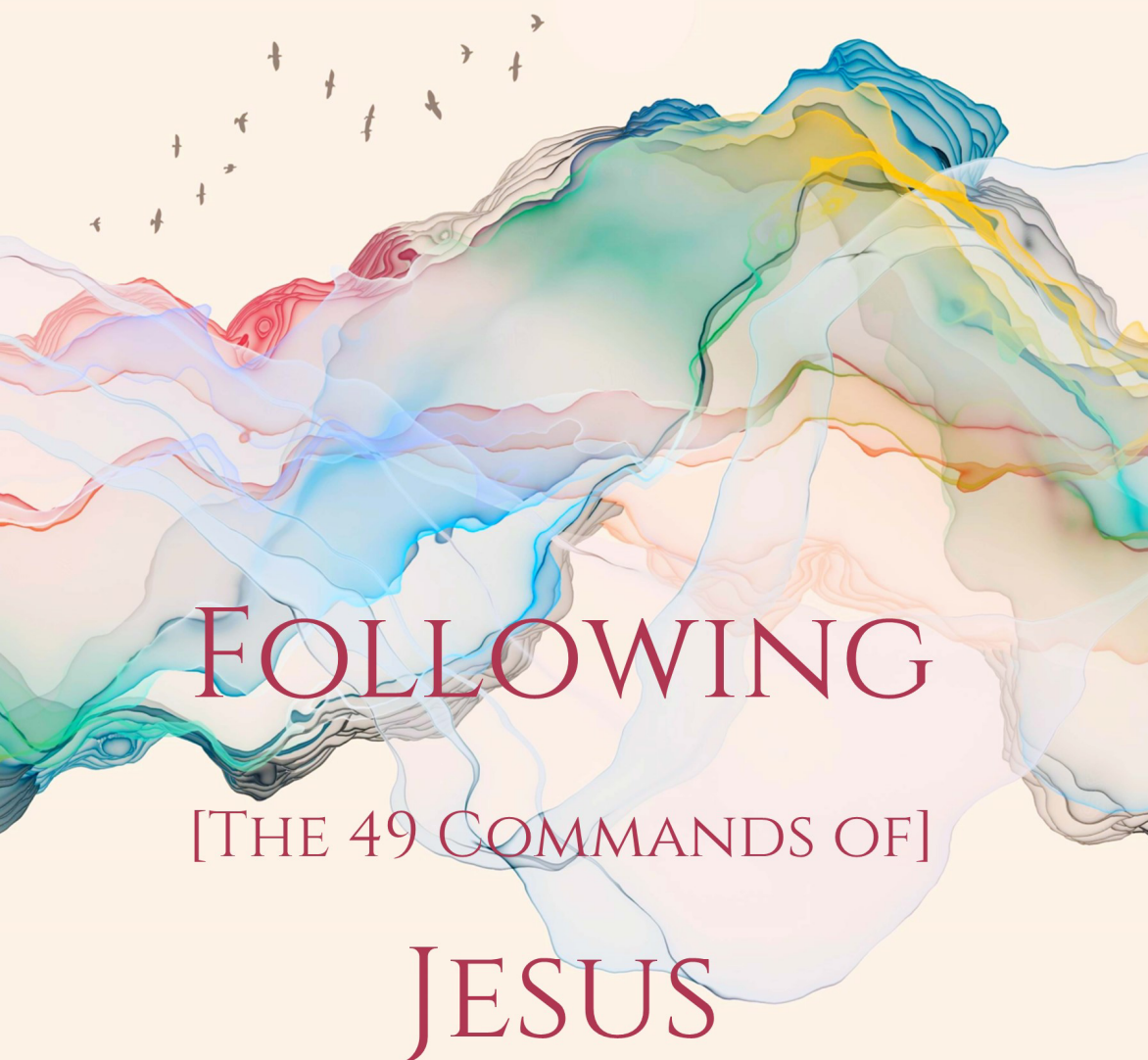


DAVID O. HARRISON

IF YOU LOVE ME

A DEVOTIONAL



FOLLOWING

[THE 49 COMMANDS OF]

JESUS

IF YOU LOVE ME

DAVID O. HARRISON

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FOLLOWING [THE 49 COMMANDS OF] JESUS

A DEVOTIONAL & JOURNAL

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DAVID HARRISON was born and raised in England and emigrated to Canada in 1973 at the age of 21.

