

# The **Bible** Unpacked

## **Comprehensive Study Series**

The Bible's teaching presented  
for Bible students

Paul Mallison



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## **Comprehensive Study Series**

The Bible's teaching presented  
for Bible students

### **23. Loving, Fearing and Obeying God**

Paul Mallison

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This copy made: 18-Nov-17.

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## A Quick Word

This series of studies aims to present a compilation of the Bible's teachings in a clear and readable order. There are 40 booklets in the series, based on the 40 chapters of the book *The Bible Unpacked - Comprehensive Edition*. Each booklet has two sections, which can be used for two or more studies.

See *Topics in This Series* towards the end of this booklet for a full listing of all the topics. Note that studying booklets alternatively from the two major sections (*What to Know* and *What to Do*) would add variety.

The material contains Bible verses. Before the verses are headings, which reflect what the verses say – in particular the parts of the verses in *italics*. The verses are sometimes followed by a comment.

The verses often have a brief introduction. Usually these state who is speaking and often who they are speaking to. Apart from God and Jesus Christ, the main speakers are:

- Moses – who led the Israelites and taught them God's laws;
- David – Israel's greatest king who wrote many of the psalms, most of which are essentially prayers;
- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and other prophets – who spoke to the people of Israel on God's behalf; and
- Paul, Peter, John and other leaders of the early church – who spoke to various groups and wrote letters to believers.

Much care has been taken in order to correctly interpret the verses. Nevertheless, if you encounter a verse that is used to teach something that is contrary to or goes beyond your understanding, assess its use by doing such things as: reading the passage it is from; and considering how its teaching fits in with Scripture as a whole (e.g. interpret OT teaching in the light of NT teaching).

For more information on *The Bible Unpacked* and free downloads, go to the website: [www.thebibleunpacked.net](http://www.thebibleunpacked.net).

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## Suggestions for Study Groups

### Preliminary matters:

- Beforehand the leader should: check the context of any verses they are not familiar with; and review the questions. If need be, they should compose questions more applicable to the group.
- Each person should have a Bible, for things such as checking a verse's context. It would also be helpful to have Bible commentaries on hand.
- Pray before beginning the study. Ask God for help in understanding the meaning of the verses and to affect your lives through them. Also pray together at the end.

### Doing the study:

- Ideally, read the material and answer the questions prior to the meeting. Then share answers and discuss any issues arising from the material in the meeting.
- Alternatively, read the material and answer the questions in the meeting – reading either aloud as a group or individually (prior to sharing answers). If reading as a group, **try having one person read the headings, another read the verses and another read the comments.** Additionally, a fourth person could read the Bible references.

### General or concluding questions:

If time permits, conclude with one or more of the following questions:

- What is something that you either: **did not know** before; gained **greater insight** into; or **needed reminding** of?
- What verse would be helpful to memorize and bear in mind during the next week?
- In taking the verses seriously, is there anything you should change in:
  - (a) how you relate to God and/or to other people; or
  - (b) any other area of your life (e.g. attitudes, values or behavior)?

If so, are there any specific steps you could take to do this?



# I. Loving and Fearing God

Love and fear are two emotions or attitudes that we should have towards God, and arguably they stand alone as such. The Bible states that loving God is of the utmost importance. Fearing God is also shown to be critical. Like loving God, understanding and having the fear of God that the Bible teaches helps and benefits us in many ways.

Note that both love and fear of God are closely associated with obeying him (the theme of the second half of this chapter). They are very strong, compelling emotions and provide the primary emotional stimuli for obeying God (cf. Deut 10:12–13) – supplementing intellectual stimuli arising out of such things as faith. Moreover, the Bible indicates that our love and fear of God are actually expressed primarily in obeying him.

## a) Love God

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### Love God . . .

