

PATHWAY TO FREEDOM

How God's Laws Guide Our Lives



STUDY GUIDE

ALISTAIR BEGG



THIS STUDY GUIDE

contains twelve sessions that aim to help you grow in your love and knowledge of God as you intently read or listen to the sermons from the series *Pathway to Freedom: How God's Laws Guide Our Lives* by Alistair Begg. You'll do a deep dive into what is perhaps the most well-known list of moral precepts in human history: the Ten Commandments. The content for each session focuses on a particular sermon Alistair preached from Exodus 20, save for the concluding session, which turns our attention to Romans 3 as Alistair reminds us that there is indeed "Good News for Lawbreakers."

Each session includes four parts:

1) Getting Started: a brief summary statement or commentary on the sermon, followed by an introductory question

2) Key Scriptures: important Bible verses that were referenced in the sermon and are flagged for further meditation and memorization

3) Going Deeper: questions to help you process the main ideas of the sermon

4) Giving Praise: a poem or hymn that can be committed to memory, incorporated in worship, and used as the basis for prayer about what you have learned and considered

The following sermon series description provides a great summary of the overall purpose for your studies:

The Ten Commandments are the Maker's instructions—and it's time to give them careful attention. In a culture that glorifies self and disregards truth, God's Word speaks clearly into every area of our lives, offering us not what we want to hear but what we need most. These laws do not provide us with a ladder to climb to reach acceptance with God. Instead, they are a mirror that exposes our sin and sends us to Christ as Savior, charting the pathway the Christian must walk to enjoy the fullness and freedom our heavenly Father intends.

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SESSION ONE

“Who Takes First Place?” The First Commandment

Getting Started

The desire to do what we want when we want, though appealing, is actually quite destructive, especially when accompanied by rampant materialism and self-serving motives. Although we may think that this kind of freedom is what we need, it will inevitably leave us lonely and disappointed.

Why do we often view individual autonomy as a path to freedom and moral obligation as a form of slavery?

Going Deeper

1. The Ten Commandments are frequently ignored because they are wrongly viewed as moral requirements God has given for us to enter into heaven. If God did not give us the law so that we might achieve salvation through obedience, why *did* He give us the law?

2. The Ten Commandments are often regarded as an impersonal list of dos and don'ts—but this overlooks important facts about how they were delivered. How should both the manner and the context in which the Ten Commandments were given affect our perspective on God's law?

3. Our sinful nature does not delight in God's law, which is why we so often view it as a burden. What must happen before we can truly delight in His law?

4. How does the law bring greater clarity to what it means to love God and our neighbor?

5. Alistair states that the problem of our rebellion is that we do not want God to reign over us, nor do we want anyone to tell us what to do. How have you seen this tendency displayed in your life?

KEY SCRIPTURES

“You shall have no other gods before me.” (Exodus 20:3)

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:37-40)



GIVING PRAISE

Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee,
God of glory, Lord of love;
Hearts unfold like flow'rs before Thee
Op'ning to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;
Drive the dark of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness,
Fill us with the light of day!

**“JOYFUL, JOYFUL, WE ADORE THEE”
BY HENRY VAN DYKE**

SESSION TWO

“Graven Mistakes” The Second Commandment

Getting Started

We often think of idolatry in terms of carved statues of deities that are found in far-off foreign cultures. Yet according to Scripture, idolatry also involves entertaining thoughts about God that are anything less than He deserves. The Bible is concerned that we worship not only the correct God but also that we worship Him in the correct manner.

In light of this understanding of idolatry, how does the second commandment challenge you to examine your thoughts about God and the manner in which you worship Him?

Going Deeper

1. Churches gather weekly for the purpose of worshiping God in a way that brings Him glory. How does the proper focus in our worship protect us from simply gathering for the purpose of entertainment?

