

# END-TIMES ISSUES



**#129** Commandment #8 – Following Jesus, serving others.

GOD DOESN'T TELL US TO KNOW ALL THE END-TIME DETAILS. HE TELLS US TO BE READY.

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1

## ARE YOU SURPRISED

with what we've seen, regarding:

**the Eighth Commandment**

*and all that it signifies?*

**You shall not steal.**  
Exodus 20:15 (BSB); also in Deuteronomy 5:19

⇒ *Many people are...*

↳ especially with some of the "positive" obligations that are a part of it.

2

### Typical reaction to the Eighth Commandment "negative" applications:

- **The part about theft and robbery:** ➔ This is what most people think of, when reading this commandment.
- **The part about the less-visible forms of theft:** ➔ Once people are told this, it tends to make sense to them. (Those guilty of this might oppose the idea.)
- **Greed:** ➔ Probably a mixed reaction. Many people don't think it's that serious, if it's not obvious to others.
- **Misusing the gifts and abilities that God has given you:** ➔ More people will take offense at this concept. We tend to think it's our *right* to do as we please with what we have.

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### Typical reaction to the Eighth Commandment "positive" applications:

- ➔ First of all, most people don't associate *any* of these with the eighth commandment. They may think of them as "good ideas," but **DON'T** consider them to be morally binding obligations.
- **Doing everything possible for the good of one's neighbor:** ➔ This duty is often ignored, except maybe in a crisis situation. Many people have no interest in their neighbors.
- **Treating the others the same way I want treated:** ➔ People may describe this as the "golden rule"; but not many consider it a *moral obligation*.
- **Working (or doing whatever necessary) with a goal of sharing with others:** ➔ This goes contrary to the way most people live.

IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS WHAT I DO WITH MY STUFF!

IT'S ALL MINE, TO DO AS I PLEASE!

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### What about these "positive" applications?

- **These are an expression of love for neighbor (and also for God).** This love is an *ongoing debt* that we have. In other words, *the obligation never ends*.

Let no debt remain outstanding, except **the continuing debt to love one another**, ...  
Romans 13:8a (NIV)

- **We are to do these "positive" things, even if we don't get rewarded for doing them.**
  - ✓ It doesn't mean we *can't* get paid (when appropriate), but the #1 issue is *not* "What do I get out of it?"
- **This fact has many applications to life.** For instance:
  - ✓ If we *have* a paying job, we are to do it as an expression of love for neighbor (and for God) – in addition to getting paid.
  - ✓ If we *don't have* a job, we are to *still* do things as an expression of love for neighbor (and for God)!

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### THIS IS OUR DEBT:

Let no debt remain outstanding, except **the continuing debt to love one another**, ...  
Romans 13:8a (NIV)

### THIS IS THE QUESTION:

⇒ **Do you view this as an *external* command**, trying to get you to do something you *don't* want to do – like a taskmaster beating you with a stick?

⇒ **OR: Has it become *internal*** – *the desire of your heart?*

- **If this is *not* the desire of your heart...**
  - ✓ **What are you doing about it?** Are you confessing the sins of your heart and repenting? Are you: ① pursuing God through prayer and ② attaining a "renewed mind" (Romans 12:2) through studying (or meditating on) his Word? God saves; and he gives us the ability to do these things. *But he warns us that the "spiritually lazy" will not be saved.*

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### THE ULTIMATE ISSUE IS: HOW DO WE LOOK AT LIFE?

- Do we look at life → the world's way... OR → God's way? Our attitude toward all that we have will reflect our view.
- Consider this:
  - ✓ We were created to live our lives *all the time* in a way that expresses love for God and neighbor. This is the only way for humanity to function 100% smoothly, with all people benefitting, and God being glorified in all of us.
  - ✓ If sin had *never* entered the world, *all* people would *naturally* be living with this God-focused and neighbor-focused attitude.
  - ✓ *Sin* has caused us to see things differently; and our goal must be to pursue the "renewed mind" that sees things *God's* way.

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 (NIV)

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### ONE OF THE PROBLEMS THAT CREATES A BARRIER TO FOLLOWING JESUS IS A WRONG UNDERSTANDING OF "FOLLOWING."

**My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me.** I give them eternal life, and they will never perish.

John 10:27-28a (BSB)

- Those who belong to Jesus do follow him. But what does that mean?
  - ✓ It *does* mean 100% commitment. Yet – because of the world's influences – it's easy to *misunderstand* what that implies.
  - ✓ When it comes to the matter of enjoying the things of life – things that God has given us – there is a tendency to view the issue in a variety of *wrong* ways. **EXAMPLES:** We might view "enjoyment" as:
    - » **Incompatible** with "putting Jesus first." (Meaning: "It's *wrong* for us to enjoy things.")
    - » **The primary reason** that God has given things to us. (Meaning: "We need to consume and enjoy it as much as we can.")
    - » **A separate issue, unrelated** to what it means to "follow" Jesus.