**Ps 31:23A** *Love the LORD, all you faithful followers of his!* NET

**Ps 116:1** [A PSALMIST:] *I love the LORD, because he has heard my prayer for mercy.* ISV

### . . . and love Jesus Christ

**EPH 6:24** *Grace be with all of those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.* NET

### Also, love and treasure God's word

**Ps 119:97, 140, 165** [A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *O how I love your law! All day long I meditate on it. ...* <sup>140</sup>*Your word is absolutely pure, and your servant loves it! ...* <sup>165</sup>*Those who love your law are completely secure; nothing causes them to stumble.* NET

**JOB 23:12** [JOB:] *I have not left his commands behind. I have treasured his words in my heart.* GW

### Love for God and Jesus Christ is shown by obeying them . . .

**1JN 5:3** *We show our love for God by obeying his commandments, and they are not hard to follow.* CEV

**JOHN 14:23–24** *Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and take up residence with him. <sup>24</sup>The person who does not love me does not obey my words. And the word you hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me.* NET

**1KI 3:3A** *Solomon showed he loved the LORD by following the commands his father David had given him ...* NCV™

### . . . and it is linked with loving and caring for other Christians

**1JN 5:1** *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is God's child, and whoever loves the Father also loves the Father's children.* NCV™

**HEB 6:10** [THE WRITER, TO BELIEVERS:] *For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love you have demonstrated for his name, in having served and continuing to serve the saints.* NET

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What do you love and treasure about God's word?

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How does one love God?

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How can you love God more?

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Pray for persecuted Christians

## b) The Importance of Loving God

### Loving God is of the utmost importance

**MATT 22:37–40** Jesus said to him, “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*”<sup>38</sup>*This is the first and greatest commandment.* <sup>39</sup>The second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ <sup>40</sup>*All the law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.*” NET

### God and Jesus Christ love those who love them

**NEH 1:5** And I [Nehemiah] said, “O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome *God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him* and keep his commandments, ... ESV

**JOHN 14:21B** [JESUS:] *The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him* and will reveal myself to him. NET

Note that the last clause refers to Jesus Christ revealing himself to those who love him, along with loving them.

### God cares for those who love him

**Ps 91:14–15** *God says, “I will save those who love me and will protect those who acknowledge me as LORD.* <sup>15</sup>*When they call to me, I will answer them; when they are in trouble, I will be with them. I will rescue them and honor them.*” GNT

**Ps 145:20** *The LORD protects those who love him,* but he destroys all the wicked. NET

### Various spiritual blessings from loving God . . .

**ROM 8:28** And we know that *for those who love God all things work together for good,* for those who are called according to his purpose.

ESV

**1COR 8:3** *But if someone loves God, he is known by God.* NET

God of course knows everything about all people, but he knows his own people in a unique way in that he has a personal, intimate relationship with them – which may be what Paul has in mind here. A related interpretation is that “known by God” refers to being recognized by God as one of his own.

**. . . Blessings in the afterlife from loving God**

**JAMES 2:5** Listen, my dear brothers and sisters! Did not God choose the poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of *the kingdom that he promised to those who love him?* NET

**1COR 2:9** But as it is written, “*No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined the things that God has prepared for those who love him.*” ISV

Note that as well as blessings of the afterlife, this is probably also referring to – or at least is applicable to – blessings of the present life.

Why do you think that, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37) is the greatest commandment?

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Choose a blessing/benefit of loving God that you particularly value or inspires you to love God – and say why.

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If God loves the whole world, in what different way/sense does he love those who love him and Jesus Christ?

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## c) Fear God

Fearing God is more than just having reverence for him. A sound appreciation of God's holiness and wrath, along with his supreme power, produces a genuine fear of incurring his displeasure. But this does not involve anxiety or terror for those who seek to please him and who understand his grace.

Clearly, fearing God moves us to obey him. It also evokes and supplements such things as worship and service, and even trust (cf. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*). When we grasp the concepts involved and willingly do fear God, we learn to gladly do so, even treasuring verses that call on us to fear God.

### Fear and be in awe of God

**1PET 1:17** If you call "Father" the one who judges everyone impartially according to what he has done, *you must live in the fear of the Lord* as long as you are strangers here [on earth]. ISV

**Ps 33:8** *Let the whole earth fear the LORD! Let all who live in the world stand in awe of him!* NET

### Fear God to the extent that you tremble before him . . .

**Ps 119:120A** [A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *My flesh trembles out of fear of you,* and I am in awe of your judgments. ISV

**Ps 96:9** Worship the LORD in holy attire! *Tremble before him, all the earth!* NET

### . . . and tremble at God's word

**ISA 66:2B** [GOD:] I will pay attention to those who are humble and sorry for their sins and who *tremble at my word.* GW

### Do not fear anyone or anything but God

**MATT 10:28** *Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Instead, fear the one who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.* NET

**ISA 8:12-13** [GOD, TO ISAIAH:] People are saying that others make plans against them, but you should not believe them. *Don't be afraid*

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*of what they fear; do not dread those things.* <sup>13</sup>*But remember that the LORD All-Powerful is holy. He is the one you should fear; he is the one you should dread.* NCV™

Note that if a person truly fears God, they are practically unable to fear anyone or anything else.

