

I. INTRODUCTION

A. WHY THE COMMANDS OF JESUS?

Many years back people started telling me I was gifted to teach. After hearing this from a couple of people, and noting that people voted with their feet when they came to my classes, eventually I was convinced. What I taught was denominational material. If we stuck with it we would survey the major books of the Bible. Some things about this experience bothered me. First, why do we study books about the Bible and not the Bible. Second, my teaching seemed to have no impact at all on the lives of the people I taught. Something needed changing it seemed. So I started wrestling with the question of what to teach. Looking back the Lord told me what to teach. The idea just popped into my head. In any case, it is clear where it came from. I hope you recognize it and know where to find it.: "...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded." This was the first instance of where I stopped looking to men for guidance, but started looking to God. I started believing that what we need to know, generally, is in the scriptures. If we are living within God's will, what we need to know specifically, in a given situation, will be provided, so that we may accomplish God's will.

The first time I taught the Commands of Jesus I created my own harmony of the gospels taking Luke as the most probable chronology framework. We met for two hours each week for about eighteen months. The next time I taught it we met for about forty-five minutes each week. This time it took three years probably more. Ironically, if I had used Mathew as an outline it might have gone much faster. Mathew is organized more thematically. On the other hand very few people hear something just once before they learn it. So if a topic is covered as many times as Jesus spoke about it, it is probably a good thing for most people.

I had yet another group to teach so I decided to organize the material thematically based on the principles or subject of each passage in the Gospels. When I made my harmony I had made a deck of cards, one card per passage. On it were the verses where the passage could be found in as many of the Gospels as it occurred and a brief phrase to serve as a title. I started sorting the cards out by subject. This took more than one attempt. I then grouped these stacks together according to which of the Ten Commandments, plus a few other general subjects, they most closely related to. With the material arranged thematically the third attempt to teach the Commands of Jesus required about a year and a half of meeting once a week for forty-five minutes. This was decidedly better but there is more to be done. Much more to be done.

I have tried to keep to a minimum the amount of Biblical text found here. Most people will need to open their Bibles to find these passages. It is good to open your Bible. Some people have committed some of these passages to memory. Good for you.

The Lord wanted me to write this, I believe, and gave me a lot of what is written here. My hope and prayer is that this will be distributed free, because the Lord freely gave it to me. When I started writing in 2007 I could find little on the subject. Now, a couple years later, there are a couple works published. For the motivated and patient ordering a book on this very important subject makes a lot of sense. For those who want something immediately, free, and those who procrastinate, a complete work free on the internet makes sense also. The right to print or incorporate in other works what is written here is granted to individuals for use in building the Kingdom of Jesus Christ only. The right to print or incorporate in other works, which are to be sold, what is written here is withheld. Freely you have received, freely give.

B. WHAT TO DO WITH THE COMMANDS OF JESUS

1. **Go.** Read Mt 28:16-20

The Greek does not say "...go and make disciples..." It says "...disciple ...". "Disciple" is a verb as it is

used here. Interestingly it appears to be used as a verb nowhere else in scripture.

Here is the big question regarding this command. If the disciples are commanded to go discipling all nations teaching them to obey all He commanded, are not the disciples being disciplined also being commanded to learn to obey all He commanded? This is the application: what are we as the disciples of Jesus doing to learn to obey all He commanded? I can't remember ever hearing a sermon on the subject, but perhaps I did. Certainly it was rarely preached before I began writing this. so I suspect most Christians never seriously thought about doing everything He commanded.

There is no denying Jesus gave commands. There is room to argue over how literally He intended each of His commands to be taken, as well as about what happens if we refuse to obey. As I see it Jesus forgives us when we repent. If we refuse to do any one thing He has commanded then we refuse to repent of not doing it. If we refuse to do it I think we are lost. We are not saved at all. Don't read too much into this. What is meant here is if we REFUSE to repent we are hell bound. Others disagree. As we work through the commands, passages will turn up that speak to this issue.

Laying the consequences aside should we not obey Jesus just because He saves us and what He asks us to do is right? Are we willing to say to Jesus in our heart, "You are the Son of God. You died to save me. Your love and mercy are so great that you died to save me even when I was a terrible sinner. I know I was a sinner and that the things I did were awful. SO I thank you for saving me. But, I'm not going to do what you tell because I don't want to and I don't have to." If you actually think that way, may God have mercy. You might just as well have nailed Jesus to the cross yourself. If Jesus has really saved us we belong to Him. And if we belong to Him we should do what He tells us even if we are pretty certain it would be wrong! And I assert that He is never wrong. So let's assume we all agree that we should submit to Jesus' will in this and do what He commanded.

