

DISCOVER

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

15



The Secret of Happiness



PERHAPS YOU REMEMBER the 1981 film *Chariots of Fire*, or its recent unofficial sequel, *The Last Race* (2016). These movies highlight the life of Eric Liddell, known as the “Flying Scotsman.” Liddell won fame and glory at the 1924 Olympics, taking a gold medal in the 400-meter race. He had planned to compete in the 100-meter sprint, but switched to the 400-meter event for personal religious reasons, since the heats for the 100-meter race were set to take place on a Sunday.

Liddell stormed to an unexpected gold medal in the 400-meter contest and took the bronze in the 200-meter final race. The stage was set for him to become a sports celebrity, but instead, he chose to become a missionary to China.

In 1943, Japanese occupation forces ordered hundreds of American and European “enemy nationals,” including Liddell, to an internment camp in China’s Shantung Province. There, the prisoners had to endure months of boredom, frustration,

overcrowding, and fear. Personalities clashed; tempers flared. Two groups especially held each other in contempt—the businessmen and the missionaries. Petty squabbles multiplied.

However, one man seemed able to span the gap between these two groups—Eric Liddell, the missionary from Scotland—a man described by one internee as “without a doubt the person most in demand and most respected and loved in camp.” A Russian prostitute in camp would later recall that Liddell was the only man who had ever done anything nice for her without wanting to be repaid in kind. When she first came into camp, alone and snubbed, Liddell put up some shelves for her. Another internee recalled, “He had a gentle, humorous way of soothing ruffled tempers.”

At one angry meeting of the internees, everybody was demanding that someone else do something about the restless teenagers who were getting into trouble. Liddell came up with a solution. He organized sports, crafts, and classes for the kids, and began spending his evenings with them.

Liddell had won fame and glory as a runner at the 1924 Olympics, but in that cramped, wearying compound, he was a winner in the Christian race as well, earning the admiration of the most jaded, cynical internees.

What made him so special? You could have discovered his secret at 6 a.m. each morning. That’s when he quietly tiptoed past sleeping companions, settled down at a table, and lit a small lamp to illuminate his notebook and Bible. Eric Liddell sought grace and strength each day in the riches of God’s Word.

1 | The Guidebook for the Christian Lifestyle

The Bible was written as a guidebook for the Christian. It is full of stories of real people like you and me—people who

experienced the same challenges we face every day. Getting to know these Bible characters—their joys and sorrows, their problems and opportunities, and their search for fulfillment—helps us mature as Christians.

The psalmist David pictures our daily dependence on the Word of God by comparing it to what we would call a flashlight:

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path”
(Psalm 119:105).

The illumination we get each day from the Bible enables us to take the next step forward; it’s how we make progress. It clearly explains the qualities we need most in our lives, and shares principles for spiritual growth. Above all, the Bible presents Jesus, the Light of the World, to us. Life makes sense only when Jesus is shining on it.

2 | Transforming Friendship

Christ wants the Bible to be as real to you as a personal letter from a close friend.

“I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15).

Jesus shared the most important truths in the universe, because He wants the very best for us. His Word brings us into God’s inner circle—those He confides in and personally instructs.

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace” (John 16:33).

When you receive a letter, email or text message from a friend, it does you no good if you don’t read it. It’s the same with Jesus’

letters to you, found in the Bible. In order to experience the joy and spiritual growth He has in mind for you, you need to read the letters He has sent.

Don't leave this correspondence from heaven unopened and unread just because it is so familiar or has always been lying around. The very message of hope and comfort you need is waiting to be discovered somewhere in God's Word.



Here is one typical testimony about the Bible's impact:

“I needed help, and I found it in Jesus. Every want was supplied, the hunger of my soul was satisfied; the Bible is to me the revelation of Christ. I believe in Jesus because He is to me a divine Saviour. I believe the Bible because I have found it to be the voice of God to my soul” (Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 461).

3 | The Bible Summarized in the Ten Commandments

Today we have the entire Bible as the Guidebook for a healthy Christian lifestyle, but before people had the Bible, God gave His people, Israel, the Ten Commandments as a summary of biblical guidelines for daily living.

A brief look at the Ten Commandments helps us understand why Jesus, the prophets who wrote the Bible, and many modern scholars have been led to affirm that the Ten Commandments are an indispensable basis for living according to God's will.

The Ten Commandments naturally fall into two divisions. The first four define our relationship to God, and the last six define our relationship to other people. They are found in Exodus 20.

The first two commandments outline our relationship to God and worship.

- 1 “You shall have no other gods before Me” (verse 3).
- 2 “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them” (verses 4, 5).

The third and fourth commandments define our relationship to God’s name and holy day.

- 3 “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain” (verse 7).
- 4 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God” (verses 8-10).

