

God's Commandments Concerning Relationships

The mark of a true follower of Christ is obedience to His command to love.

“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” **John 15:12**

“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” **John 13:35**

Jesus gave us clear commandments on **how** we should love one another. By loving one another **in the way Jesus commanded**, we abide in His love.

“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” **1 John 5:3**

“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.” **John 15:10**

“Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him.” **1 John 3:24**

When we keep His commandments, His Spirit fills us and He brings forth much fruit in our lives

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” **John 15:5**

When someone has sinned against you

(1) “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.

If he hears you, you have gained your brother.” **Matthew 18:15**

When we are sinned against, we are NOT to talk to other people about it but we are to speak privately to the one who has sinned against us. We are to go to them privately, calmly, speaking with gentleness and kindness. The goal is to win their heart. Angry tones, defensiveness and

vindictive attitudes are contrary to the love of God and prevent most people from hearing what we are saying.

Speaking with love increases others ability to hear us.

“The wise of heart is called perceptive, and pleasant speech increases persuasiveness.” **Proverbs 16:21** (New Revised Standard Version)

“The wise in heart will be called prudent, and sweetness of the lips increases learning.”

Proverbs 16:21 (New Kings James Version)

We are not to complain to others but to speak only to the brother or sister who has sinned against us. When we repeat negative things to other people we are sinning against them and sowing division.

“He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends.” **Proverbs 17:9**

“The Lord hates. . . . one who sows discord (division) among brethren.” **Proverbs 6:16,19**

When a brother or sister is offended with us

(2) “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” **Matthew 5:23-24**

God is not interested in our worship or service to Him until AFTER we have sought to make peace with our brother or sister. It does no good to seek God’s blessing when we know that we have wronged a brother or sister but are unwilling to apologize, ask for forgiveness and seek peace with them.

“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.” **Psalms 66:18**

“Pursue peace with all men and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.” **Hebrews 12:14**

We cannot make someone forgive us if we have wronged them. All we

can do is humble our self, apologize and ask for forgiveness. If we need to repay or restore something that was lost, we should do that. Even so, some people will not forgive. That is their sin. If we have done our best to make things right, then we are free.

“If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.” **Romans 12:18**

How many times should we forgive someone?

(3) “Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him.”

Luke 17:3-4

“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.” **Mark 11:25-26**

“Blessed *are* the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.” **Mathew 5:7**

“Judge not, and you shall not be judged.
Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 38 Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” **Luke 6:37-38**

If we are hard with others, God will be hard with us. If we are kind and gracious to others, God will be kind and gracious to us.

“The merciful man does good for his own soul, But he who is cruel troubles his own flesh.” **Proverbs 11:17**

We are to forgive, from the heart, as often as a brother or sister repents and asks for forgiveness, even if that means seven times a day. We are not to scold or lecture the repentant person, but to show the love of

Christ by forgiving them.

Judgmental attitudes toward others

(4) “But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.” **Matthew 5:22**

Even if we do not say or outwardly do anything negative toward another person, if we have an angry or condemning attitude in our heart we are guilty before God. Let us avoid such attitudes and instead show grace and mercy. God sees what is in our hearts.

“The Lord knows the thoughts of man”

Psalms 94:11a

What to do when we are angry

(5) “Don’t let the sun go down on your anger, neither give place to the devil.”

Ephesians 4:26-27

When we are offended, we must seek to get the offense out of our heart as soon as possible. To do otherwise is to give place to the devil. If we allow anger to remain in our hearts it turns to bitterness and a demonic stronghold forms in us. We then become defiled and that defilement spreads to others around us through the bitterness in our heart.

“Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled” **Hebrews 12:15**

Kneel down in prayer, and relying on the Lord’s help, choose to forgive the person(s) from your heart. Remember that we are to love one another “as Christ loved us”. He died for us on the cross long before we admitted our guilt or asked God for forgiveness. He fully pardoned us for all of our sins. We are to love like Christ loved us. Forgiving someone who wronged us is a choice.

Forgiveness is not a feeling. It is a choice that you can make.

If possible, seek to talk peacefully with the person who sinned against

you. Speak to them with patience and grace with a goal of making peace.

Do not repay evil to someone who has wronged you

(6) “Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore

‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

If he is thirsty, give him a drink;

For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Romans 12:17-21

We are to OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD. We demonstrate love by doing good to those who have sinned against us.

When we withhold our affection or love from someone who has wronged us, we are repaying them with evil. When we “repay evil for evil”,

“the face of the Lord is against” us and He does not hear our prayers

1 Peter 3:12

1 Peter 3:8-12 “Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. For:

‘He who would love life and see good days,

Let him refrain his tongue from evil,

And his lips from speaking deceit.

Let him turn away from evil and do good;

Let him seek peace and pursue it.

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,

And His ears are open to their prayers;

But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

Overcome evil with good

(7) “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Romans 12:21

The way Jesus overcame evil was by truly loving and doing good. When He was hated, he loved back. When he was abused he prayed for His enemies. He laid down His life on the cross for the very people who were putting Him to death. He never allowed His heart to become bound by anger, hatred or vindictiveness. He always walked in the freedom of love. We are to do the same. When we love and do good to those who mistreat us, we overcome evil with good. The joy of the Lord becomes our portion.

“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.

These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” **John 15:10-11**

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

Matthew 5:43-48

Do not lie to one another

(8) “Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds” **Colossians 3:9**

“Are you upset at me?” someone may ask us. “No” we reply. But the truth is, we really are bothered. We have just lied. Often we don’t tell the truth because our own hearts are encumbered with anger, frustration or bitterness. We are commanded to be honest, but we must speak the truth in **love**. Before we speak we should make sure that our hearts are free of judgments, anger or bitterness. Our desire must be for

the other persons' good, not to vent our own frustrations. When correcting a brother or sister, we must speak in the mildest tones with gentleness and sincere love.

Speaking the truth in love is what causes the body to grow up into the full stature of Christ (Eph. 4:15).

Seek restoration for one who is in sin.

(9) "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted." **Galatians 6:1**

Restoration involves "speaking the truth in love" with the goal of repentance, reconciliation and restoration.

Bear one another's burdens

(10) "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

Galatians 6:2 The law of Christ is love. To love, as Christ loved us, is to help bear the burdens of our brothers and sisters. This involves sacrifice and inconvenience. "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others." **Philippians 2:4**