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IF I'M SUPPOSED TO: ✓ love God and neighbor 100%, and ✓ deny myself 100%, and ✓ focus on sharing with others, and ✓ building them up...

THEN HOW CAN I JUSTIFY personally enjoying the things of life that God has given me? I *feel guilty every time I do!*

And I also see verses about the dangers of possessions, the fact that I have to choose between serving God or "stuff," and lots of other passages with similar themes.

#### IT CAN BE A STRUGGLE

- The world teaches a basic mental framework for interpreting the things of life. It convinces us that certain concepts do go together and certain other concepts don't.
- We may *want* to view reality the way Scripture portrays it; but trying to *undo* a perspective that has been *constantly bombarded* into our minds for most of our lives can be difficult.

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### THE WORLD TENDS TO GIVE US TWO EXTREMES TO CHOOSE FROM:

- "Self denial," which tends to be portrayed as...
  - ✓ Giving away all of one's possessions; a vow of poverty.
  - ✓ Leaving society and joining a religious hermitage, somewhere out in the wilderness.
  - ✓ Depriving myself of daily needs, and punishing my body.
  - ✓ Following a lot of religious rules.
  - ✓ Avoiding anything enjoyable.
- The alternative to "self-denial," which is often viewed as...
  - ✓ "It's mine, so I can do with it whatever I want."
  - ✓ "You only live once... so enjoy it while you can!"
  - ✓ "I plan to retire and travel the world, and live a wild life."
  - ✓ (If feeling "spiritual") "Once I've accomplished all my goals, then I can give some time to God."

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### Genuine "self denial" is more like this:

- ✓ I am rejoicing in God's blessings; and I am doing what I can, so that *others* may also rejoice in God's blessings (now and eternally). Since these blessings are from God, and not me, *they need shared!*
- ✓ I am willing to sacrifice my *own* interests, if needed, for God's kingdom, and for the benefit of his people. Exalting God and helping God's people brings me *greater joy* than wallowing in my own pleasures.
- ✓ I *treasure* God's kingdom more than I treasure temporary things.

#### We need to put our hope in GOD...

... who richly provides **all things** for us to enjoy.

1 Timothy 6:17b (BSB)

We also need to realize that the word "**us**" is *plural*. We may need to be involved in other people's lives, so that they can also enjoy some of those "**all things**" that God provides for "**us**."

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### ISSUES; THINGS TO CONSIDER, as we try to "reframe" our thinking to match Scripture:

- The issue involves values:
  - ✓ What do we value most? God and his kingdom? Temporary things?
  - ✓ Things in life do not always compete or conflict; but when they do... what things take precedence over everything else?
  - ✓ Even when there is *no* conflict, which values do we prefer to express? (Our actual choices will show what our values are.)
- The issue involves trust and obedience:
  - ✓ God has already promised to take care of our *needs*. Our job is to *trust* him! And to *obey* him!
  - ✓ We also need to recognize the difference between "wants" and "needs" – something few people are willing to do.

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- The issue involves **stewardship**:
  - ✓ Nothing that we have belongs to us. It is all on loan from God – who will someday hold us accountable for what we did with the various resources, abilities and life circumstances, we have "borrowed" from him. Did we honor *him* with them ... or exalt and pamper *ourselves*?
- The issue involves an **honest appraisal of ourselves**:
  - ✓ We are *not* the center of reality! Our inflated self-evaluations are an *obstacle*, not a gift. Humility and honesty – the two can't be separated – are what we need.
- We don't need to **reject God's blessings; but we need to reorient our perspective on them**:
  - ✓ When we don't *cling* to things that belong to God, we are more inclined to *share* them. Then we can enjoy them as *gifts*, rather than as *possessions*.
  - ✓ When our values match Jesus' values, sharing God's blessings *doubles* our joy!

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**<< Developing a perspective on God, us, and things. >>**

- When looking at the "positive" aspect of the Eighth Commandment, we presented the following statement, as something to be considered. (Since then, we've been looking at various issues related to this matter.)

**IF ALL THAT WE HAVE COMES FROM GOD...  
WHAT CAN WE CONCLUDE?**

"The logic is clear: if everything originates with God, then our role is neither to hoard nor to boast, but to channel these resources toward others' benefit.

This understanding transforms how we relate to our possessions, abilities, and advantages—they become instruments entrusted to us temporarily, not trophies we've earned or assets we ultimately own."

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- TO FINISH THIS TOPIC:**
- We're going to see what information we can find with Bible software.
- We're going to tell the Bible software to find all the Scripture passages it can, related to various issues.
    - ✓ As we said the last time we did this, the software can make mistakes – occasionally *not* finding a passage, perhaps including a passage that doesn't seem to fit, or having an occasional duplicate.
    - ✓ Rather than going through all the verses it finds, we will present a short summary answer for each question. *Since we are limiting our inquiry to Scripture passages, you'll eventually find these results if you simply read the Bible* (and accept what it says).
      - » Remember that *Scripture*, not computer software, must be the final authority!
    - ✓ We will start by listing the questions asked, along with the number of Scripture passages the software found. After that, we will present *summaries* of the results.

