



## **GOD'S WAY IS BEST**

### Does Liberty Have Perimeters?

September 2, 2023

#### **1 PREPARING**

##### **A. THE SOURCE**

**Exodus 20:3-17** • (Read it from the Bible.)

**Matthew 22:37-40 (NIV)** • “Jesus replied, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.’ ”

**Matthew 23:11, 12 (NIV)** • “The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

**Psalms 44:3 (NIV)** • “It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was your right hand, your arm, and the light of your face, for you loved them.”

**Messages to Young People, p. 148** • “Many are waiting for some great work to be brought to them. Daily they lose opportunities for showing their faithfulness to God; daily they fail of discharging with whole-heartedness the little duties of life, which seem to them uninteresting. While waiting for some great work in which they may exercise their supposedly great talents, and thus satisfy their ambitious longings, their life passes away.”

**Messiah, pp. 11, 12** • “Jesus’ sacrifice on Calvary shows that the law of unselfish love is the law of life for earth and heaven. This selfless love comes straight from the heart of God.”

##### **B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT “GOD'S WAY IS BEST”**

In the Bible Jesus tells us—His citizens—to follow His example when He was here on earth. When we look at the world, we often see behaviors and characteristics honored that are opposite from those Christ portrayed. For example, God has asked us to love Him with all our heart, soul, and mind. In the kingdom of this world, which Satan rules, people are expected to have that kind of passion for making money, winning at sports, or being the most beautiful or handsome.

The Bible tells us to love others as ourselves. That includes showing honor to our parents. Satan tells us it’s all right to ignore, disobey, and make fun of them. (Notice what people laugh at on television?) The devil doesn’t care how we disregard the principles of unselfish love, as long as we do.

Every principle of God has been counterfeited, twisted, and turned around by Satan. The devil knows that God’s way is the best, and his goal is to make sure we do anything but what God has told us leads to success in His kingdom.

As citizens of the kingdom of God, we must continually focus on the principles of His kingdom so that the devil’s counterfeits don’t deceive us. It all began when “the law of selfless love was broken in heaven itself. Sin began as selfishness” (Jerry D. Thomas, *Messiah* [Nampa, ID: Pacific Press®

Publishing Association, 2003], p. 12).

### C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH "GOD'S WAY IS BEST"

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Understand that the principles of God's kingdom run contrary to the principles of this world.
2. God's law of unselfish love is the way to true happiness.
3. Recognize that living by God's law in this world can be accomplished only through the power of His Spirit.

### D. MATERIALS NEEDED

**Beginning** • (Activity A) compass—one that points to the four cardinal directions. (If you don't have one, check with your local Pathfinder Club.) A picture of Jesus or a card with the name "Jesus" written on it. Also cards labeled S, N, W, NW, SW, NE, SE. (If you have extra time, you can also do: NNE, ENE, ESE, SSE, SSW, WSW, WNW, NNW); (Activity B) paper, pencils, white/chalkboard, markers/chalk.

**Connecting** • Bibles, student lessons, paper, pens or pencils.

## 2 BRIDGING

### A. THE WEEK IN REVIEW

**Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:**

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

### B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at [www.realtimfaith.net](http://www.realtimfaith.net))
- >> Service projects reports

## 3 BEGINNING

**NOTE TO TEACHER:** Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

### A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

**Get ready** • The purpose of this activity is to reinforce the students' understanding that there is only one direction that Jesus is taking us. There may be other directions that come close, but only one way that keeps us walking right with Him. To prepare, have the picture of Jesus and the direction cards ready. The leader will need to create an open space where the students can walk in different directions. Ask for volunteers to participate in this activity.

**Get set • Ask: Does anyone know how a compass works?** (In the Northern Hemisphere the compass will point toward the magnetic north; in the Southern Hemisphere the compass will point toward the magnetic south.) **Ask: What direction does the compass point? Why do we use a compass? When would using a compass be valuable to us?**

**Go • Say: Now that everyone knows what a compass is and how to use it, let's give it a try. I need a volunteer.** Give the volunteer the compass. **Say: Walk straight east and stand by the wall.** Once the student has located the eastern wall, place the picture or name of Jesus

there. Next, get a second volunteer and have them find the west side of the room. Mark it with the W card. Depending on how many students you have, one student can do a couple directions or individual students can locate a direction and label it with the identification card.