**Note: God's people should not live in fear of his punishment**

**1JN 4:16B–18** [JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] God is love, and those who live in love live in union with God and God lives in union with them. <sup>17</sup>*Love is made perfect in us in order that we may have courage on Judgment Day; and we will have it because our life in this world is the same as Christ's.* <sup>18</sup>*There is no fear in love; perfect love drives out all fear. So then, love has not been made perfect in anyone who is afraid, because fear has to do with punishment.* GNT

In v. 18 "love" appears to be referring to the love of God that is manifested in the Christian – the love that God has for them and they in turn show to others (v. 16), revealing themselves to be like God or Christ (v. 17b). Knowing and expressing such love drives out anxious fear of punishment from God (v. 18) – particularly as those who live in love live in God, and God in them (v. 16b). Knowledge of such love cannot coexist with anxious fear of God's punishment; they are incompatible, both logically and experientially. As such we can look towards Judgment Day with courage and confidence (v. 17).

Having a godly fear of God's punishment is a good thing, as it leads us to spurn sin and to not turn away from God. However, living with God's love – and under his grace – believers ought not to live in anxious fear of God's punishment.

Do you think Christians should fear God? Should they tremble before him or simply have reverence for him?

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What differences are there between fearing God and fearing other people or things?

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Explain why believers should not live in fear of God's punishment.

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Pray for persecuted Christians

## d) Why God Should Be Feared

### God's surpassing greatness and sovereignty

**JER 10:6–7** *There is none like you, O LORD; you are great, and your name is great in might. <sup>7</sup>Who would not fear you, O King of the nations? For this is your due; for among all the wise ones of the nations and in all their kingdoms there is none like you.* ESV

### God's great deeds, . . .

**1SAM 12:24** *However, fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. Just look at the great things he has done for you!* NET

### . . . including God's creative work and control over nature

**Ps 33:8–9** *Let the whole earth fear the LORD! Let all who live in the world stand in awe of him! <sup>9</sup>For he spoke, and it came into existence, he issued the decree, and it stood firm.* NET

**JOSH 4:23–24** [JOSHUA, TO THE ISRAELITES:] *The LORD your God dried up the Jordan ahead of you until you had crossed, as he did to the Red Sea until we had crossed. <sup>24</sup>The LORD did this so that everyone in the world would know his mighty power and that you would fear the LORD your God every day of your life.* GW

### God's anger and judgment

**Ps 76:7–9** [A psalmist, to God:] *But you, you are to be feared! Who can stand before you when once your anger is roused? <sup>8</sup>From the heavens you uttered judgment; the earth feared and was still, <sup>9</sup>when God arose to establish judgment, to save all the humble of the earth.* SELAH ESV

### God's holiness

**REV 15:4A** *Who will not fear you, O Lord, and glorify your name, because you alone are holy?* NET

God's holiness involves his separateness from and intolerance of that which is morally impure, with the latter leading to his judgment. Thus God's holiness – awesome in itself – and its grave implications give good reason to fear him.

### God's love . . .

**Ps 33:18** Behold, *the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, ...* ESV

This associates fearing God and having one's hope in God's love. Arguably it suggests that God's love towards his people is a reason why they fear him.

### . . . and God's forgiveness

**Ps 130:4** [A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *But with you there is forgiveness, so that you may be feared.* ISV

Without God's forgiveness the fear of God that the Bible commands would not be possible – it being a fear which encompasses (among other things) worship, service and even longing for God. In place of it there would only be terror.

State one thing God has done that particularly inspires you to fear him – if possible something great he has done for you. Say why or how it inspires you to fear him.

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How mindful should we be of God's anger and judgment? To what extent should they move us to fear God?