2. How do images of God conceal the truth of who God is?

3. How does the way we worship God impact our lives and the lives of those who are close to us?

4. It is impossible for man to fully display the truth of God in an image. If this is so, why does man so frequently try to do what He has clearly forbidden?

5. God has revealed Himself to us in the Bible. Do you ever try to imagine God to be someone other than who He has revealed Himself to be in His Word? How can you grow in your confidence that the Bible is sufficient to teach you about the character of God?

KEY SCRIPTURES

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or 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 or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God.” (Exodus 20:4-5)

“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” (Colossians 3:5)



GIVING PRAISE

Holy, holy, holy!
Though the darkness hide Thee,
Though the eye of sinful man
Thy glory may not see,
Only Thou art holy;
there is none beside Thee,
Perfect in pow’r, in love, and purity.

“HOLY, HOLY, HOLY” BY REGINALD HEBER

SESSION THREE

“What’s in a Name?” The Third Commandment

Getting Started

Names are important. In expressing His name, God declares His greatness and reveals His character. The reason the name of God is so significant is not because it possesses magical power but because it is full of doctrinal content. When we understand what God’s name signifies, we may then rest in it, and in Him.

How can the significance of God’s name provide you with encouragement and rest when difficult times come in your life?

Going Deeper

1. How does understanding the significance of God’s name enable us to obey the third commandment?

2. Alistair mentions several names of God that are revealed in Scripture. Which name of God most strengthens your faith in God when you reflect on its meaning? Why?

3. In a culture that uses the name of God with great flippancy, how can Christians maintain a deep reverence and respect for God’s name?

4. The third commandment encourages us not only to speak God’s name with reverence but also to hallow it in our hearts. What does it look like for us to live with a desire for God’s name to be hallowed?

5. Only when we encounter Christ as Savior do we meet God and understand why His name is to be hallowed. How does an intimate relationship with Jesus enable us to live in a manner that is worthy of God’s name?

KEY SCRIPTURES

“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.” (Exodus 20:7)

“The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.”
(Proverbs 18:10)



GIVING PRAISE

All hail the power of Jesus’ name!
Let angels prostrate fall.
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all!

**“ALL HAIL THE POWER OF JESUS’ NAME!”
BY EDWARD PERRONET**

SESSION FOUR

“Holy Day or Holiday? — Part One” The Fourth Commandment

Getting Started

In *Chariots of Fire*, the head of the Olympic Committee pleads with Eric Liddell to run on Sunday. He famously refuses, stating that he would never set aside his king or his country, save that there was a higher power, a higher authority—the one who sets up kings and the one who brings down kings.

What do you think of Eric Liddell’s response? Should modern Christians share his convictions regarding the Lord’s Day?

Going Deeper

1. Should Christians view the fourth commandment as less authoritative than the other nine commandments? What answer does Alistair provide?

2. John Murray wrote, “The Sabbath day is different from every other day, and to obliterate this distinction ... in thought or practice is to destroy what is the essence of the institution.”¹ Why is it necessary that we recognize the sanctity of the Sabbath day before we are able to obey the fourth commandment?

3. Lack of convenience is one of the primary reasons the Sabbath day is disregarded. Why is convenience an inappropriate standard for determining whether or not we should obey God’s commands?

4. The Lord's Day is a day of rest. If this is so, why is it not contradictory to fill the Lord's Day with worship and Christian activity?

5. How might a lack of delight in the Lord's Day indicate a lack of desire for the reality of heaven?

KEY SCRIPTURES

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God." (Exodus 20:8-10)



GIVING PRAISE

O day of rest and gladness,
O day of joy and light,
O balm of care and sadness,
Most beautiful, most bright;
On thee the high and lowly,
Through ages joined in tune,
Sing "Holy, holy, holy"
To the great God triune.

**"O DAY OF REST AND GLADNESS"
BY CHRISTOPHER WORDSWORTH**

¹ John Murray, "The Sabbath Institution," in *Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 1, *The Claims of Truth* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976), 209.

