

END-TIMES ISSUES



#47 Commandment #1 – Trusting people instead of God.

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1

"You shall have **no other gods** before Me."
Exodus 20:3 (BSB); also Deuteronomy 5:7.

- LAST TIME** – We looked at the temptation to make **SECURITY** our god: **Wealth, possessions, safety, happiness...**
- TODAY** – We are looking at the issue of **TRUST**.

Part of *obeying* this first commandment involves *trusting* God 100%.

When we look to something other than God, we are transferring trust from God to that other thing.

2

- TODAY** – We are looking at:

TRUST ISSUES (PART 1)

- ✓ When we want to be saved ...
- ✓ When we want guidance ...
- ✓ When we want spiritual growth ...
- ✓ When things aren't going our way and we would really like them to change ...

What do we put our trust in?

WHAT IS "TRUST"?

In the Bible, the words trust, faith and believe all refer to the same action. When it involves the Good News, salvation, and spiritual matters, it refers to accepting the truth and living by it.

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SCRIPTURE MENTIONS DIFFERENT TYPES OF TRUST (OR LACK OF IT).

BAD!

- ✓ **Being deceived; misguided trust** – What we believe is false; or we are trusting the wrong thing.
- ✓ **Unbelief** – We don't accept (believe) the facts.
- ✓ **Ignorance** – We don't know the facts, so we *can't* believe them.
- ✓ **Doubt** – We waver back and forth, between believing and not believing the facts. We are too unstable to get anywhere.
- ✓ **Temporary faith** – We believe the facts for a while, but then we change our minds (such as when trials come our way).
- ✓ **"Little" faith** – A "faith" is small and shrinking; soon it might not even exist. (It could turn into "temporary faith").
- ✓ **"Dead" faith** – We claim to believe the truth, but our lives don't show it.

GOOD!

- ✓ **"Living" faith** – Genuine; accepting the truth and living by it.
- ✓ **"Mustard-seed" faith** – Genuine; it's small... but *growing*.

TRUSTING IN OURSELVES.

In matters of salvation and spiritual growth, we can be tempted to think we need to *help* God, or to somehow gain his favor, before he will be willing to do something. This involves a trust in our own abilities, perhaps even a feeling of self-reliance.

⇒ **① IN SALVATION:** Scripture tells us that salvation is a 100% free gift that *cannot* be worked for. It involves simply admitting our sinfulness and relying on *God* to make a change in us. We cannot add to his accomplishments.

Yet how often do people think they need to:

- ✓ Improve their lives before coming to God.
- ✓ Do some religious or sacrificial act, to show God that they are serious about salvation.
- ✓ Perform some religious rite that they think is necessary, as a part of "getting saved."
- ✓ "Help" God in some other way, in order that they may be saved.

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We fail to realize the seriousness of sin. Spiritually, we were utterly dead, and hopelessly under God's wrath.

And you were **dead** in your trespasses and sins, ...
All of us ... were by nature children of **wrath**.
Ephesians 2:1, 3 (BSB)

We fail to recognize the utter helplessness of our original condition! We were 100% powerless!

... when we were still powerless ,* Christ died for the ungodly. Romans 5:6b (NIV)	For while we were still helpless ,* ... Christ died for the ungodly. Romans 5:6 (CSB)
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* (The N.T. Greek word found in this passage conveys both of these concepts.)

We were helplessly-powerlessly ungodly.

... Christ died for the **ungodly**.
Romans 5:6b (CSB)

6

The only thing that *our* works could earn is eternal death.

For the wages of sin is **death**, ...

Romans 6:23b (BSB)

The only reason God saved us was because he *decided to*.

- There was nothing in us to give him a reason to do so.
- He simply did it, and we don't deserve it.

[God] has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but **because of his own purpose and grace**.

2 Timothy 1:9a (NIV)

[God] saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but **because of his mercy**. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ...

Titus 3:5 (NIV)

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⇒ ② IN SPIRITUAL GROWTH: Scripture tells us that God *changes* the hearts and minds of people who are saved. They begin to *want* to do what is morally right. Furthermore, God gives them the power to do so.

Yet how often, when people *fail*, do they think they need to:

- ✓ Improve their lives before returning to God?
- ✓ Do some religious or sacrificial act that "proves" they are serious about coming back to him?
- ✓ Do something good, in order to "make up" for their sinning.
- ✓ "Help" God in some other way, in order to restore fellowship.

Even when people *succeed* in doing good, do they think:

- ✓ They're doing it to impress God, or to earn his favor?
- ✓ It causes them to be "spiritual"?
- ✓ God now has to reward them?
- ✓ It increases their chance of "going to heaven"?