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Which of the reasons given in the text stimulates you the most to fear God? Why?

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Pray for persecuted Christians

## e) The Importance of Fearing God (I): Godly Living

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### Fearing God is closely associated with obeying him

**ECCL 12:13** [A WISE TEACHER:] Having heard everything, I have reached this conclusion: *Fear God and keep his commandments*, because this is the whole duty of man. NET

Fear of God and obedience of God are often spoken of in conjunction with each other, to the point where it would appear they are inseparable in practice. A key reason for this close relationship is that fear of God, with an appreciation of his power and wrath, is a great stimulus to obeying him.

### Fear for God is associated with righteous living . . .

**ACTS 10:35** Indeed, the person who *fears him and does what is right* is acceptable to him in any nation. ISV

### . . . Fearing God compels one to avoid sin and evil

**EX 20:20** Moses said to the people, “Don’t be afraid, for God has come to test you, *so the fear of him may be present with you in order that you don’t sin.*” ISV

**PROV 16:6** By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and *by the fear of the LORD one turns away from evil.* ESV

### Fearing God ensures we deal rightly with others

**LEV 25:17, 43** [GOD, TO THE ISRAELITES:] *You shall not wrong one another, but you shall fear your God*, for I am the LORD your God. ...  
<sup>43</sup>*You shall not rule over him [a servant] ruthlessly but shall fear your God.* ESV

### Not fearing God is linked with ungodliness – and the consequences

**PS 36:1** *An evil man is rebellious to the core. He does not fear God, ...*  
NET

**PS 55:19** [A PSALMIST, SPEAKING OF WICKED ENEMIES:] *God will give ear and humble them*, he who is enthroned from of old, *because they do not change and do not fear God.* ISV

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How does fearing God help us to obey him?

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How could you utilize the fear of God to help you avoid sin?

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What do you think the writer of *Amazing Grace* meant when he wrote: "T'was grace that taught my heart to fear. And grace, my fears relieved"?

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Pray for persecuted Christians

## f) The Importance of Fearing God (II): Blessings

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### God delivers and protects those who fear him

**PS 33:18–19** Behold, *the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love,* <sup>19</sup>*that he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine.* ESV

**PROV 14:26** *In the fear of the LORD one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge.* ESV

### Fear of God leads to life

**PROV 19:23** *Fearing the LORD leads to life, and one who does so will live satisfied; he will not be afflicted by calamity.* NET

OT verses (such as this one) which speak of fearing God leading to “life”, generally have in view: life as opposed to premature death; and/or a fullness of life.

### Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom

**PS 111:10** *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding.* His praise endures forever! ISV

### Further present-day blessings of fearing God

**PS 103:11, 13** *For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; ...* <sup>13</sup>*As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.* ESV

**ACTS 10:34–35** Then Peter started speaking: “I now truly understand that God does not show favoritism in dealing with people, <sup>35</sup>*but in every nation the person who fears him and does what is right is welcomed before him.* NET

### Future blessings for those who fear God

**MAL 3:16–17** Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and *a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name.* <sup>17</sup>*“They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts,*

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*in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him.* ESV

**REV 11:18** [LOUD VOICES IN HEAVEN, TO GOD:] The nations were angry, but your wrath has come. *It is time for the dead to be judged— to reward your servants, the prophets, the saints, and all who fear your name, both unimportant and important, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.* ISV

Both of the above passages have the day of God's final judgment in view.

Why is the fear of God the beginning of wisdom (cf. Ps 111:10)?

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Why does God show love and compassion to those who fear him (cf. Ps 103:11, 13)?

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In addition to the reasons given in this and the previous section, what other reasons can you think of for why fearing God is important or helpful?

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# II. Obeying God

## See also:

- *The Need to Obey God*, Ch. 21

The concept of obeying God permeates the whole Bible – the New Testament as well as the Old Testament. It is fundamental to a functional and healthy relationship with God. A related concept is that of following Jesus Christ, which likewise is relevant to all aspects of the Christian's life.

Note the section cross-referenced above, which has been placed in *21. Being Right with God*, in the second half of the chapter which is entitled *Staying Right with God*. It is obviously also very pertinent to this topic, *Obeying God*.