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<u>QUESTION</u>	<u># PASSAGES</u>
1 How much of what we have comes from God?	165
2 How much of this does God owe us?	46
3 Of all these things, how much of it do we owe to God?	207
4 What are some specific things we owe to God?	164
5 What do we owe God, in the sense of "payment"?	10
6 How much of our <i>selves</i> do we owe to God?	150
7 How do we <i>accomplish</i> this "giving of our selves" to God?	137
8 How do we <i>know</i> that we have given our selves to God?	199
9 Of all that we have, what do we NOT owe God?	0
10 Of all that we have, what can we keep for ourselves?	105

( As we look at the summaries on the following pages, it will become obvious why certain questions were associated with very few passages. )

- Question 1 – How much of what we have comes from God? (165 passages)**
- *Everything* we have and are – all 100% – comes from God. *None* of it originates from ourselves. This includes not only material wealth and possessions, but also all our talents and capacities.
  - God has done all of this *purposefully*, not by accident. He invites us to use these things – not for boasting or hoarding, but in service to others, as his faithful stewards.
- Question 2 – How much of this does God owe us? (46 passages)**
- This type of thinking is actually *backwards!* God owes us *absolutely nothing*. There is nothing that we can demand from God, as though he owed it to us. In fact, he does not even owe us *salvation* – it's totally undeserved, something we cannot work for.
  - Rather than thinking that we are *entitled* to something from God, we should have *gratitude* for what he has freely given us!

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- Question 3 – Of all these things, how much of it do we owe to God? (207 passages)**
- We owe God *everything*. 100%. At the same time, there is nothing we can give him that he does not already own. We are 100% dependent on God; because what we have, we have *received*, not *earned*.
  - Since it is *already* his, the only proper response is to acknowledge God's ownership of everything, completely surrender to him, and be faithful stewards of what he has given to us.
- Question 4 – What are some specific things we owe to God? (164 passages)**
- Some specific examples include: ① Worship and devotion (including offering our *bodies* as "living sacrifices" – Romans 12:1); ② Gratitude and covenant-keeping (honoring commitments we've made) – both being responses to God's generosity; ③ Stewardship recognition (recognizing that all our abilities came from God; using them in ways that honor him); and ④ Love (toward God and neighbor).

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**Question 5 – What do we owe God, in the sense of "payment"?**  
(10 passages)

- There are no passages that tell us that we owe God something, in the sense of a *payment* – though there are a few that remind us that we *don't*, and *can't*, pay him back for anything.
- As seen in the other questions, we *do* owe God a lot – in fact, we owe him *everything*. But it is because of who God is, not because of any "debt" that we need to pay. (See the next question.)

**Question 6 – How much of our selves do we owe to God?**  
(150 passages)

- We owe God *everything*. We are to love him with *our whole being* – heart, soul, mind and body. This involves absolute surrender.
- We do not belong to ourselves; he owns us. If we accept this fact, it will influence and reshape the whole way we live. It will influence our daily choices.

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**Question 7 – How do we accomplish this "giving of our selves" to God?**  
(137 passages)

- This involves the concept of "stewardship." God has entrusted to us all that we have; and we are like "managers," with an obligation to use what he has entrusted to us in a responsible way, for his glory.
- We have been entrusted with these things; they are not ours to waste. Our obligation is to be *faithful* in how we manage the things he has placed under our care.

**Question 8 – How do we know that we have given our selves to God?**  
(199 passages)

- Authentic commitment to God is evidenced through our choices and behaviors. It is inseparable from obedience. It involves one's daily life.
- This does not mean absolute sinless perfection; the issue isn't *perfect* obedience. Rather, the *direction of your life* (indicated by your choices) demonstrates who/what you have genuinely submitted to – God (and righteousness) or the evil one (and sin).

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**Question 9 – Of all that we have, what do we NOT owe God?**  
(0 passages)

- In Scripture, the idea of having something we *don't* owe God is *unthinkable!* Such an idea could only arise in a mind controlled by *sin*.
- It should be obvious, by the answers to all the other questions, that this idea would not even be a consideration!

**Question 10 – Of all that we have, what can we keep for ourselves?**  
(105 passages)

- Materially speaking, we can keep *nothing*. Furthermore, these things – which so many people devote themselves to pursuing – do not in any way define what "life" is all about. (These facts ought to influence our attitude toward these things.)
- There is only one thing that we *can* keep – and that is only if we're willing to *lose* it for Jesus' sake: our "soul" (or "inner self"), with its spiritual identity (in Christ) and moral character (developed through our choices). Everything else, we will lose.

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★ ★ **OUR MISSION:** ★ ★

Once we understand the *true* nature of  
"following Jesus"...

Once we understand what we actually owe him, and  
*why* he is worthy of being followed ...

**THEN...**

★ **FOLLOW JESUS!!** ★

(And you will fulfill the Eighth Commandment!)

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