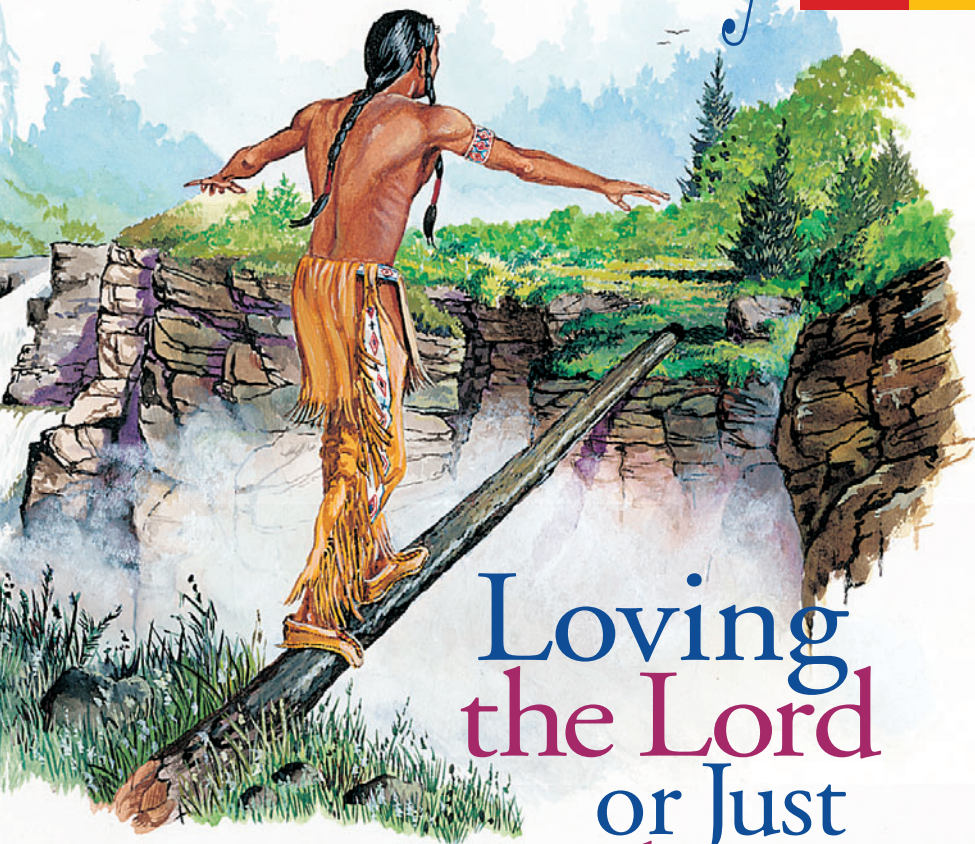


Native New Day

10



Loving the Lord or Just Being Religious

Historically, in a few Native cultures, it was customary for a young warrior to prove himself worthy of being accepted into a leadership position by completing certain tests.

One of the tests was crossing a river canyon on a long, thin log. It was a precarious undertaking. Many were injured and some lost their lives trying to achieve this feat.

Likewise, spiritually, many believe that they can be accepted by God only through perfectly keeping all His commandments.

The Bible tells us that because of our sinful nature it is impossible in our own strength to accomplish such a task. It is only through the outside power of God and by the Holy Spirit that we can successfully live above the temptations of human life and obey the commandments.

It is important to understand that the Ten Commandment law can save no one. The law serves as a spiritual mirror. When we look into the law we see what is right and what is wrong. As we look into a mirror at home, if our face is dirty, we can see the dirt on our face. Like the mirror, the law shows us what we need to do to clean up, or change, spiritually. Like the mirror, the law cannot cleanse us or change us. It only tells us how we should be living as we prepare for citizenship in heaven (James 1:22-25). God's perfect law points out our sins. In this respect God's commandments are indispensable. Once we see our sin, only Jesus can cleanse us and change our hearts to want to do what is right.