## a) Obey God

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### Keep God's commands and obey him

**DEUT 13:4** [MOSES, TO THE ISRAELITES:] You must follow the LORD your God and revere only him; and *you must observe his commandments, obey him, serve him, and remain loyal to him.* NET

### Obey all God's commands . . .

**JOSH 1:7-8** [GOD, TO JOSHUA:] Make sure you are very strong and brave! *Carefully obey all the law my servant Moses charged you to keep! Do not swerve from it to the right or to the left, so that you may be successful in all you do.* <sup>8</sup>This law scroll must not leave your lips! You must memorize it day and night so you can *carefully obey all that is written in it.* Then you will prosper and be successful. NET

The Mosaic Law (the law given through Moses) was what God's covenant with Israel was based on. Under the new covenant instituted by Jesus Christ, believers are still to obey all the law's commands that remain pertinent under the new covenant. These commands are basically those pertaining to the believer's spiritual relationship with God and their relationships with other people.

### . . . and obey God always – forever

**PS 119:112** [A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *I am determined to obey your statutes at all times, to the very end.* NET

### Do God's will . . .

**EZRA 10:11A** Now give praise to the LORD God of your fathers, and *do his will.* NET

**1PET 4:2** From now on, then, you must *live the rest of your earthly lives controlled by God's will and not by human desires.* GNT

### . . . and do what pleases God

**1THES 4:1** [PAUL, TO THE THESSALONIAN BELIEVERS:] Brothers and sisters, we taught you how to *live in a way that will please God, and you are living that way.* Now we ask and encourage you in the Lord Jesus to *live that way even more.* NCV™

## Also obey Jesus Christ

**MATT 28:19–20** [JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to *obey everything I have commanded you*. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. NET

## We should obey God because he is our God . . .

**EZEK 20:19** [GOD, TO THE ISRAELITES:] *I am the LORD your God; follow my statutes, observe my regulations, and carry them out.* NET

## . . . It is no good expressing commitment to God and Jesus Christ without obeying them

**EZEK 33:31** [GOD, TO THE PROPHET EZEKIEL:] *So they come to you in crowds as if they were really ready to listen. They sit in front of you as if they were my people and hear your words, but they will not obey them. With their mouths they tell me they love me, but their hearts desire their selfish profits.* NCV™

**LUKE 6:46** [JESUS, TO THOSE WHO MERELY PROFESSED HIM AS THEIR LORD:] *Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and don’t do what I tell you?* NET

Implicit in both of the above verses is the pointlessness of such words and actions.

## We should obey God because of the great things he has done for us . . .

**Ps 105:43–45** [A PSALMIST, REFERRING TO GOD’S DEEDS FOR ISRAEL:] *When he led his people out, they rejoiced; his chosen ones shouted with joy. <sup>44</sup>He handed the territory of nations over to them, and they took possession of what other peoples had produced, <sup>45</sup>so that they might keep his commands and obey his laws. Praise the LORD!* NET

We should obey God because of all that he has done for us and moreover because our obedience is in fact one of the chief objectives of all his deeds for us (v. 45a). A corollary of this is that if we do not obey we will forfeit God’s blessings which are a key part of all the things he does for us.

**. . . and we should obey Jesus Christ because he died for us**

**2COR 5:14-15** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *For the love of Christ controls us, since we have concluded this, that Christ died for all; therefore all have died. <sup>15</sup>And he died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised.* NET

Christ’s love shown in him dying for his people compelled Paul to live for Christ.

Which kinds of commands in the Mosaic Law do God’s people no longer need to obey?

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How can we live our lives “controlled by God’s will” (1Pet 4:2)?

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What great things have God and Jesus Christ done for you – for you personally and as a believer – that you should obey them?

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## **b) Learn God's Commands – and All His Word**

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In order to obey God we need to learn his commands. Moreover, we should learn all aspects of God's word.