**Debriefing • Ask:** How many different directions are designated as the “Jesus” direction? How many other directions did we label? If you didn’t label these, **ask:** Are there more directions that we didn’t label? (NNE, ENE, ESE, SSE, SSW, WSW, WNW, NNW) How easy is it to see when we are headed directly opposite from the “Jesus” way? (That’s pretty easy to tell.) Did anyone look as if they were headed toward Jesus, but ended up off by a little bit? How is that like thinking we are following Jesus, but mixing in our own opinions, or the principles we pick up in the world around us?

What compass do citizens of God’s kingdom have to help them walk with Jesus? (the Bible, which contains God’s commandments; other things and people who help explain them—Holy Spirit, parents, pastors, teachers, friends, the Spirit of Prophecy). **Say:** Best of all, we have the example of Christ’s life of unselfish love while He was here on earth.

## B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

**Get ready •** Divide the students into two groups. Have pairs/trios form within the two larger groups. Supply each pair/trio with paper and pencil and have them designate a scribe.

**Get set •** Give each large group their instructions without the other large group hearing them. Then each pair/trio is to work to carry out the instructions. (If you have a small Sabbath School, you can eliminate forming pairs/trios.) Tell the first large group: **Each of your pairs/trios must make up 10 rules that a person should live by in order to become the richest and most famous person on earth.** Tell the second large group: **Each of your pairs/trios must make up 10 rules that a person should**

**live by in order to absorb God’s unselfish love into their lives and share it with others.**

**Go •** Give time for creation of the lists. If possible, have an adult helper available so that each of you can work with one of the large groups when they have completed their initial lists. Listen to the pairs/trios share and help the large group come to a consensus on a group list of the top 10 rules. Use a white/chalkboard to help manage this process.

After each large group has made their list of the top 10 rules, bring everyone together and have each large group tell the other one what their assignment was and the list that they developed.

**Debriefing • Ask:** What do these two lists make you think of? What seems to be the fundamental principle of each of the lists? (Hopefully, you will be able to point out that one is very self-centered, and the other is very selfless, or self-sacrificing.) What similarities are there? What differences? How might a person who tries to live by all the rules on one list view a person who tries to live by all the rules on the other list? What similarities or differences do you see between the list of 10 rules for absorbing and reflecting God’s unselfish love and the Ten Commandments?

## C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

**In your own words, tell the following story:**

A few generations ago, on very dark, foggy nights, along the Netherlands’ rocky coast, a man stood out in the water on a huge rock, a lit lantern hanging from his hand. Ships, seeing the light, would turn into the harbor for safety. But this wasn’t a harbor, and the man with the lantern wasn’t the lighthouse. The man also wasn’t alone; there were more men along the shore waiting for a ship to be tricked by the false lighthouse and crash into the rocks just off the shore. Then the pirates would loot the ship and disappear into the countryside.

**Debriefing • Ask:** How did the pirates take

something good and turn it into something bad? (The light is good, but they used it to trick people.) **How do you think the ship captains could have been kept from being fooled?** (They could have known the coast better and known where to look for the real lighthouse.) **Do you see any comparisons in this story to your life as an agent of the kingdom?**

## 4 CONNECTING

### A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM AND CONNECTING TO LIFE

**Present the following ideas in your own words:**

**Ask:** The world has a lot of ideas about what is success; can you describe any?

**Say:** Let's see what the Bible says about success. This is the time to look at the texts in the teacher's section and hand out the student's lesson to have those texts read also. Notice specifically the quote from *Messiah*, the contemporary adaptation of *The Desire of Ages*, by Jerry D. Thomas.

**Say:** Having looked at what the Bible says, compare that with what we know the world says about success.

**Ask:** What does the Bible give us as guiding principles for happiness?

**Say:** Let's take a look at Exodus 20:3-17 and find those guiding principles for our happiness and success. Have each commandment read by a volunteer. Lead students in a discussion of how each commandment elaborates on how "the law of unselfish love is the law of life for earth and heaven" and leads to true happiness and success.

#### 1. Exodus 20:3.

Principle: Christianity is the only religion that has a perfect example (Jesus) of God's law

of unselfish love for us to pattern our lives after (through His power). No other gods or religions offer that. We will be happiest if we avoid considering other gods (religious or secular) or false spiritual beliefs. (Religions such as New Age, Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Druidism, etc., are counterfeits and will take us away from Jesus, His power, and true success.)