What is Jesus actually asking the disciplers and teachers to teach us? Consider what He didn't say. Jesus did not command us saying: "teaching them what my commandments are", or "teaching them to understand my commandments", or "teaching them how to apply my commandments to their lives", or "teaching them that they should obey my commandments", or "teaching them how to obey my commandments", or "teaching them to obey some of what I commanded". We are to be teaching them is **TO OBEY EVERYTHING** Jesus commanded. This includes all of the above and more besides.

In the past I have not done very well with teaching the entire package. This, then, is an attempt to fulfill the entire mission as much as possible. For the commands that I misunderstand it will be a miracle. Can I do this? Certainly not. Can God teach you to obey everything Jesus commanded? Certainly yes. Does He want to do this? Most likely. And the biggest question: will you submit to learning **TO** obey everything Jesus commanded? If so God's will will be done, in you. Perhaps this material will help you along the way.

This work is to help you learn. Not to teach you. God is the teacher. What I have written here could be wrong. I pray that it is not. I also pray that God will teach you his truth even when I am wrong. Perhaps He will push you to study the scriptures yourself to discover the exact truth. If this work does no more than lead you to search for better material and find something better it will have accomplished something.

This work does not pretend to be a commentary on the four gospels. If it was I would know how to read New Testament Greek, I would be very familiar with the culture of the Jews in Jesus time, having read every contemporary document found as well as what has been published to document the archaeological discoveries made in their land. I would be aware of what others have written by way of commentary on the gospels. The more widely read this work is, the more criticism I expect to collect on how uneducated I am and how unscholarly is my approach. Perhaps through this I will be referred to useful works on these subjects. Even now I probably could do more by way of research. Had Jesus

commanded me thus, "...and when you have exhaustively studied everything there is and thoroughly understood all that was written, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded..." I would have studied first and written afterwards. But instead He said, "...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded, AND I AM WITH YOU..." If I did not believe that Jesus is with me as I work on this I would not have started at all.

Furthermore this is not written to apologize for a particular denominational theology. I will let the reader guess what brand of theology I endorse most closely. Regarding the theological controversies in Christianity, there seems to be more in the scriptures to refute, at least part of any particular denominational theology than to support all of it. With the Holy Spirit's help and power and an individual's desire, willingness, teachability and honesty I believe that God can teach that individual to understand anything. If we sent people to seminary or Bible school to learn to be desirous of learning the truth, willing to make an effort at it, teachable and honest there would be little left to argue about. I have never been to these places but based on what I hear the educated say, my suspicion is that we send people to Bible school and seminary to be indoctrinated and taught how to defend our particular denominational heritage and tradition. We are more concerned that the next generation be taught **what** to think, rather than be taught **how** to learn. But, rather than take offense at the preceding ask yourself this: "Do I agree that with the Holy Spirit's help and power and my complete willingness, teachability and honesty God can teach me to understand anything?"

C.LEARNING TO OBEY

To learn **TO** obey everything Jesus has commanded the disciple of Jesus must:

- 1.Know where the commands can be found,
- 2.Know what the commands are,
- 3.Know the principle behind each of the commands, if a deeper principle exists,
- 4.Understand the commands,
- 5.Understand the principles behind the commands, if a deeper principle exists.
- 6.Understand how to apply the commands in their life.
- 7.Know why the commands are to be obeyed.
- 8.Repent of not obeying the commands,
- 9.Learn how to obey the commands in their lives,
- 10.Learn to obey the commands,
- 11.Learn how to be held accountable, by other disciples, for obeying the commands,
- 12.Keep the commands.

In the past I think I did a better job of teaching the items at the top of the list than the bottom. For the rest all flow from the disciple's resolve to do them and the active working of the Holy Spirit to change the disciple's heart and life. For God wants to make of each of us a new creation. He wants us to be made to be like Jesus.

Perhaps it would be useful to consider one or two possible paths the Holy Spirit might take a disciple along as He changes the person from a unrepentant sinner to a Christ-like mature disciple. God the Father begins to draw the people towards Jesus. He may do this by putting a desire in their hearts for something spiritual, something they don't have and something that seems so far away. In my case I was given a desire to have a life with meaning. The material life I could see ended in death. Our race ended

in death, our world ended in death, our universe ended in death. Because these things will end and will be forgotten, they are without meaning and valueless. That is how I saw it all, and that is different from the way things are. God, if He existed, did not end. If anything had meaning it had meaning in the eternal God. God could sustain all things and even if He did not, He would remember everything, who we were and what we did.