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Even when we do good works, we are dependent on *God* for the ability and power to do them!

- That ability and power does *not* originate in our own efforts!
- In other words, *we need to trust God as we do those good works!*

For I am sure of this very thing, that **the one who began a good work in you will perfect it** until the day of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 1:6 (NET)

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do **good works, which God prepared** in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)

For **God** is working in you, **giving you the desire and the power** to do what pleases him.

Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

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What is YOUR motivation?

GOD, I'M DOING THIS BECAUSE I WANT TO GAIN YOUR FAVOR!

GOD, I'M DOING THIS BECAUSE YOU GAVE ME THE DESIRE, AND YOU MADE IT POSSIBLE!

- Do we do good works because God created us for that purpose, and he placed within us the desire and ability to do them?
- Or do we do them because we think we need to, so that God won't get angry with us?

We realize our obligation, so we try to do it. So often, we fail to acknowledge that it's **impossible** for us to do it. **We need God, who makes it possible!**

WRONG!!

I NEED TO WORK FOR MY SALVATION AND FOR MY SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

I NEED TO HELP GOD...

I NEED TO START IT AND THEN GOD WILL FINISH IT.

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TRUSTING OTHER PEOPLE AND THEIR "TECHNIQUES."

Love for God and neighbor *summarizes* our obligation in life. The Ten Commandments show us *how to fulfil* this obligation of love. As we do these things, *we need to trust God* for the ability to do them.

We may be tempted to pursue religious activities or rituals, instead. We may look to people who we think are good examples of being "spiritual." This could be people from the past, or those living today – and we try to imitate them, or use the techniques that seemed to work for them.

Can we *ever* follow people's example?

Paul told us to follow *his* example. But that was specifically because *he was following Christ's example*.

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1 (NIV)

Our problem is that we tend to get our eyes *off* Christ and the Bible, and focus on the activities and techniques of people.

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Taking one's eyes off Christ and the Bible? It's not something new. People have been doing this ever since sin entered the world.

In the early days of Christianity, the world had many types of influences, which people tried to *add* to the Bible. They tried to change the "Good News." They tried to change what it meant to "follow Jesus." Some of these false teachings are mentioned in the Bible; more were invented later. **SOME EXAMPLES IN THE BIBLE:**

- ✓ Adding Jewish rituals, such as circumcision – Acts 15.
- ✓ Adding all sorts of restrictions or "self-discipline" to following Jesus – Colossians 2:20-23.
- ✓ Claiming that "grace" allows a person to sin all they want... and they will still be forgiven – Romans 6:1-2.
- ✓ Promoting a "higher" or "secret" knowledge that can only be attained through various philosophies or teachings *not* found in the Bible – Colossians 2:8; 1 Timothy 6:20.

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All such influences have certain things in common:

- They aren't satisfied with keeping only to the Bible. They all go beyond what Scripture teaches.
- They tend to use religious terminology that makes their teachings sound "spiritual" (even though the teachings came from the world).
- *Their influence is the greatest when Bible understanding is low.*

What's happening today? Today, there is an increased emphasis on promoting various teachings and activities taken from the world, as a means of attaining "spirituality." Those promoting these things...

- They tend to use enough Scripture in their teachings, to make it sound "Christian." (As expected, they omit Scripture passages that oppose what they are doing, or tell us to do something else.)
- They tend to give their teachings "Christian-sounding" names – such as "spiritual enrichment," or "the wisdom of the early Christians," "following Jesus on a new level," etc.

People who are aware of their lack of "spirituality," and who want to change their condition, often fall prey to these teachings.

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How do we avoid this false "spirituality"?

- So many techniques have been invented down through the centuries (mostly from "Christianizing" the influences of the world), that we could not describe them all.
- Besides that, people sometimes "repackage" them and give them different names, in order to make them sound like they're new. People opposed to the "old" methods might be tricked by a "new" (repackaged) one.

The best way to counteract this is to learn to recognize the genuine!

- This requires us to be willing to find out what the Bible says – something most people today are *unwilling* to do.

There is a constant emphasis in Scripture on NOT changing what it says, and NOT departing from its message.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING



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Warnings that apply to these issues (examples):

These are found throughout Scripture. Here's a random selection.