Key Thought. There are two mistakes that many make when they decide to follow our God.

The first mistake is trying to keep God's commandments in our own strength. The Bible tells us it is impossible to keep God's commandments by our own power. Most of us as Christians discover this weakness early in our Christian walk.

The Bible tells us that the human heart is exceed-



The law is like a spiritual mirror;
it points us to Jesus.

ingly deceitful and that we don't realize how weak we are. God knows that it is impossible for us to do what is right on our own. For this reason Jesus said, ". . . without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

The second mistake many people make is to think that when they love Jesus and accept His gift of eternal life, that's all there is to Christianity. They think accepting Christ as their Savior frees them from keeping the law of God and that keeping all of the laws of God isn't that important to a Christian. We must be careful not to make either of these mistakes.

Jesus died on Calvary's
cross to save mankind
from sin. He loves us
with an infinite love.



The wonderful truth is that God has given us His laws as guidelines for our happiness. Those who learn to depend on God's help to live in harmony with the principles of His law will become the happiest people on earth!

The direction of our lives needs to be changed in order for us to become citizens of heaven, even while living on this earth. If we continued to follow our sinful ways in heaven, heaven itself wouldn't be a better place to live throughout eternity than this sinful earth is today. We would just be moving from one bad place to another. Eternity would never be safe from selfishness, murder, and theft. We would continue to experience tragedies because of alcoholism and drug abuse. Can you imagine beer cans and cigarette butts scattered along the golden streets of heaven?

Those who don't want to live by God's law would be miserable in heaven, because they would still want to do things that are harmful and destructive to themselves and others.

BIBLE ANSWERS

1. What does the Bible call those who claim to have

a close relationship with Jesus but don't keep His commandments? 1 John 2:4. "He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a _____, and the truth is not in him." *(All quotations from the Bible in these lessons are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV) unless otherwise noted.)*

NOTE: No one likes to be called a liar. The use of this term helps to demonstrate the seriousness of claiming to love God, but not living a life like Jesus.

God has given us His laws as guidelines for happiness. He wants us to be happy people.

2. What does James tell us concerning true faith? James 2:20, last part. "Faith without _____ is dead."

True faith always produces good works. Obedience comes from a heart of love for Jesus.

NOTE: Those who give their hearts to the Lord moment by moment will see the beauty and the value of keeping God's commandments. They learn to say like David, "I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8).

Freedom never before experienced will come to those who obey God's laws. Along with this will come the assurance of someday living in the sinless new world which Jesus is preparing for us.

