

to give us His Spirit to enable us to obey (see Ezekiel 36:27). We received His promised Holy Spirit when we believed the truth of the gospel (Ephesians 1:13). The Holy Spirit is God dwelling in us. He empowers us to be able to obey the truth continuously. We can do beyond what we can think or imagine according to His power at work within us (Ephesians 3:20). We can do all things He commands us to do because He is in us strengthening us (Philippians 4:13).

We exercise the power we have by continuously exercising faith as Paul states in Galatians 2:20. Living by faith can be defined as follows: “attempting to obey expecting the Lord to fulfill our act of faith with His power” (see Paul’s prayer in 2 Thessalonians 1:11). We can obey every command the Lord has given us. The command may seem impossible for us to do, but if we attempt to obey, the Lord will do for us and through us what is impossible for us to do without Him (NOTE: John 15:5 states very clearly that apart from Him we can do nothing).

The picture of using the power of a car gives some idea how this exercise of faith works. We have all of the car’s power at our disposal, but we move forward in power only when we press down on the gas pedal, and we stop the car in power only when we press the break pedal. Attempting to obey God’s commands is like stepping down on the gas pedal to do what he tells us to do, or stepping down on the break pedal to stop doing what he tells us not to do. The power is released and we have divine assistance in fulfilling our attempt at obedience.

### The Blessings of Obedience

Obedying God’s commands allows us to experience his blessings. Two commands in particular open the door to those blessings: “repent” and “believe” (Mark 1:15). “Repent” means “to change one’s mind.” “Believe” means “to consider something to be true and therefore worthy of one’s trust.”

When we repent and believe, God gives us the righteousness of God (Romans 4:16, 21, 22-25; 6:16; 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4). This is called *positional* righteousness or justification. We use what we have been given by obeying his commands through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is called *experiential* righteousness or sanctification (Romans 6:19). In other words, when we obey we *experience* the righteousness we have already been given.

By God’s grace, we repent and believe in order to experience the blessing of positional righteousness, the removal of the penalty of sin by complete forgiveness of sins (Romans 4:6-8), the blessing of eternal life (Romans 5:21), and the receiving of the promised Holy Spirit by whom we inherit all of God’s blessings and the power to live the abundant life (Ephesians 1:3, 13-14; 1 Corinthians 2:11-13; John 10:10b).

Obedience to every other command of Christ causes us to *live* righteously (Romans 6:16). When we obey the commands of Christ, we experience the abundant life Jesus came to bring us (John 10:10b). The following verses list some of the blessings that accompany obedient, or righteous, living:

1. *Ephesians 6:14* — Positional and experiential righteousness (obedient living by the power of the Holy Spirit) protect us from the powers of darkness.
2. *Hebrews 12:11* — Experiential righteousness yields peaceful fruit.
3. *1 Peter 3:14* — Experiential righteousness yields blessing even when it results in persecution.
4. *1 John 2:29; 3:7* — Experiential righteousness is evidence of being born again.
5. *Proverbs 10:6* — Experiential righteousness blesses the individual.
6. *Proverbs 3:33b* — Experiential righteousness blesses the family.
7. *Proverbs 11:10-11* — Experiential righteousness blesses the city.

8. *Proverbs 14:34* — Experiential righteousness exalts a nation.
9. *Proverbs 11:18* — Experiential righteousness reaps a sure reward.
10. The word “righteous” or “righteousness” is used 78 times in the New International Version’s (NIV) translation of Proverbs. Count the blessings (personal, family, city, nation)!
11. *Jeremiah 4:1-2* (NIV) shows that righteousness blesses the nations.
12. *John 17:23* — Righteousness yields a unified testimony to the world concerning God sending His son and loving His people.

### What Did the Lord Command Us to Do?

The following commands are a few of the more than 150 commands the Lord has given us in the New Testament:

1. *Matthew 28:20* — “Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.”
2. *Matthew 17:5* — “Listen to the Son [Jesus Christ].”
3. *Matthew 22:37* (see also 1 John 5:3) — “Love the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”
4. *Matthew 22:39* (see also 1 John 5:2) — “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

## Family Church

Pastor Ray Haas

715-340-0537

rayandjenhaas@yahoo.com

## Living in Christ

# Following the Commands of God:

“... Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you ...”  
Matthew 28:20



Family Church

# F o l l o w i n g   t h e   C o m m a n d s   o f   G o d

“... Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you ...” — Matthew 28:20

Abundant life. That’s what everyone’s looking for, isn’t it? Life to the full? Good news: Jesus offers that kind of life. Jesus came that we might have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10b). He was crucified to pay the penalty for our sin and provide the way for us to be made righteous and have eternal life. The Holy Spirit was given to us after He ascended into heaven to give us the power to live righteously in order to experience abundant life.

Jesus stated in nine words the curriculum for abundant living, “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20). Jesus’ commands will make a positive difference in raising children, in having a fulfilling godly marriage, in doing business, in our friendships, in everything we are and do no matter what the temporal circumstances are. Obedience to His commands will display God’s glory to a lost and dying world.