### **Learn God's commands**

**DEUT 5:1** Moses called all the people of Israel together and said: *Listen, Israel, to the commands and laws I am giving you today. Learn them and obey them carefully.* NCV™

### **Ask God to teach you his commands**

**PS 119:26B–27** [A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *Teach me your statutes!* <sup>27</sup>*Help me to understand what your precepts mean!* Then I can meditate on your marvelous teachings. NET

### **Persistently read and study God's commands – and all of God's word**

**DEUT 17:19** *It [a copy of God's law] must be with him constantly and he must read it as long as he lives,* so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and observe all the words of this law and these statutes and carry them out. NET

**EZRA 7:10** Now *Ezra had dedicated himself to the study of the law of the LORD,* to its observance, and to teaching its statutes and judgments in Israel. NET

**ACTS 18:24** At that time a Jew named Apollos, who had been born in Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent speaker and *had a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures.* GNT

Having "a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures", Apollos is a good example of one who would have persistently read and studied all of God's word.

### **Listen carefully and pay attention to God's word and commands**

**EX 15:26** He said, "If you will *listen carefully to the LORD your God and do what he considers right,* if you *pay attention to his commands and obey all his laws,* I will never make you suffer any of the diseases

I made the Egyptians suffer, because I am the LORD, who heals you.”

GW

### **Likewise, listen carefully to Jesus’ teaching . . .**

**MARK 7:14** Then he [Jesus] called the crowd again and said to them, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand. NET

### **. . . and pay attention to all Christian teaching**

**HEB 2:1** [THE WRITER, TO BELIEVERS:] Therefore *we must pay closer attention to what we have heard*, so that we do not drift away. NET

### **Accept God’s word**

**JOB 22:22** *Accept instruction from his mouth and store up his words in your heart.* NET

**JOHN 17:8** [JESUS, TO GOD:] *I gave them the teachings you gave me, and they accepted them.* They knew that I truly came from you, and they believed that you sent me. NCV™

We must accept and so believe God’s word - both his commands (cf. Job 22:22 ↑) and other truths of the faith (cf. John 17:8 ↑).

### **Note: Not listening to God’s word has ill consequences**

**JER 6:19** [GOD:] Hear, O earth, *I’m about to bring calamity on this people, on the fruit of their plans, because they didn’t listen to my words and they rejected my instruction.* ISV

What parts of or concepts in the Bible do you think you need to study more?

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What measures could you take to more effectively learn God's word?

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Is there any teaching in God's word that you find difficult to accept? If so, is there anything you could or should do about it?

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Pray for persecuted Christians

## c) How to Obey God

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See also:

- *Love for God and Jesus Christ is shown by obeying them . . .*, p. 2
- *Fearing God is closely associated with obeying him*, p. 12
- *Faith produces obedience to God*, Ch. 22
- *II. Avoiding Sin and Being Holy*, Ch. 37

The previous section largely looked at learning God's words and commands, which is necessary in order to know what God wants us to do in obeying him. This section discusses how, on learning God's commands, we should set about obeying him.

Note also the supplementary teachings in the above cross references, which indicate that obedience to God is produced by such things as love of God, fear of God and faith in God.

### Do what you learn of God's law and word . . .

**EZRA 7:10** *For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.* ESV

**MATT 7:24** [JESUS:] *Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them is like a wise man who built his house on rock.* NET

### . . . Do not just listen to God's word

**JAMES 1:22** *But be sure you live out the message and do not merely listen to it and so deceive yourselves.* NET

### Ask God to help you follow his ways and commands

**Ps 25:5A** [DAVID, TO GOD:] *Teach me to live according to your truth, for you are my God, who saves me.* GNT

**Ps 119:33–36** *Teach me, O LORD, the lifestyle prescribed by your statutes, so that I might observe it continually.* <sup>34</sup>*Give me understanding so that I might observe your law, and keep it with all my heart.* <sup>35</sup>*Guide me in the path of your commands, for I delight to walk in it.* <sup>36</sup>*Give me a desire for your rules, rather than for wealth gained unjustly.* NET

## Submit yourself to God

**JAMES 4:7** *So submit to God. But resist the devil and he will flee from you.* NET

To persistently obey God, we need to first submit to him.