SESSION FIVE

“Holy Day or Holiday? — Part Two” The Fourth Commandment (Cont.)

Getting Started

The Sabbath purposes of God are seen in the Bible’s earliest chapters. As a creation principle, the Sabbath command is fundamental for society. When we keep the Sabbath, it is important that we understand the effect that observing the day has in our lives and in society.

How does Sabbath observance benefit both the church and the world? How is the Sabbath command related to the church’s mission?

Going Deeper

1. Do you think it would be helpful to use the fourth commandment in evangelistic conversations with non-Christians? Why or why not?

2. Alistair states that Sabbath observance is a restraining influence which prevents many other sins. Have you found this to be true in your own life? If so, how? If not, how might that change?

3. The fourth commandment can become an instrument of self-righteousness when viewed improperly. How can we obey the Lord’s command to observe the Sabbath without falling into the trap of legalism?

4. Why should we view the fourth commandment as a positive command that is intended for our good?

5. There is a direct correlation between joyful Christianity and observing the Lord's Day. How has observing the Lord's Day increased joy in your life?

KEY SCRIPTURES

"The heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation." (Genesis 2:1-3)



GIVING PRAISE

All creatures of our God and King,
Lift up your voice and with us sing,
Alleluia, alleluia!
Thou burning sun with golden beam,
Thou silver moon with softer gleam,
O sing ye, O sing ye,
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

"ALL CREATURES OF OUR GOD AND KING"
BY FRANCIS OF ASSISI, TRANS. WILLIAM H. DRAPER

SESSION SIX

“Family Life, God’s Way” The Fifth Commandment

Getting Started

“It all comes back to the kitchen table.” These words communicate the truth that the well-being of a person, a society, and a nation all begin within the home.

How does the relationship between family life and everything outside of it motivate you to have God-honoring relationships within your family?

Going Deeper

1. Disobedience to parents may seem like a minor offense when compared to other sins, yet the Bible frequently lists it alongside other heinous sins. Why should disobedience to parents be considered a significant sin?

2. How does honoring our parents teach us to give honor and respect to those who are not in our family?

3. Why is it inconsistent for a Christian to say that they are devoted to Christ while their life reflects that they are not devoted to honoring their parents?

4. Why is it so important that parents cultivate genuine love in their relationship with their children?

5. How can parents train their children to obey them from the heart?

KEY SCRIPTURES

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.” (Exodus 20:12)

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’ (this is the first commandment with a promise), ‘that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.’” (Ephesians 6:1-3)



GIVING PRAISE

When we walk with the Lord
In the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will,
He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey!

“TRUST AND OBEY” BY JOHN H. SAMMIS

SESSION SEVEN

“Life Is Sacred” The Sixth Commandment

Getting Started

The reality that all that we see exists because it has been personally and purposefully created by God adds immediate value to all life. Man, being made in the image of God, is qualitatively distinct from other organic life and is afforded greater significance.

How does the existence of a Creator who purposefully formed and fashioned man compel you to value and appreciate your fellow man?

Going Deeper

1. Our worldview has practical implications. Why is it important that we address worldview issues before we address the moral problems that we face in society?

2. With a matter like abortion, why is it so important for Christians to prove that, as Alistair puts it, “we are not simply about crusades for certain slogans and ideas”? How do we do so?

3. How is suicide an expression of wrongly perceived autonomy?

4. When thinking about murder, why is it critical to remember that our hidden anger is a sin just as abortion and other murderous actions are?

5. Slander and gossip are among some of the most common sins committed by conservative, evangelical Christians. Why should these sins be detestable to Christians?

KEY SCRIPTURES

“You shall not murder.” (Exodus 20:13)

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.” (Matthew 5:21-22)



GIVING PRAISE

O Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works Thy had hath made;
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!