#### 2. Exodus 20:4-6.

Principle: We will find happiness in placing our relationship with Jesus first and not letting things become so important to us that we forget about Jesus and our love for Him.

#### 3. Exodus 20:7.

Principle: We will have greater joy in our life if we don't misrepresent Jesus. There is no happiness when we use the name of God as a curse. Nor can we be joyful when, by our lives, we present a false picture of Jesus and what He is like.

#### 4. Exodus 20:8-11.

Principle: The seventh day has a special blessing. By stopping our daily work and putting aside our worries on that day, we will be much happier. Jesus looks forward to this day also, because we are allowing ourselves to enjoy our special friendship with Him. Only in spending time with Him and honoring Him as our Creator are we changed into His image of unselfish love.

#### 5. Exodus 20:12.

Principle: Our home is happiest if we respect our parents and treat them the way we would like to be treated. God has a special blessing for us when we honor the family relationships that He created for us. It is the perfect laboratory for us to practice the loving principles of God's kingdom.

#### 6. Exodus 20:13.

Principle: Taking the life of, or in some way ruining the life of, one of God's children is the ultimate act of selfishness, the principle of Satan's kingdom, not God's.

#### 7. Exodus 20:14.

Principle: We are happiest when the family loves one another and keeps this special relationship exclusive to the family. Any

other action is a selfish one that hurts many people. It is obviously not based on God's principle of love.

**8. Exodus 20:15.**

Principle: Taking other people's things hurts those people. It would hurt us if someone stole from us, so we should treat them as we would want to be treated. Neither is there happiness in worrying about getting caught, or that other people will take what is ours.

**9. Exodus 20:16.**

Principle: We are not going to be happy when we misrepresent the truth. Lying brings more worries, such as getting caught or having to remember what we've lied about so we don't give ourselves away. And, because we know how much God loves us, we want to treat all of His other children with His same unselfish love.

**10. Exodus 20:17.**

Principle: Happiness and joy come from being satisfied with what we have, trusting that God has given us all we need. We lose our joy when we think only about ourselves and are always wishing for what we don't have and think we want.

**Share the following ideas in your own words:**

"The law of selfless love is the law of life for earth and heaven. This selfless love comes straight from the heart of God" (Jerry D. Thomas, *Messiah* [Nampa, ID: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 2003], pp. 11, 12). Therefore, success in God's kingdom is being so connected with God through Jesus and His Spirit that we absorb this principle into our lives and live it out in all our relationships with others. Each of the Ten Commandments grows from this concept. This is totally opposite from what the world considers success, which usually depends on people being self-centered in order to get where they want to, or what they want. God's way to success brings true happiness. Satan's leaves people empty and hollow eventually, because the success of this world never lasts forever.

**B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION**

**Ask someone beforehand to read or tell the illustration from Sabbath's section of the lesson.**

**Ask:** How do you feel about freedom, meaning you can do anything you want? Does another's freedom end where yours begins? How do you define where someone's freedom begins and ends? By what means do we attain true freedom and happiness? (following God's plan, keeping His commandments, doing what Jesus did)

**Then, in your own words, share the following thoughts:**

There are many examples of how the way humans view things is very limited. Most humans view success and happiness in relationship to their lives here on this earth, and the influences that they see all around them. That gives them a very self-centered focus, which is exactly what Satan wants them to have. That is what he is all about, and what got him thrown out of heaven. When we are able to look at the bigger picture that only God can see, we find that the law of life in the universe is the law of unselfish love. We will be happiest and most successful for eternity when we live according to that law just as Jesus did. Jesus gives us the power to live as He did while on earth. And we can easily see that this unselfish love idea is far different from what the world thinks.

**5 APPLYING**

**A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY**

**In your own words, share the following thoughts:**

We have discussed what success looks like in God's kingdom, and how Satan tries to counterfeit God's principles for success in his kingdom on this earth. What does this mean for our lives? Are there areas in our lives in which we might

be functioning in the wrong kingdom? Might our path not be with Jesus, but in a slightly different direction?

Have students refer to Friday's section of their lesson—the list of what living out God's principles of unselfish love might look like in their lives. Ask them, in groups of two or three, to read down the list of 10 and discuss honestly how that looks or doesn't look like a description of their life in the past week.