When he was 35, David became a Christ-follower. He is married and the father of two adult children. He attended a Brethren Bible Chapel in Scarborough for 25 years, ten of those years as an elder.

For 23 years David ran an audiovisual integration company in Toronto, Canada, catering primarily to universities, banks, and law firms.

In 2006 David founded Bus Stop Bible Studies¹, a ministry which used public transit advertising panels to display messages of encouragement from the Word of God to many millions of people in Canada.

For 10 years David was the Board Chair of Daystar Native Christian Outreach, based on Manitoulin Island.

Now 'retired', David and his wife, Wendy, run a Bed & Breakfast in Muskoka, and David, who failed miserably in English at school, has taken to writing as a hobby. Never in his wildest dreams did he ever imagine appearing at the top of one of Amazon's Best Seller lists. His English teachers would have proclaimed that a *bone fide* miracle!

Contact: david@thrivebooks.ca

¹ See bit.ly/bsbsimagine

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INTRODUCTION - THE 49 COMMANDS OF JESUS

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 neighbour as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Matthew 22:37-40

Jesus distilled all the Old Testament laws into 49 clear commands, which He then summarized into the two Greatest Commandments. Ultimately, God reduces these laws to what matters most—the heart.

“My child, never forget the things I have taught you.
Store my commands in your heart.”

Proverbs 3:1

This devotional book is based on a compilation of Jesus’ commands found on a blog composed by Dan Foster.² Thank you, Dan.

Some believe that Old Testament laws no longer apply because we live under the New Covenant. However, this is a misunderstanding of what Scripture teaches us. Each of Jesus’ commands is firmly rooted in Old Testament principles.

² medium.com/backyard-theology/what-jesus-actually-said-8b4bbb0a50e8

When Jesus addressed the teachers of the law and the Pharisees, He rebuked them:

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, *without neglecting the former.*”

Matthew 23:23 NIV

Although Jesus criticized them for their legalism, exposing their neglect of practicing ‘true religion’³, He did not dismiss Old Testament principles. Jesus emphasized that true obedience is about practicing justice, mercy, and faithfulness. Similarly, while social justice is vitally important, it should not become our sole focus, lest it also turn into empty religiosity also. Neither extreme will bring us closer to God.

Our obedience to Jesus’ 49 commands must stem from our love of God. Following each of these commands does not cause God to love us more—His love is already perfect. However, obedience transforms our lives, causing *us* to draw closer to Him. What could be better than that?

It is my hope that this book will not simply be a one-time read, but instead, will become a daily habit. When we reach the end of the book, we can start over and follow the instructions found on a shampoo bottle: “Wash. Rinse. Repeat.” While personal growth and development are ongoing, transformative processes, learning and practicing new habits can help us improve continually. Although we strive to achieve our goals,

³ James 1:27

IF YOU LOVE ME

it is important to remember that progress takes time and effort, and no one has reached their final destination yet.

Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Romans 12:2 NLT

When Jesus challenges us, "If you love me, obey my commands." I believe he is looking for a paradigm change to occur within each of us. What may initially be considered 'an act of obedience,' will one day become instinctive to us. When that happens we will have truly be conformed to His likeness.

Some commands may seem counter intuitive. For example, the devotional for Day 23 starts, "If you love me, don't be afraid." One might reasonably ask, 'What do love and fear have to do with each other?' Understanding context provides us with clarity and guidance. As the disciple John teaches:⁴

And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.

⁴ 1 John 4:17-19

I struggled to find the perfect title for this book — something that would prompt readers to truly reflect on what it means to follow Jesus. Then I recalled the moment when Jesus asked Peter three times, “Do you love Me?” Jesus also confronts us with a conditional statement, “If you love Me, obey My commands.” Could He be challenging us in the same way He challenged Peter? “Do you love Me? *Will you* follow My commands?” I have come to realize that following Jesus and obeying Him are inseparable realities. Including the two brackets [] in the book’s title seemed to emphasize this truth more clearly.

