

Gathering Question: How often do you read the Ten Commandments and think about how they relate to your life? Do you think that is a profitable thing to do for Christians? Why or why not? Which of the Ten Commandments seem to give you the most difficulties?

God's Law and My Life

John Wesley once wrote in his journal, "I am a Bible bigot. I follow it in all things, both great and small. Do you agree with Wesley? Should *everything* the Bible says still be followed today? If the Old Testament did not exist, what would be missing in our knowledge of God?

If you think that Jesus came to do away with the Law and the Prophets (what we commonly know as the Old Testament) you are wrong. Jesus makes that clear from the beginning of his ministry. What God has given us in the law is perfect. In fact, in the Sermon on the Mount and especially in this passage, Jesus makes it clear that he did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it. That is amazing when you begin to hear what Jesus has to say about the real meaning of the law.

The Law represents God's perfect way for humans to live. The Law is not a bad thing. The problem is that we are imperfect and unable to live up to the Law's requirements. To demonstrate to us the Law for what it really is, Jesus will point out to the people listening to him that what they always thought the Law required is not nearly what it truly requires for a person to be righteous in the sight of God.

Keeping the righteous requirements of the Law is a part of God's expectation for his people. If you keep the law and teach others to do so, you will be considered great in the Kingdom of Heaven! And then he ends with an incredible statement and a challenge. Unless our righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and the Pharisees, we will *never* enter the Kingdom of Heaven! Wow! What could that mean?

Read:

Matthew 5:17-20

Reflect:

1. This passage naturally divides into two parts, verses 17-18 and verses 19-20. What does each part emphasize?
2. Why do some people think Jesus came to abolish the Law and the Prophets?
3. How does our response to the Law determine our status in the Kingdom of God?
4. The Scribes and Pharisees were very zealous about law keeping. How can our righteousness possibly exceed theirs?
5. How do you understand Jesus' words in this passage in view of the grace of God?