## Obey God wholeheartedly . . .

**PS 119:69** [A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *Arrogant people smear my reputation with lies, but I observe your precepts with all my heart.* NET

## . . . Moreover, rejoice and delight in God's commands

**PS 119:14** [A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *I rejoice in the lifestyle prescribed by your rules as if they were riches of all kinds.* NET

**PS 119:47** [A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *I will also speak of your testimonies before kings and shall not be put to shame, <sup>47</sup>for I find my delight in your commandments, which I love.* ESV

## Be careful to obey God

**2KI 17:37A** *You must carefully obey at all times the rules, regulations, law, and commandments he wrote down for you.* NET

## Note: God's and Jesus Christ's commands are not too difficult

**DEUT 30:11** [MOSES, TO THE ISRAELITES:] *This commandment I am giving you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it too remote.* NET

**MATT 11:28–30** [JESUS:] *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke on you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy to bear, and my load is not hard to carry.* NET

The “yoke” referred to was probably that which lay across the necks of oxen. In saying that the “yoke” and “load” of following him is “easy” and “not hard to carry” (v. 30), Jesus may be alluding to the fact that as he is “gentle and humble in heart” (v. 29) he will not require anything that is beyond us. Also, far from being tiresome, his “yoke” of discipleship is the way of life that best fits us – the most comfortable and suitable “yoke” – and it benefits us in many ways. Rather than weighing us down, it is actually uplifting.

What does submitting ourselves to God involve doing? What do you find hardest about submitting yourself to God?

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How does one come to the point of rejoicing and delighting in God's commands (cf. Psalms 119:14, 47)?

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What do you think of the assertion that God's and Jesus Christ's commands are not too difficult or burdensome? Are there any of their commands that you do find very difficult or burdensome? If so, why – and is there anything you can do about this?

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## d) Blessings of Obeying God

See also:

- . . . *As such, God gives the Holy Spirit to those who believe and obey him, Ch. 17*
- *The Need to Obey God, Ch. 21*
- *God answers those who obey and please him . . . , Ch. 24*
- *Obeying God's commands brings wisdom . . . , Ch. 33*

### General promises of blessing

**LUKE 11:28** But he [Jesus] replied, *“Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!”* NET

**JOHN 13:17** [JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] If you know these things, *blessed are you if you do them.* ESV

Note that Jesus is referring primarily to his instruction and example regarding humble service of other believers (cf. vv. 4–16).

### God's and Jesus Christ's love, . . .

**Ps 103:17–18** But the LORD continually shows loyal love to his faithful followers, and is faithful to their descendants,<sup>18</sup> to those who keep his covenant, who are careful to obey his commands. NET

**JOHN 15:10** [JESUS:] *If you obey my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commandments and remain in his love.* NET

### . . . including God's help

**ISA 64:5** [ISAIAH, TO GOD:] *You help all who gladly obey and do what you want ...* CEV

### The realization of God's promises

**GEN 18:19** [GOD, REFERRING TO ABRAHAM:] I have chosen him so that he may command his children and his household after him *to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just. Then the LORD will give to Abraham what he promised him.* NET

**HEB 10:36** For you need endurance in order to *do God's will and so receive what is promised.* NET

## Peace and rest

**ISA 48:18** [GOD, TO THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL:] *If you had obeyed me, you would have had peace like a full-flowing river. Good things would have flowed to you like the waves of the sea.* NCV™

**JER 6:16A** The LORD said to his people: “You are standing at the crossroads. So consider your path. Ask where the old, reliable paths are. *Ask where the path is that leads to blessing and follow it. If you do, you will find rest for your souls.*” NET

The “path” corresponds with God’s way, i.e. life lived in obedience to him.

## Other present-day spiritual blessings

**LUKE 8:21** But he [Jesus] replied to them, “*My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.*” NET

**JOHN 15:7** [JESUS:] *If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want, and it will be done for you.* NET

Being in Jesus Christ involves knowing, believing and obeying his words. This produces prayer that is consistent with Jesus Christ’s purpose and will – prayer that will be answered.

## Note: Ill consequences of not obeying God

See also:

■ *Not obeying God ultimately ends in eternal destruction, Ch. 21*

**HOS 9:17A** [HOSEA, REFERRING TO THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL:] *My God will reject them, for they have not obeyed him ...* NET

**NUM 32:23** [MOSES:] *But if you do not do this, then look, you will have sinned against the LORD. And know that your sin will find you out.* NET

The final clause is implying that sin (or disobeying God) brings its consequences – it “catches up with you”.

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Explain as if you were talking to a non-believer, why the psalmist claimed that knowing and observing God's commands made him wiser than his teachers and older people (cf. Ps 119:98–100).