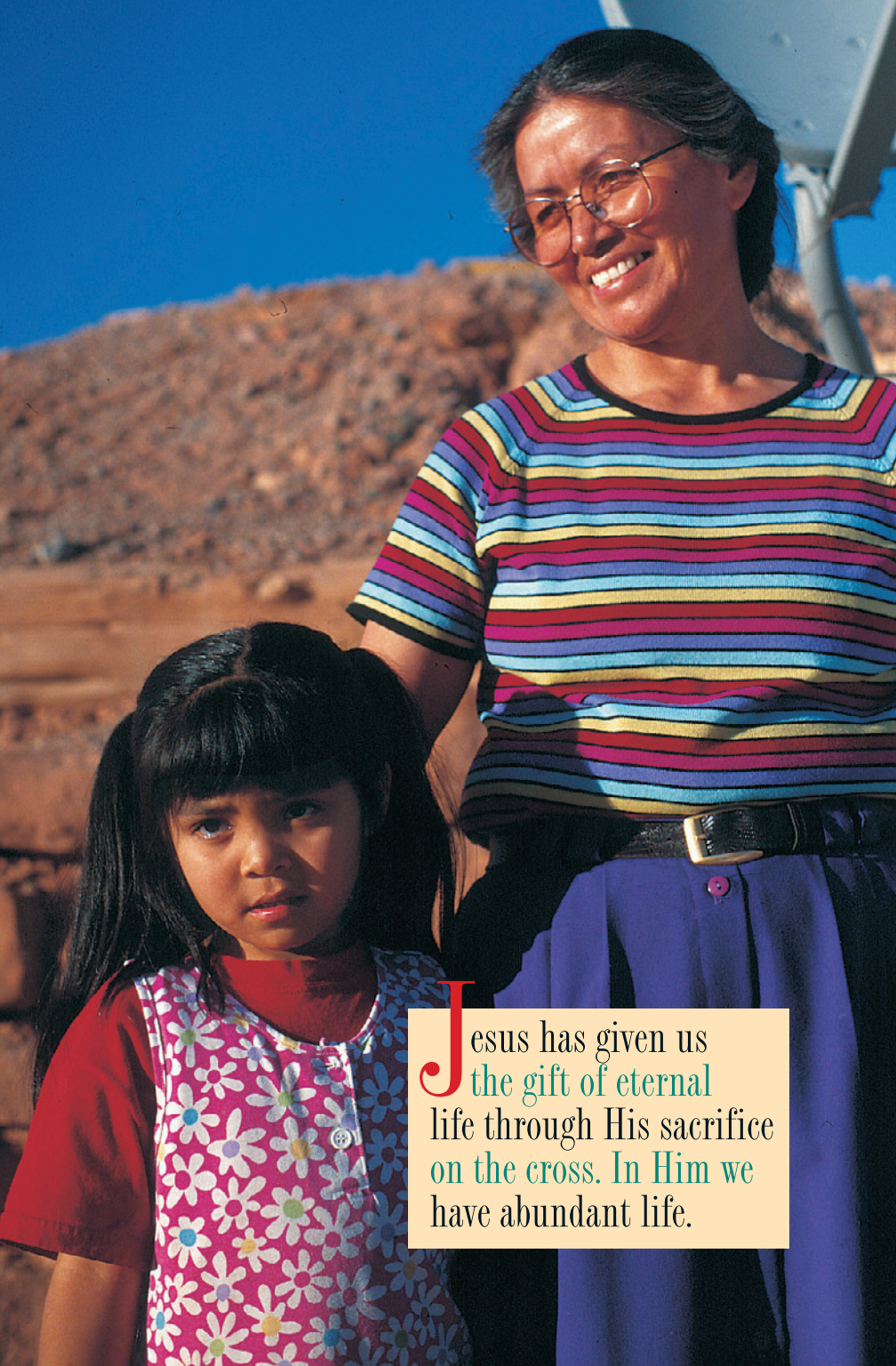
Just as we tell
our children
what to do to
protect themselves,
the Creator does the
same thing for us
by giving us His
commandments.



When you think it through, you will see that there is a loving reason behind every commandment God has asked us to keep. Just as we tell our children what to do to protect themselves, God does the same thing for us by giving us His commandments.

3. How does Jesus describe the actions of those who are genuinely seeking to follow God? John 15:10. “If you keep _____, you will abide in _____, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”

NOTE: Like a mother and father who yearn for their children to become good people, our heavenly Father longs for us to learn and grow into all that He has intended for us. Becoming like Jesus is something that continues from the day we give our heart to Jesus until we die or see Jesus coming again. Christian growth is the work of a lifetime.



Jesus has given us the gift of eternal life through His sacrifice on the cross. In Him we have abundant life.

4. What does the Holy Spirit do for those who continue to abide in Christ? Philippians 2:13. “For it is God who works in you both to _____ and to _____ for His good pleasure.” (See also 2 Corinthians 5:17.)

NOTE: This is one of the greatest promises of God to us. If you will give your heart to the Lord hour by hour and day by day, in a short time you will become a totally different person. As we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us, He will help us and give us the “desire” to do what is right—as well as the strength.