**“HOW GREAT THOU ART”
BY CARL GUSTAV BOBERG, TRANS. STUART K. HINE**

SESSION EIGHT

“Whom God Has Joined” The Seventh Commandment

Getting Started

The sociologist Morton Hunt said that polygamy “seems better suited to the emotional capacities and requirements of many people, particularly men. It offers renewal, excitement, and the continuance of experiences of personal rediscovery; ... it is an answer to the boredom of lifelong monogamy. ... We are by nature polygamous.”²

How does this statement reflect a belief that keeps growing in Western society? How should Christians respond to such a statement?

Going Deeper

1. Why should Christians be concerned about all marriages, not just Christian marriages?

2. How is the marriage covenant different from other contractual relationships?

3. Views on moral purity and marital fidelity are becoming increasingly radical in our day. How can you remain resolute in your commitment to these virtues when most of the culture does not hold to your values?

4. What is the difference between mental and actual adultery? Why is it important that we maintain a distinction between these while still labeling each for what it is—sin?

5. Alistair mentioned three walls that we can put up to guard us against the possibility of falling into moral and marital failure. What are they? How can you practically implement them in your life?

KEY SCRIPTURES

“You shall not commit adultery.” (Exodus 20:14)

“Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’?” (Matthew 19:4-5)



GIVING PRAISE

Loved with everlasting love,
Led by grace that love to know;
Gracious Spirit from above,
Thou hast taught me it is so!
O this full and perfect peace!
O this transport all divine!
In a love which cannot cease,
I am His, and He is mine.

“I AM HIS, AND HE IS MINE” BY GEORGE W. ROBINSON

² Morton Hunt, *The Affair: A Portrait of Extra-Marital Love in Contemporary America* (New York: World, 1969), 23, 39.

SESSION NINE

“I Was Only Borrowing It!” The Eighth Commandment

Getting Started

Nearly every type of theft in the United States is at or near an all-time high. The Robin Hood principle—that it is right to steal from the rich in order to give to the poor—is deeply embedded into the hearts of men and women. There no longer appears to be the shared conviction in society that stealing is wrong.

What are some ways that stealing is often justified? How can you increasingly depend upon God when you are tempted to believe that you need what others have?

Going Deeper

1. How does stealing devalue others who are made in God’s image?

2. James 1:17 states, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” How does this verse encourage you to be content with the good gifts that God has given you?

3. Why are we so preoccupied with possessions? Why is this foolish from the vantage point of eternity?

4. Alistair mentions several ways that we break the eighth commandment. Which of these challenged you the most? Why?

5. How does honesty in smaller things prepare us to be honest in larger matters?

KEY SCRIPTURES

“You shall not steal.” (Exodus 20:15)

“Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.” (Ephesians 4:28)



GIVING PRAISE

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away:

Wash all my sins away,
Wash all my sins away;
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.

“THERE IS A FOUNTAIN” BY WILLIAM COWPER

SESSION TEN

“The Truth Matters” The Ninth Commandment

Getting Started

“There is no absolute truth.” This statement represents one of the greatest challenges in our day for those who desire to proclaim the truth of God’s Word.

How do you share the truth of the Gospel with conviction to a culture that believes that truth is relative?

Going Deeper

1. The denial of absolute truth is a slippery slope. What consequences arise when absolute truth is rejected?

2. Satan is the father of lies. He tells lies because he hates God, hates people, and wants to extend his anti-God revolt. How does this reality motivate you to be more truthful in your speech?

3. Alistair states that we may tell lies in subtle ways, such as winking our eyes or even through silence. Why do we tend to tolerate subtle lies more than overt lies?

4. It is easy to say that we should tell the truth, but the real test is to speak the truth when it could have negative consequences. How can you overcome the fear of consequences in such circumstances?

5. The reason many of us are shackled to our lies is because we have never come to know the God of truth. How does God's truthfulness encourage you to be more truthful?

