 30; 19:7; John 15:4; Hebrews 10:5, 7

**Further Reading:** Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, pp. 233.3-234.1; *Maranatha*, p. 79.2-3



**Reflection...**

God's law is not simply a long list of dos and don'ts preventing us from living free. Rather, it is a beautiful expression of God's loving grace, freeing us from the bonds of sin. The ten commandments begin with God's deliverance of His people. It is the call to hope and freedom to live by his loving life principles.

**Next Step...**

A relationship with God that is rooted in love will not simply perform the minimum requirements of the relationship but will also do those things that are pleasing in His sight. In our next step, we'll explore some often-overlooked principles that help us to live an abundant life in Christ.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What is the relationship between God's law and grace? (Eph. 2:8-10)
2. What is your understanding of "having nailed it to the cross?" (Col. 2:14)
3. In what way do the Ten Commandments express God's character of love? (Exodus 20:2)

**Further Reading**

Official Adventist Website: <https://adventist.org/the-law-of-god>

**Contact Information**

Ellen G. White Estate: [mail@whiteestate.org](mailto:mail@whiteestate.org)

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