5. How important is it for a Christian to keep God’s commandments after he or she has accepted the gift of eternal life? Revelation 22:14. “Blessed [happy] are those who _____ His commandments, that they may have the _____ to the tree of life.”



We are not saved
by works, but by
God’s free gift.



NOTE: We do not keep the commandments to be saved; we keep them because we love Jesus. As David said, “By them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward” (Psalm 19:11). You may be thinking that there is no way in your own strength that you can keep God’s law. You are absolutely right! None of us can. Only as we daily allow God to give us a new heart will we have the desire and strength to obey God’s commandments.

6. How do we allow God to help us keep the law? 1 John 3:6. “Whoever _____ in Him does not [habitually] sin.”

NOTE: According to Jesus we are to abide in Him. To abide means maintaining a daily living connection with Him through prayer and Bible study. It means a humble commitment to keep God’s commandments (1 John 3:24). It means letting Jesus lead us in *everything* we do, turning to Him with every difficulty, with every question, and with every temptation we encounter during hard times. He has promised that He will be there to help us when we do. In a wonderful promise God says that He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear, but also with the temptation He provides a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13).

7. What hope is there for Christians when they make mistakes? 1 John 2:1. “My little children, . . . if anyone sins, we have an _____ with the Father.”

There is
a loving
reason behind
every com-
mandment
God has asked
us to keep.





NOTE: The Christian life is one of growth; we will make mistakes as we grow, because of our fallen sinful nature. But God takes us as we are and helps us grow as the days, months, and years go by. When we are converted our spiritual nature becomes stronger than our sinful nature. Satan constantly appeals to our sinful nature to dominate our spiritual nature. This strife will continue until Jesus returns and gives us new immortal bodies free from fallen sinful nature. (1 Corinthians 15:51-53). Until then God is able through His power to keep us from falling, providing we choose to daily allow Him to help us (Jude 24–25).

The Christian may fall at times, but when he turns back to Jesus he will always be accepted and forgiven. “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, . . . but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). The key is always turning to the Lord again with faith in His promises and submission to His will, choosing to allow Him to help us not to commit the same wrongs again.

The Christian may fall at times, but Jesus is always there with open arms. God takes us as we are and helps us grow.

Closing Thought. Sunlight, a Native girl, lived on the Nez Perce Reservation. Unfortunately, she married a man who became a drunkard and often beat her. One thing she hated was that he wrote out a list every day of several household chores he wanted her to do.

With each list he left, her love for him continued to die. Tragically, one night he had been drinking and was killed in a car accident. She felt badly, but shed few tears. Many years passed before she married a kind Christian man who was very good to her. He never left a list of work for her to follow. He was there for her in all of her struggles and questions. His love changed her whole life.

One day as she was vacuuming she ran across a slip of paper, one of those lists her former husband had left for her. As she looked at the list, she noticed that during that very day she had done all the duties listed, plus many more. Only this time she wasn't following a list. She now did the household chores cheerfully, because of her love for her new husband.



Love makes a difference.

Love changes people.

Love makes a difference. Love changes us! The Bible tells us that we are to be spiritually married to the Lord, to the One who truly loves us and has only our good at heart. We will find His commandments are a blessing and not hard to follow (1 John 5:3). It will be like the psalmist said, “I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart” (Psalm 40:8).



ur walk with Christ can begin this very moment. He came to Earth to give us eternal life.

Christ's death on the cross provides forgiveness as a free gift; it is nothing we can buy or earn. If you haven't done so already, you can receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior by repeating the following prayer.

◆ P R A Y E R ◆

Dear Father, I need You. I am sorry for my sins and ask You to forgive me. I believe that Jesus died for my sins. I give You my life and accept Jesus as my Savior and Lord. Make me the kind of person You want me to be. Thank You for hearing me and helping me to follow Jesus. In His name, Amen.

Next Lesson. We will look at one of the greatest events of all time, the second coming of Jesus and His gathering of all nations.





*"I delight to do Your will, . . . and Your law
is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8).*



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