At first glance, 49 Commands may seem like a tough slog but, as other wise individuals have noted, every journey begins with a first step. And as God personally encouraged me, He can’t steer a parked car.

In the perpetual wonder of grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Harris". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

1. IF YOU LOVE ME, TURN YOUR LIFE AROUND

“From that time on Jesus began to preach, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’”

Matthew 4:17

The very first word of Jesus’ public ministry was “repent.” This command is both simple and profound. In the original Greek, the word *metanoeo* means to “change one’s mind” or to turn one’s life around completely. Repentance is more than just feeling regret for sin; it is a radical transformation—a complete reorientation of one’s heart, mind, and actions toward God.

This call to repentance is not about superficial change or empty rituals. It is a profound invitation to leave behind the old ways of sin and step into the light of God’s kingdom. It is the ultimate paradigm shift, a turning away from the fleeting pleasures of the world and toward the eternal joy of walking in righteousness.

Psalms 51:10 captures the heart of repentance:

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

True repentance is not just about changing outward behaviour; it starts with a transformation of the heart. It is an acknowledgment of our need for God’s grace and a desire for Him to renew us from the inside out.

Isaiah 55:7 beautifully illustrates the promise of repentance:

“Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord,

1. IF YOU LOVE ME, TURN YOUR LIFE AROUND

and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.”

God’s call to repentance is not one of condemnation but of mercy and forgiveness. When we turn to Him, He welcomes us with open arms and gives us a fresh start.

Proverbs 28:13 reminds us of the freedom that comes with repentance:

“Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.”

Hiding our sins only leads to guilt and spiritual stagnation, but confession and repentance bring healing and restoration.

Acts 3:19 encourages us to embrace the blessings of repentance:

“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.”

Repentance is not a burden—it is a gift. It brings freedom from the weight of sin and opens the door to a renewed relationship with God.

Jesus’ call to repentance is a call to life. It is not just about turning away from sin but about turning toward God, aligning our lives with His will, and walking in His ways. It is the first step in experiencing the fullness of His kingdom.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for calling me to repentance. Help me to turn away from anything that separates me from You and to walk in Your ways. Create in me a clean heart and renew my spirit. Thank You for Your mercy and the gift of transformation. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

2. IF YOU LOVE ME, FOLLOW MY EXAMPLE

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” – Matthew 4:19 (NIV)

When Jesus called His first disciples, He extended an invitation that was both simple and life-altering: *“Follow me.”* This was not merely an invitation to listen to His teachings or admire Him from afar. It was a call to walk alongside Him, to learn from His example, and to share in His mission. Jesus modelled a life of love, service, and obedience to God, showing His disciples how to win hearts and minds for the Kingdom. His presence must have been so compelling that ordinary fishermen left everything behind to follow Him.

This same call to follow Jesus is extended to us today. It is a call to not only believe but also to live in such a way that others see Christ in us. Deuteronomy 4:5-6 reminds us of the power of living according to God’s ways:

“See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations.”

Our lives are meant to be a reflection of God’s truth and wisdom, drawing others to Him through our actions.

Joshua 24:15 challenges us to make a deliberate choice:

“But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will

IF YOU LOVE ME

serve... But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

Following Jesus requires intentionality. It means choosing to align our lives with His mission, even when it calls us to step out of our comfort zones.

Psalm 78:4 emphasizes the importance of passing on God's truth:

"We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done."

Just as Jesus taught His disciples to "fish for people," we are called to share the good news of God's love and faithfulness with others. Our lives should tell the story of God's goodness, inspiring those around us to seek Him.

Proverbs 4:1-2 underscores the value of learning and teaching God's wisdom:

"Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching."

As followers of Christ, we are both students and teachers, continually learning from Him and sharing His truth with others.

Jesus' call to "follow me" is an invitation to live a life of purpose and impact. It is a call to reflect His love, to serve others selflessly, and to point people toward the hope and salvation found in Him. Will you answer His call?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank You for calling me to follow You. Help me to walk in Your footsteps, reflecting Your love and truth to those around me. Teach me to live

3. IF YOU LOVE ME, BE HAPPY WHEN OTHERS
PUT YOU DOWN

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven.”