Bring them back together and **ask**: **What came to your mind as you discussed these kingdom-life principles? Is anyone willing to share any areas in which they see they could walk more closely with Jesus in the coming week?** (Now would be a good time for the leader to share an area in which they would like to be walking more closely with Jesus.)

## **B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS**

1. What does it mean to be a successful agent of God's kingdom?
2. How possible is it to be successful in God's kingdom as well as in this world?
3. How do we determine whether or not our

actions are motivated by unselfish love?

4. Whom can we turn to for help in living by God's kingdom principles?
5. How can one have a good concept of who they are and still be a "servant" or "the last" instead of the first?

## **6 CLOSING**

### **SUMMARY**

**In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:**

The world shows us ways of living that don't follow biblical principles. Jesus' way is the path to true joy and happiness, something that is very hard to believe when the world is bombarding us with other images. In order to make good decisions in this world, we need to know God's principles for happiness. Thinking about what Jesus would like us to do will help us know what is the right way. All the power in the universe is available to help us find out what is important and to do what is right. We just have to stay continually connected to Jesus.



## STUDENT LESSON

### **GOD'S WAY IS BEST** Does Liberty Have Perimeters?

September 2, 2023

#### Sabbath **FOR STUDY**

- » **Memory Text:** "Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets' " (Matthew 22:37-40, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 19, The Law of God:** "The great principles of God's law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God's love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age."
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 49-52

#### **DOES LIBERTY HAVE PERIMETERS?**

"The story is told of a European who was always complaining about his lack of freedom. He kept saying, 'Someday I will go to America, the land of the free.' At last the day came when he was on his way to America, the land of his dreams. As he sailed into New York harbor and saw the Statue of Liberty, he was thrilled. He cried out, 'I'm free at last, free at last.'

"As soon as he got off the boat, he walked

down the street, right up to a perfect stranger, and punched him in the nose. It wasn't long until a policeman arrested him. The European protested, saying, 'This is a land of freedom, I can do as I please.' But the man with the sore nose said to him, 'Mister, you may be free, but don't you forget that your freedom ends where my nose begins.'

"Why are laws necessary? God knows that if there were no laws, we would live in a universe of anarchy, and nobody would be truly happy. Any liberty that infringes on the rights of others is not true liberty" (Henry Feyerabend, *Slices of Life* [Oshawa, ON: Maracle Press Limited, 1995]).

By following God, we can have true freedom. Freedom from sin and the control of Satan.

God's laws secure our freedom and are laws of love—love for Him and love for others.

#### Sunday **RESPONDING**

- » Read Matthew 20:26-28.
- » Kevin wants to feel included in school activities at his new school. He doesn't necessarily want to become really popular, just accepted and a part of things. Sports aren't his thing, so he takes his parents' advice to try to get involved in student government. But, of course, all the important positions are taken by popular kids, whether they can do the jobs well or not. What is open to him, he is told, is a "position" as chair of the cleanup committee for the school picnic.

- » Should Kevin agree to do it? What will that say about him to his new schoolmates? Will he ever be seen as anything other than a “servant”? What advice would you give Kevin before he makes his decision?

## Monday BIBLE ANSWERS ON THE LAW OF GOD

- » Read Exodus 20:1-17; Matthew 22:35-40; John 14:15.
- » God’s law was given that human beings might know how to relate to God and to others. The first four commandments deal with our relationship to God. The last six commandments are about our relationships with each other. God is a God of love, and the Ten Commandments help us to understand how to show our love to God and to others.
- » How do you see the relationship between Exodus 20 and Matthew 22? \_\_\_\_\_
- » How do these commandments shape your life? \_\_\_\_\_
- » Unscramble the mixed-up words and then fill in the blanks to be able to read the following verse from the New King James Version.

“The law of the LORD is **tcefrep, gnitrevnoc** the soul; the **ynomitset** of the LORD is **erus**, making **esiw** the simple; the **setutats** of the LORD are **thgir, gniciojer** the heart; the **tnemdnammoc** of the LORD is **erup, gnet-hgilne** the **seye**; the **raef** of the LORD is **naelc, gnirudne** forever; the **stnemgduj** of the LORD are **urt** and **suoethgir** altogether. More to be **derised** are they than **dlog**, yea, than much fine gold; **reteews** also than **yenoh** and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is **denraw**, and in **gnipeek** them there is great **drawer**” (**mlasP** 19:7-11).