KEY SCRIPTURES

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." (Exodus 20:16)

"Having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another." (Ephesians 4:25)



GIVING PRAISE

O God of truth, whose living word
Upholds whate'er hath breath,
Look down on Thy creation, Lord,
Enslaved by sin and death.

Set up Thy standard, Lord, that we
Who claim a heav'nly birth
May march with Thee to smite the lies
That vex Thy groaning earth.

**"O GOD OF TRUTH, WHOSE LIVING WORD"
BY THOMAS HUGHES**

SESSION ELEVEN

“The Other Man’s Grass” The Tenth Commandment

Getting Started

The Bible nowhere promises that we will be healthy, wealthy, or wise as a result of our commitment to Jesus. Yet Christianity is often mistakenly intermingled with the American Dream so that Jesus is made to be a guru who leads the way to our materialistic happiness.

In a culture that is consumed by materialism, how can you display a life of joyful contentment in God?

Going Deeper

1. The Ten Commandments primarily relate to actions that are forbidden, but the tenth commandment is unique in that it addresses our desires. Why is it critical to understand that we sin not only by our actions but also with our desires?

2. Many of our disagreements and ruined relationships result from covetousness. Why is it impossible for us to love our neighbor when we covet what they have?

3. The story’s told of a newspaper reporter who once asked a rich man, “How much money does it take to be happy?” He replied, “Just a little bit more.” What does this reply reveal about the ultimate futility of covetousness?

4. How is it possible to be free from covetousness?

5. Although the Bible forbids covetousness, it does not promote a monastic lifestyle either. What perspective enables us to enjoy the things that God has given us without having a covetous heart?

KEY SCRIPTURES

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.” (Exodus 20:17)

“Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” (Luke 12:15)



GIVING PRAISE

I’d rather have Jesus than silver or gold;
I’d rather be His than have riches untold;
I’d rather have Jesus than houses or lands;
I’d rather be led by His nail-pierced hand.

“I’D RATHER HAVE JESUS” BY RHEA F. MILLER

SESSION TWELVE

“Good News for Lawbreakers”

Getting Started

F. F. Bruce, commenting on Romans 3:24, said, “God pronounces believers righteous at the beginning of their course, not at the end of it.”³ If this is true, it precludes justification by works.

How does God’s immediate justification give you comfort and strength as you seek to serve Him?

Going Deeper

1. Why is it necessary to understand the depth of our sin before we can fully comprehend the Gospel?

2. What does Alistair say is the cause for much ineffectiveness in proclaiming the Gospel? Have you found this to be true in your own life?

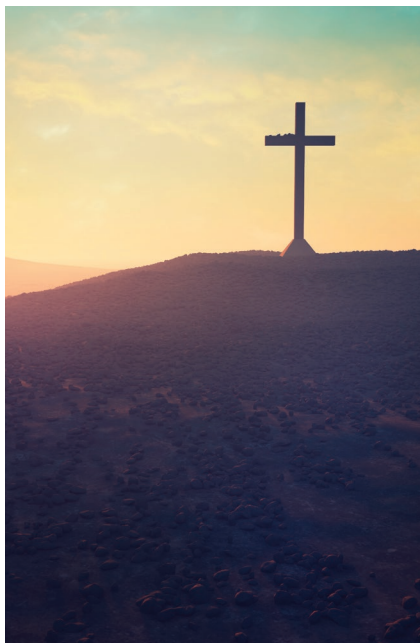
3. The wrath of God is not an uncontrollable emotional outburst. What is the wrath of God from a biblical perspective?

4. Why is the Gospel the only solution to the wickedness that is seen in our culture and in our own lives?

5. What danger is there in rushing people to Christ?

KEY SCRIPTURES

“We know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law ... the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.”
(Romans 3:19-22)




GIVING PRAISE

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Savior, or I die.

“ROCK OF AGES” BY AUGUSTUS TOPLADY

³ F. F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary*, 2nd ed., Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1985), 97.



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