Commandments five and seven safeguard family bonds.

- 5 “Honor your father and your mother” (verse 12).
- 7 “You shall not commit adultery” (verse 14).

Commandments six, eight, nine, and ten protect us in social relationships.

- 6 “You shall not murder” (verse 13).
- 8 “You shall not steal” (verse 15).
- 9 “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (verse 16).
- 10 “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife . . . nor anything that is your neighbor’s” (verse 17).

The Ten Commandments are a concise summary of the Bible’s teachings regarding how we ought to live. They define our relationship with God as well as with other people. They are the guideposts of a Christian lifestyle.

4 | What Jesus Said About the Ten Commandments

One day as Jesus was teaching, an enthusiastic young man hurried up to Him and asked, “Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” (Matthew 19:16). Christ could see that this man was wrestling with a money problem and advised him to get rid of his possessions and “keep the commandments” (verse 17).

The young man tried to sidestep Christ’s diagnosis of his problem by asking Him, “Which ones?” Jesus then listed several of the Ten Commandments: those prohibiting murder, adultery, stealing, lying, and dishonoring parents (verses 18, 19). Then Jesus invited him to turn away from his riches and follow Him.

Finally, this “rich young ruler” turned and walked away sadly (verses 20-22). He wasn’t willing to take the prescription. He could agree with the Ten Commandments, but he wasn’t willing to obey the commandments that directed him to abandon his selfish way of life.

5 | Guide to a Happy Life

The Ten Commandments show us the boundaries that enable healthy relationships to grow—with God and with each other. This is why God appeals so passionately through Isaiah:

“Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea” (Isaiah 48:18).

Jesus pointed to obedience as the way to real joy:

“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).

The Bible presents the Ten Commandments as an unchangeable, indispensable, perfect guide to happy living. Human experience testifies to its enduring validity. Jesus and many others declared that the road to happiness is paved with loving obedience to God’s commandments, for they are God’s basic principles for living a happy life.

6 | The Ten Commandments Were an Indispensable Guide for People in the Old Testament

The book of Ecclesiastes is an account of Solomon’s search for happiness. He records how he tried to find happiness in the riches of the world. He built magnificent houses, and planted productive vineyards, beautiful gardens, and orchards of luscious fruit. He acquired servants. He found himself surrounded with every material thing a person could desire. But eventually, his bubble burst. He said:

“Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind” (Ecclesiastes 2:11).

Solomon then turned to searching for happiness in the pleasures of this world. Following one dead-end street after

another, Solomon finally decided that he had made a mistake in seeing illusions as reality, and he declared:

“Vanity of vanities . . . All is vanity” (Ecclesiastes 12:8).

Solomon had once known and followed the way of the Lord. As he compared his sinful, reckless pursuit of happiness with his early life of obedience to God, he came to this understanding:

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13, KJV).

Solomon had tried to find a shortcut to happiness in the pleasures of sin. Toward the close of his life, he admitted his error and published his failures to the world in the hope that he could save others from the same mistake. He wrote: “He that keepeth the law, happy is he” (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).

7 | The Ten Commandments Are an Indispensable Guide for People in the New Testament

In the New Testament, Paul testified:

“Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” (Romans 7:12).


James adds his weight to the testimony of Paul by stating:

“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘Do not murder.’ Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty” (James 2:10-12).

Charles Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher of the 1800s, declared: “The law of God is divine law—holy, heavenly, perfect. . . . There is not a commandment too many; there is not one too few; but it is so incomparable that its perfection is proof of its divinity” (“The Curse Removed,” *The Spurgeon Archive*).

John Wesley, one of the founders of the Methodist Church, wrote this about the enduring nature of the law: “The moral law contained in the Ten Commandments . . . He [Christ] did not take away. . . . Every part of this law must remain in force upon all mankind and in all ages” (*Sermons*, vol. 1, pp. 221, 222).

Billy Graham, one of the world’s most respected evangelists, in answer to a question published in the *Kansas City Star* regarding the Ten Commandments, responded, “Have you ever actually studied the Ten Commandments thoughtfully and carefully? (You can find them in Exodus 20 or Deuteronomy 5). If you do, you might be surprised how relevant and up-to-date they are, even if you don’t agree with some of them.”



**There is only one
path to obedience,
and it is not by
trying harder**

8 | Power to Obey

The Bible and the Ten Commandments are an unchangeable, perfect guide to happy living. Yet we humans find it so difficult to obey the commandments. Why? The Bible gives us an answer:

“The carnal [sinful] mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be” (Romans 8:7).