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How or in what ways does obeying God's word bring peace and rest?

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What are the main attractions that tempt you to not obey God? Choose one thing (not necessarily from this chapter) that diminishes such attractions.

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## e) Epilogue: Follow Jesus Christ

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To follow Jesus Christ involves not just simply following his commands, but also following him and his example. In doing so, we follow Christ not only as our leader, but also in companionship with him. This concept is an important aspect of discipleship.

### Follow Jesus Christ . . .

**MATT 4:19B–20** [JESUS, TO PETER AND ANDREW:] *“Follow me, and I will turn you into fishers of people.”* <sup>20</sup>*They left their nets immediately and followed him.* NET

**MARK 8:34** Then Jesus called the crowd, along with his disciples, and said to them, *“If anyone wants to become my follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.* NET

To “deny” ourselves involves setting aside our own desires, no longer having ourselves as the focus of our lives. For a person to “take up his cross” implies a willingness to bear any cost – even to give up one’s life – in order to follow Christ as his disciple.

### . . . Be a disciple of Jesus Christ

**JOHN 8:31** Then Jesus said to those Judeans who had believed him, *“If you continue to follow my teaching, you are really my disciples ...* NET

A disciple is one who seeks to learn and follow the teachings of another, even to the extent of becoming like the teacher (as reflected in the following two subsections).

### Follow Jesus Christ’s example . . .

**JOHN 13:15** [JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] *For I have given you an example – you should do just as I have done for you.* NET

**1COR 11:1** [PAUL:] *Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.* NCV™

**. . . Notably, follow his example of love and service of others**

**JOHN 13:34** [JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] I give you a new commandment – to *love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.* NET

**MATT 20:26–28** [JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] It must not be this way among you! Instead *whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant,* <sup>27</sup>*and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave* –<sup>28</sup>*just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve,* and to give his life as a ransom for many. NET

**Moreover, make Jesus Christ your Lord . . .**

**1PET 3:15** But *set Christ apart as Lord in your hearts* and always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks about the hope you possess. NET

**. . . and so live for Jesus Christ, pleasing him**

**2COR 5:15** And he [Christ] died for all so that *those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised.* NET

**COL 1:10** [PAUL, TO THE COLOSSIAN BELIEVERS:] We pray that you will also have great wisdom and understanding in spiritual things <sup>10</sup>so that you will *live the kind of life that honors and pleases the Lord in every way.* You will produce fruit in every good work and grow in the knowledge of God. NCV™

**Be willing to give up everything to follow Jesus Christ**

**LUKE 5:27–28** After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax collector’s booth. *Jesus said to him, “Follow me!”*<sup>28</sup>*So Levi got up, left everything, and followed him.* NCV™

**LUKE 14:33** In the same way,” concluded Jesus, “*none of you can be my disciple unless you give up everything you have.* GNT

Choose one aspect of Jesus Christ's example that you should imitate better. What is a situation you are likely to encounter in which you could do so?

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What can we do to be more conscious of Jesus Christ as our Lord, worshiping and serving him more consistently in our everyday living?

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How is Jesus' instruction to "give up everything you have" (Luke 14:33) applicable to us?

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  - II. God's Pre-Eminence
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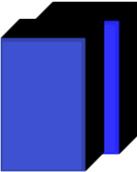
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It advocates on behalf of and aids persecuted Christians.

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CSI works to defend religious liberty and help persecuted Christians.

**Christian Solidarity Worldwide** – [www.csw.org.uk](http://www.csw.org.uk)

It advocates for freedom of religion and justice for persecuted believers.

**Open Doors** – [sb.od.org](http://sb.od.org); [www.opendoors.org.au](http://www.opendoors.org.au)

It equips believers for persecution and maintaining a witness to the Gospel.

**Religious Liberty Commission** – [www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc](http://www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc)

RLC defends and aids persecuted Christians. See also [www.idop.org](http://www.idop.org).

**Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin** – [rlprayerbulletin.blogspot.com.au](http://rlprayerbulletin.blogspot.com.au)

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*Then the King will answer, 'I tell you the truth, anything you did for even the least of my people here, you also did for me.'* Matthew 25:40 NCV



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