Matthew 5:11-12

Mockery and opposition are not new to those who follow Christ. From the prophets of old to Jesus’ closest disciples, faithfulness to God often invites criticism, rejection, and even suffering. The world, which values power, success, and self-sufficiency, struggles to understand those who surrender their lives to Christ. Yet Jesus tells us to be *glad* when we are insulted or mistreated because of our faith.

Why should we rejoice in the face of rejection? First, it is a sign that we are walking the right path. Psalm 119:23 reminds us,

“Though rulers sit together and slander me, your servant will meditate on your decrees.”

Opposition affirms that our lives reflect Christ’s truth. When we live in a way that convicts the world of sin, it often responds with resistance.

Second, our trials will not last forever. Isaiah 51:7-8 reassures us:

“Do not fear the reproach of men or be terrified by their insults. For the moth will eat them up like a garment, the worm will devour them like wool. But

3. IF YOU LOVE ME, BE HAPPY WHEN OTHERS PUT YOU DOWN

my righteousness will last forever, my salvation through all generations.”

Earthly mockery fades, but God’s approval endures eternally.

Third, opposition refines and strengthens our faith. Jeremiah 20:11 says,

“The Lord is with me like a mighty warrior; so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail.”

Though insults sting, they cannot shake the foundation of a heart rooted in Christ. When we endure with joy, we grow in spiritual maturity, becoming more like Jesus, who Himself endured the cross for the joy set before Him (Hebrews 12:2).

Finally, Jesus promises a reward in heaven. The kingdom of God belongs to those who suffer for His sake (Matthew 5:10). Every insult, every rejection, every misunderstanding faced because of our faith is noted by God. And He assures us: it is worth it.

Instead of responding with anger or resentment, let us rejoice. Let us trust that God sees, strengthens, and ultimately rewards those who stand firm. The world’s rejection is temporary, but the joy of the Lord is eternal.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, when the world mocks or misunderstands me because of my faith, help me to rejoice. Strengthen me to stand firm, knowing that my reward is with You. Remind me that the trials I face today are temporary, but Your love and righteousness will never fade. May my life reflect Your truth, even in the face of opposition. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

4. IF YOU LOVE ME, SHINE!

“Let your light shine before all people that they may see your good works and praise your heavenly Father.”

Matthew 5:16

Jesus calls us to shine—to live in such a way that our actions reflect the goodness and love of God. But what does it mean to shine? It means allowing our lives to radiate kindness, righteousness, and compassion so that others see the presence of God in us. This is not about seeking personal recognition but about glorifying our Father in heaven through the way we live and serve.

Proverbs 11:30 tells us,

“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and the one who is wise saves lives.”

Our good deeds should be life-giving, drawing others toward God’s grace. When we choose to live with integrity and wisdom, we become a source of encouragement and hope to those around us.

Micah 6:8 simplifies God’s expectations for us:

“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

Shining our light means living justly, showing mercy, and maintaining a posture of humility. When we embody these

qualities, we reflect the character of Christ and illuminate the path for others to follow.

Isaiah 58:10-11 adds,

“If you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.”

When we serve selflessly—caring for the needy and uplifting the broken-hearted—our light pierces through the darkness of the world. God promises to guide and strengthen us as we commit ourselves to His work.

Psalms 112:4 assures us that

“Even in darkness, light dawns for the upright, for those who are gracious and compassionate and righteous.”

No matter how dark the world may seem, God’s light shines through those who live in righteousness. Our kindness, generosity, and faithfulness become beacons of hope, pointing others to the love of Christ.

Living as a light in the world is not always easy. Challenges, opposition, and discouragement may come, but we must remember that our calling is greater than our circumstances. The light we shine is not our own—it is the reflection of Jesus, the true Light of the world (John 8:12). When we stay connected to Him, our light never fades.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for calling me to be a light in this world. Help me to live in such a way that others see Your goodness in me. Teach me to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with You.