One lady expressed it like this: “I believe the Ten Commandments are binding; I know the Bible teaches that I should follow them. I believe that most of the great preachers accept them as being a guide to our conduct. I am certain that keeping them leads to happiness. And I have tried my very best to keep them, but I just can’t do it. I simply can’t keep them, and I’m beginning to believe that no one else can.”

Because we are born with a sinful nature, we cannot—in our own strength—obey God’s holy, unchanging law. We can try, and millions have tried, but over and over again, we find ourselves falling and failing. There is only one path to obedience, and it is not by trying harder.

The very fact that we cannot keep God’s holy law in our own strength tells us something important. It tells us that we are sinners in need of a Savior. Paul put it like this:

“By the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20).

“The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24).

You see, Jesus is the Answer! Once the law teaches us that we are helpless without a Savior, we can come to Jesus Christ and receive power from Him to obey His law.

9 | Loving Obedience to the Ten Commandments

Jesus tells us that obedience is the result of love:

“If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15).

If we love God, we will obey the first four commandments, which define our relationship to God; and if we love people, we will obey the last six commandments, which define our relationship with others (Matthew 22:35-40).

The Apostle Paul agrees with the thought that love for God and our neighbors will result in being law-keepers rather than law-breakers:

“He who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law” (Romans 13:8-10).

The person who tramples on the Ten Commandments sins:

“Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4).

Thank God we have a Savior who came to this world, died, and was resurrected—all so that we could live:

“You know that He [Jesus] was manifested to take away our sins” (1 John 3:5).

Our Savior forgives and removes our sinfulness:

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

And He promises to give us His love so we, in turn, can love others:

“The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Romans 5:5).

We have no ability in ourselves to keep God’s law. In fact, our sinful minds reject God’s law (Romans 3:10), but the Holy Spirit has promised to pour out God’s love into our hearts (Romans 5:5). Love is the motivating power of the Christian life. Because we love God, we naturally want to obey Him. “Love is the fulfillment of the law” (Romans 13:10).

10 | God’s Grace and Obedience to the Law

Salvation is a gift. *We cannot earn it.* We can only accept it *by faith*. We receive justification (right standing with God) as a gift, solely through faith, because of God’s grace.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

We cannot keep the commandments by our own works—by *trying*. We cannot keep the commandments to *be* saved. However, when we come to Jesus and *are* saved, His love fills our hearts, and as a result of this divine grace and acceptance, our desire to follow and obey Christ intensifies. We begin to obey His commandments through the power of His love in our hearts. Christ’s love is “poured out in our hearts,” and we begin to love others with His love.

“This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).

According to John, “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness” (1 John 3:4), but after suggesting that the Christian is no longer under the condemnation of the law because of Christ’s death for our sins on Calvary, Paul adds:

“Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law” (Romans 3:31).

Paul stresses the futility of human effort and indicates that we are not under the law as a way of salvation, but “under grace,” then he asks:

“Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!” (Romans 6:15).

“Faith without works is dead” (James 2:20), but a heart motivated by love produces a life of loving obedience (1 John 5:2). To love Christ is to obey His commandments:

“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me” (John 14:21).

Paul echoes Jesus’ teaching:

“What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:3, 4).

Living in the Spirit’s power translates into a growing ability to fulfill the “righteous requirement of the law.”

Continued on page 16

WordSearch

If you want to go deeper into this study topic, complete this section.

1. Is your conscience always a reliable guide to what is right?
(Proverbs 16:25)

2. What word does God use to describe His law? (Psalm 19:7)

3. What does the Bible say about the value of your faith if you are not also being obedient to God's will? (James 2:20-26)

4. How long did Jesus say His law would remain in place?
(Matthew 5:17, 18)

5. When a person truly loves the Lord, how will he or she feel about obeying His law? (Psalm 40:8)



Eric Liddell demonstrated that, even in the worst of circumstances, the believer who is plugged into God's power can live a contented, obedient life. Liddell demonstrated grace in a time of stress and fear. His loving relationship with God enabled Him to meet "the righteous requirement of the law" through his close relationships with others in the internment camp. A loving relationship with the crucified and risen Savior can produce that quality of life—when Christ's love fills our hearts, it becomes our nature to obey His commandments.

"The law [is] written in . . . [our] hearts" (Romans 2:15).

Have you discovered this secret for yourself? Jesus' love for you caused Him to give His life for your sin. He offers to empower all your relationships with His love and "make you complete in every good work to do His will" (Hebrews 13:21). What is your response?

My Decision

- I choose, by God's power and grace in my life, to obey all His commandments.
- I love Jesus and want to live for Him. Please pray for me.

My Prayer

Dear Father in heaven, thank You for the Bible, Your Guidebook for Christian living. Thank You for the power of the Holy Spirit and for Your love, which makes it possible to live for You and keep Your commandments. Please fill me daily with Your love. I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

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