“The law of the LORD is \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ the soul; the \_\_\_\_\_ of the LORD is \_\_\_\_\_, making \_\_\_\_\_ the simple; the \_\_\_\_\_ of the LORD are \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ the heart; the \_\_\_\_\_ of the LORD is \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_; the \_\_\_\_\_ of the LORD is \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ forever; the \_\_\_\_\_ of the LORD are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ altogether. More to be \_\_\_\_\_ are they than \_\_\_\_\_, yea, than much fine gold; \_\_\_\_\_ also than \_\_\_\_\_ and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is \_\_\_\_\_, and in \_\_\_\_\_ them there is great \_\_\_\_\_” (\_\_\_\_\_ 19:7-11).

## Tuesday REFLECTING

- » Read 1 John 5:3.
- » Everything about God’s kingdom is about selflessness. That is sometimes a hard concept to really understand. But self-centeredness is exactly what Satan and his kingdom are all about. At this time in your life as you are discovering who you are, God wants you to be aware of His place in your life and to be aware of the needs of others around you. God would like you to place Him and others before yourself.
- » You are a special, unique, and valuable child of God. One of a kind. And yet the very grace and power that have made you that way are based on the law of selfless love. When you read the commandments that He asks us to obey if we love Him, you find that every one of them is about selflessly loving God, and then selflessly reflecting His love to others. Success in God’s kingdom is the opposite of success in the kingdom of this world.
- » To live this way in the middle of Satan’s kingdom takes the bravest kind of person that there is. Remember, too, that selflessness does not mean you have no self. It means to



submit your natural self to Christ and allow Him to replace it with a new self that reflects His character (Ephesians 4:22-24).

### Wednesday BIBLE INSIGHTS

» Match the verses to the correct references. The Bible passages are from the New King James Version.

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|------------------|------------------|
| Matthew 5:17-20  | 1 Kings 2:3      |
| John 15:7-10     | Mark 10:31       |
| Matthew 22:37-40 | 1 John 2:3       |
| 1 John 5:3       | Revelation 14:12 |

1.	"... we know Him, if we keep His commandments."	
2.	"... here are those who keep the commandments of God ..."	
3.	"... to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies ..."	
4.	"... I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. ..."	
5.	"... ' "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." ... "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ' ..."	
6.	"... many who are first will be last ..."	
7.	"... 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."	

8.	"... this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. ..."	
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### Thursday CONNECTING

- » Read Ephesians 6:10-12.
- » Review the memory text.
- » As a citizen of God's kingdom, you have access to a much bigger perspective than those whose allegiance is to the kingdom of this world. You can look at things from the big picture of God's selfless love, the love that is the law of the entire universe. Living in that kingdom means that everything you do is in reference to God's great commandments: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart" and "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37, 39, NIV).
- » That is the way to success in God's kingdom. The successful kingdom citizen would never think of unloving acts such as using God's name lightly, making a false accusation against someone else, or disrespecting their parents.
- » But following God is completely opposite to the way the world is. When we follow Jesus, we are empowered by His unselfish grace to live according to His plan of love. Living a life of unselfish love in a self-centered world is a great responsibility. Are you up to the challenge?

Friday  
**APPLYING**

- » Read Exodus 20:1-17.
  
- » This week, take the time to look at God’s Ten Commandments in the light of living a life of unselfish love. Ask for the Spirit’s power to live that way this week and then observe yourself doing it.
  
- » This week . . .
  1. I spent time with God each day before I did anything else, thinking about His love and asking Him to guide my day.
  2. I asked God to stay more important to me than anything or anyone else.
  3. I chose not to do or say things that would be disrespectful to God or would misrepresent Him.
  4. I kept my “date with God” on the Sabbath, joining Him in helping others, and learning more about Him in nature and His Word.
  
- 5. Through the Spirit’s power I was obedient and respectful to my parents, trying to think about how they felt and not just the way I felt.
- 6. I loved others by not “killing” anyone’s reputation, or hating anyone and getting them back for something they did to me.
- 7. I stayed pure, not going against my promise to God, and kept myself for the loving purpose for which He created me.
- 8. I respected other people’s belongings, not taking anything for myself that God didn’t provide for me.
- 9. I did not lie to others or about them; instead, I told them the truth in love.
- 10. I didn’t waste time wishing I had what others have. I trusted, instead, that God has provided everything I need (including the power to keep His commandments).