## Is Teaching Obedience Legalism?

Legalism is a terrible sin, but teaching obedience is *not* legalism. Salvation comes entirely by the grace of God. It is important to note, however, that just as we are righteous in Christ by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 5:1-2; Hebrews 10:14), so in the same way do we live out our righteousness: by grace through faith (2 Corinthians 12:9; Hebrews 4:16; 10:14; Galatians 2:20). Eternal life and abundant life are both experienced by grace through faith.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church: “The only thing that counts is obeying His commands” (1 Cor 7:19). Trust and obey for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.

## Our Confidence to Obey: Knowing God

We have confidence to obey the Lord because His purpose is for us to have eternal and abundant life. These purposes are clearly stated in John 3:16 and John 10:10b: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” and “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (emphasis added). The Lord desires for us to be with Him forever (John 14:1-6) and desires for us to have fullness of life while we live out our life on earth in an environment corrupted by sin (Romans 3:23; 5:12; 8:21,22; Philippians 2:15)

We have confidence to obey the Lord because, as Creator, He knows what is best for us. He knows how we are made (Psalm 139:13-16, Genesis 1:27). He knows what we need (Matthew 6:8,31,32). The Lord, as Creator, has all the power needed to do whatever He commands (Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, etc.)

We have confidence to obey the Lord because His actions have given us reason to believe he has our best interests in mind. The Lord’s desire for our best interests is made crystal clear by Romans 5:8 and Romans 8:31-32. The Lord made the greatest sacrifice anyone could make to demonstrate His love for us. He clarified in 8:31 that He is for us and in 8:32 that He will spare nothing for our well-being. We can confidently and eagerly obey Him!

We need confidence in the Lord in order to obey him. For instance, the commands to rejoice, be glad and leap for joy seem rather odd to be following when we are insulted, persecuted, and falsely accused because of Jesus. But that is exactly what Jesus commands believers to do in Matthew 5:11-12 and Luke 6:23. We can trust and obey because we know the Lord.

## The Need to Obey: We Are Blind!

The Lord makes it very clear through the written Word that people are blind, and they don’t know they’re blind unless it is revealed to them by the Holy Spirit using the written Word (John 16:8-11; Romans 7:7,13). Proverbs 14:12 and 4:19 state this truth: people do what they think is right for them at the time they do it and don’t really know why they stumbled and messed up their life (they did what they thought was right). Some go through life without living God’s way and are not aware of the destruction until it suddenly comes upon them at the end of their lives (Psalm 73:4, 5, 18-20).

We are blind because of sin’s deception. Sin deceives us and hardens our heart to the truth (Hebrews 3:12-13). We are determined to do what we think is right and best for us, but because sin is pleasurable for a season of time (Hebrews 11:25), we are deceived and stumble in the darkness of that deception. We are blind and don’t know it — unless we take the Scripture as truth. If we believe that the Scripture is true, then we realize we are blind and in darkness and we seek light and assistance in living life so we can avoid stumbling and ruining ourselves.

We are blind as people because the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers (2 Corinthians 4:4). If we are unbelievers we are blinded to the truth and walk in darkness (Ephesians 2:1-3; 4:17-19). We can walk in darkness as believers if we continue to live like unbelievers in the futility of our own thinking (Ephesians 4:17) and don’t continually renew our mind in the truth and put it into practice (Ephesians 4:20-24; Romans 12:2). Satan, the god of this age, deceives even believers if the believers do not stand firm in the truth (1 Peter 5:8-9; 2 Corinthians 11:3).

Psalm 19:8 and Proverbs 6:23 state clearly that God’s commands give light in darkness. Jesus commanded that His new disciples be taught to obey

everything He commanded the disciples who had followed Him during His three years of teaching (Matthew 28:20). We need to learn and obey the commands of God if we are to experience eternal and abundant life. We will not be deceived if we obey the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Creator God.

The Psalmist called God’s commands a lamp (Psalm 19:8). If we realize we are in darkness, then we desire to have the lamp of His commands. We are commanded, for instance, in Matthew 5:24 to make it a priority, even over offering sacrifice to the Lord, to be reconciled with people. This works to light up our relationships. If we don’t realize we are in darkness and *think* we are in the light (i.e., that we’re right), then we are in the dark in many relationships and miss out on the blessing the Lord desires for us.

## The Power to Obey: We Can Obey!

We who are powerless on our own to consistently obey His commands *can* obey all His commands consistently by using *His* power. He gives us the grace to obey (1 Peter 5:10; Titus 2:11-14). As believers in Christ we can no longer say, “I *can’t* obey.” Instead, when we are failing to obey His commands, we more truthfully must say, “I *won’t* obey.”

An example of a command that seems too difficult to obey is found in Luke 17:3-4. In those verses, we are commanded to rebuke the one who sins against us and forgive him if he repents. We are commanded to forgive even seven times in one day. Even though it seems very difficult to obey that command, we *have* the power to do it.

We, as believers in Jesus Christ have the power to obey everything we are commanded to do by our Lord Jesus Christ. God promised