God may also put into the people a disgust with something in their lives. Something they did or are doing. They may see that escape is impossible from where they are. God, if He exists, is the only way of escape. Or instead He might have them consider the emptiness in their lives.

God will give the people the thought that they really don't know the truth. If they were sure there was no God, now they are not certain. He draws them into doubt. For doubt is a sword that cuts both ways. God urges them to begin seeking. They open their eyes and ask questions. They become observant and teachable. They are looking for the truth. They have become seekers.

God brings into the acquaintance of these seekers those who already belong to Him. He shows the seekers that in these followers there is a glimpse of what they want. They see some of the fulfillment of the desire they thought could never be fulfilled. They see those who were never prisoners of, or who escaped from, that thing from which there is no escape. Now these followers may actually appear better than they really are. God may let the people see past the human frailty of His followers to see what He has done in them, to see Him in them and to hear His words from them. He may cover their faults. This is not so hard. For the seekers have lived amongst faulty people their entire lives and may not see the truth that some of these things are faults, for they know nothing else. God may show them a spiritual reality in His people that the seekers have never seen before. And His followers might still not see it.

The seekers have objections of course. "If there is a loving God and Jesus is His son then so how come?..." At this point God connects these seekers with followers of His who have the answers. I used to debate with people in the forum of an on-line community. Most of the people there were under twenty. They had learned to parrot certain arguments. I found it fun to point out the illogic in some of their arguments by just reversing the words. For example: "If there is a loving God then why do bad things happen to people?" I could answer with, "If there is no loving God then why do good things happen to people?" This is not mere flippancy. It is the application of symmetry that exposes a lot of questions that were previously not thought of. God leads the seekers to see that the water tight logic that denies that He is, is not so water tight. Ideas that were previously dismissed with the same arguments are no longer so adequately dismissed.

At this point the seekers have as many doubts on either side and for the first time honestly want to know the truth. A curious thing may happen. When conversing with believers the seeker takes the position of the unbeliever. But when with unbelievers the seeker presents some of these new ideas he or she has heard from believers.

The seekers begin to be troubled by not knowing the truth. They recognize that the truth will have a big impact on their lives. The growing desire to know the truth comes from God as He is drawing them. They make a great effort to find the truth. By this I mean that they begin to give the question a lot of thought.

At some point it may occur to them that the truth is already revealed. It is up to them to run with it. That was how it was with me. The thought occurred to me that I had all I needed. The ball was on my side of the net.

Now I think of it as a big experiment. If someone were to tell you that by applying several volts to a container of water that hydrogen could be collected at one pole and oxygen at the other, what would be the most convincing and conclusive way of learning whether this is true? Quite simply by trying it. It

amazes me that we take for granted all the technology we have and forget that so much of it was developed using the scientific method. In the past people devised experiments that revealed the truth and principles of the natural world. What kind of experiment can we perform that will reveal God. If God is no smarter than us He is not God. If He is smarter He can evade any test we devise. But in a way He has devised tests for us. There is an experiment we can do. He offers us a deal.

We can do our best to do everything He has told us to do and then see what happens. God has said that our actions have consequences. If we do things His way the consequences will be different when compared to our previous life. Wherein we did very little His way, and all that by accident. This trying to do things His way will present us with some problems, but if we are honest and follow God every way we can something should happen. If God wants us, no matter how dumb or unobservant we are He will reveal Himself as we try to conform to His will.

When the seekers realize that there is some truth to what God says they are going to face a lot of trials. Others including the devil himself will actively resist losing a person. For anyone who does not belong to God in a sense belongs to the devil. They think the way He thinks and share his fate. The seekers themselves may think that maybe controlling their own lives and leaving things the way they are, is preferable to taking a big gamble on and with God.

But God and His followers try to help and teach and encourage the seekers by reminding them of what they hope to gain. The rewards of finding God are worth more than the troubles.

Eventually the seekers come to the point where they make a private but complete decision to follow God. The seekers have now become new believers. Frequently there is a lot of euphoria. It seemed that I was walking on air. Everything was good and life was great. I wanted to tell everyone and explain to them how I found God. Those who are already followers of Jesus will be supportive. Perhaps one or two might make an effort to help the new believer on the path.

But it might not go this way. many new believers have serious issues in their lives. Sins and destructive habits or addictions that have great power over them. Added to this, the devil attacks and attacks the weakest ones the hardest. These “at risk” new believers need a lot of guidance, support, prayer, and a real relationship with God right away.