- **Don't add to, or subtract from, Scripture** – Deuteronomy 4:1; 12:32; Revelation 22:18.
- **Don't deviate to the left or to the right from what it teaches** – Deuteronomy 28:14; Joshua 1:7; 23:6; 2 Kings 22:2 (good example); Proverbs 4:27 (context begins at v. 20).
- **Scripture is completely accurate; God provides what we need.**

All Scripture is **God-breathed** and is **useful** for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, **so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

His divine power has **given us everything we need for a godly life** through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

2 Peter 1:3 (NIV)

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- **Warnings about distorting the truth** – Acts 20:30; 2 Peter 3:15-16; also, a good example: 2 Corinthians 4:2 ("we *don't* do it").
- **Learn from the bad examples** found in Scripture, and *do the opposite!* – Matthew 23; Mark 7:6-8; etc.
- **Pursue "true religion and spiritual growth, instead of following the ways of the world"** (which have often crept into the church – James 1:26-27 (see also v. 22-25); 2 Peter 1:5-11.

The world is constantly inventing new substitutes for attaining "spiritual growth." Pursue it God's way, instead!

The best way to be protected from the counterfeit is by learning the genuine well-enough that that we can easily recognize the difference!

(Some of the world's "spiritual techniques" rely on demonic influence. We plan to look at such issues next time.)

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BUT WHAT IF THE WORLD'S TECHNIQUES SEEM TO WORK?

TWO issues are involved here.

- ① You can expect counterfeits to have an appearance of godliness, as illustrated in the following passage. *But it won't accomplish what Scripture accomplishes.*

Such regulations indeed have **an appearance of wisdom**, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they **lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.**

Colossians 2:23 (NIV)

- ② When a person uses one of the world's techniques... If God *does* accomplish anything, it is *in spite of* it, not *because of* it. God is *overruling* the counterfeit, not *justifying* it.

↳ The person may be doing a *mixture* of these techniques *plus* what God tells us to do. (Next page. ➡)

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HOW TO HAVE GENUINE SPIRITUAL GROWTH? IT'S NO SECRET!

- ① **It's the WORD of God** that has active power!

For **the word of God is living and active**. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it pierces even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Heb 4:12 (BSB)

↳ Going *beyond* Scripture (= adding to it, or subtracting from it) does not increase spirituality. *It chokes it*. Don't let anyone captivate you with such things! Compare to this passage:

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

Colossians 2:8 (NIV)

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"Do not go beyond what is written."

1 Corinthians 4:6b (NIV)

- ② **We need to grow in our understanding of this WORD** – this requires us to take the time to think about it and learn it.

↳ The Bible calls this "meditation" on the Word. (This is quite the *opposite* of the world's counterfeit "meditation" – which encourages people to *not* think.)

But his delight is in the Law of the LORD,
and on His law he **meditates** day and night.

Psalms 1:2 (BSB)

↳ Under the New Covenant, God embeds within his people the desire to do this. *But it still takes effort; because we have spent a lifetime developing sinful habits that oppose it... and the forces of evil also try to hinder us.*

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"Do not go beyond what is written."

1 Corinthians 4:6b (NIV)

- ③ **This WORD needs to change the way we think** – and when applied to our actions, this will result in a change in the way we *live*. Romans 12:2.

Do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

Romans 12:2 (BSB)

↳ As we do this, we will discover new areas in life where we need to repent of sin. But the end result will be following God more closely.

↳ Under the New Covenant, God embeds within his people the desire to do this. *But it still takes effort; because we have spent a lifetime developing sinful habits that oppose it... and the forces of evil also try to hinder us.*

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"Do not go beyond what is written."

1 Corinthians 4:6b (NIV)

- ④ **As we do these things, we will learn more about how to grow in Christ**. We will learn about prayer, attitude, the fruit of the Spirit, how to love God and neighbor, etc.

↳ But the key issues are: (1) our willingness to focus on God's WORD and to learn it, and (2) our willingness to live according to God's WORD.

Do not merely listen to the word, and so **deceive yourselves**. **Do what it says**. ...

But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom [= God's Word], and continues in it—**not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it**—they will be **blessed** in what they do.

James 1:22, 25 (NIV)

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Your MISSION

⇒ **Grow in your trust in God alone!**

- **Scripture tells us** *how to be saved*, and *how to grow in salvation*.
- **Our tendency** is to: (1) rely on our own efforts, and/or, to (2) look to techniques and methods that have been invented by the world, and adapted and changed into a "Christianized" form.
- **This wrong focus diverts our trust from God** and directs it onto people (and their methods). This becomes a substitute for what God told us to do – which involves trust and obedience to his commandments alone.

"You shall have **no other gods** before Me."

Exodus 20:3 (BSB); also Deuteronomy 5:7.

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Credits

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