The sad thing is that the seeker was told by believers that Jesus would change his or her life. But when their lives do not change immediately they will be discouraged and faced with doubts. Jim Sheridan founded a ministry named “TIED”, which stands for “Training In Evangelism and Discipleship”. He said many things that have stuck in my mind, but the most valuable was that discipleship needs to begin within 48 hours of a person being saved. The new believers expect everything to be different. Get involved in their lives and get them involved in discipleship and fellowship activities so that many things are different.

Unfortunately most of us will have no better idea than to invite the new believer to church Sunday. For people saved on Friday night or Saturday this is not so bad. But God alone will have to support and protect and reach out to the new believers saved earlier in the week.

For many new believers having received the word of God may not be enough to overcome ongoing sin, temptations, and the lack of a tangible life changing experience. This will be their undoing. The devil will be there to test them and they will fall away. See Lk 8:13.

Perhaps every believer, no matter how immature, knows that believers are supposed to be baptized. This is a formal and public decision to follow God. In America the new believer will be taken to meet a member of the Christian clergy. This person will require the new believer to take a greater or lesser amount of instruction This could be the beginning of discipleship but it must not be the end. Discipleship, as we have see already, is more than taking a course, even more than a thirteen week

course. A church membership course does not fulfill God's command to disciple either.

The new believers need a few things: They need to begin a dialog with God through prayer and reading the scriptures. They need to worship and praise God. They need help understanding and applying the scriptures. That's discipleship. They need people to come alongside and shepherd them from sinful living into holy living. That's discipleship. They need relationships of accountability wherein the followers of Jesus ask them the hard questions that uncover heart issues on the one hand and help to overcome on the other. That's discipleship. When these things happen the new believer becomes a disciple and it's no accident.

The new disciples begin to change and everyone notices it. They have a growing love for God and all He has done for them. There is a change in the way they act, talk, think and feel. They may have direct encounters with God. Their spiritual walk is going well . The disciple is becoming more mature. Hopefully this state of affairs lasts their entire life.

As time goes by the maturing disciples want to do something for God as an expression of thanks and to acknowledge how much He did for them This is different from joining the church and wanting to pitch in with the work. The difference is who they are trying to please. The one you are really trying to please is the one you really work for. The maturing disciples want to not disappoint God in any way. They want to help build His kingdom. They want to know what work God wants them to do and their spiritual gifts. They want and ask Him to help them search out any areas in their lives that they should change. They want to know His ways and how to do them and do everything His way. They discover that Jesus gave his people commands and they want to keep them and do everything He commanded.

That is where a book like this has some value. This book cannot in itself convince and convict anyone to obey Jesus. It can not create the desire in the disciple's heart to want to please God. That conviction is in the disciple and comes from God. The motivation to obey comes from the heart. The purpose of this book is to provide part of the means. Written material together with the discipling of other followers of Jesus can be a benefit. But, of the two, the conscientious discipling of other followers is much more important. But there won't be any discipling until the Christian makes a conscious choice to make pleasing God the highest priority.

D.THE BASIC ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMANDS USED IN THIS WORK:

II. Seek The Truth

III. Make the Lord First

IV. Love the Lord

V. Repent

VI. Be Saved

VII. Follow

VIII. Have a Right Relationship With the Lord

IX. Obey the Lord

X. Love Your Neighbor,

XI. Be Just

XII. Serve

The organization does not follow the probable development of a believer, rather, the beginning sections are the most foundational for discipleship. Some of the material is repeated in different places as it

applies to different commands. I assume it bears repeating.

E.BIBLICAL NOTATIONS

Frequently Christians are so used to finding their way around the Bible that they forget that other people do not know where to look to find the various books. We need to be more sensitive.

Here then is a few words on biblical notations. Most Bibles have a table of contents where the names of the various books are listed with page numbers. Using this the various books can be found. There are 66 books, etc. We call them books. Some of them would be short books if printed by themselves. Most of the "books" in the New Testament are really letters. Several are only about a page long. We use two and sometimes three letter abbreviations of the titles of the books to save time. Many Bibles have a list of the abbreviations for the books near the table of contents. In this work I have tried to write out the names of the books except for the four gospels themselves. These are abbreviated as follows: Mt = Matthew, Mk = Mark, Lk = Luke, Jn = John. They are named for the men who wrote them. It is in the gospels that Jesus commands are found.

In a biblical reference the number before the colon (:) is the chapter. The numbers that follow are the verses. And so Jn 3:16 is the Gospel of John chapter 3 verse 16. The chapters in the Bible are numbered at the beginning of each one and the verses are usually numbered where the verse begins. So one would first find John then the third chapter and finally the sixteenth verse.

May the Lord bless you as you put yourself on the path to know and follow Him.