



# Look to the Source

Even if you have to go a bit farther up.

Written by Rick Manning



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## Introduction/Confession

I am a sinner. I am now repentant, which means that I make an honest effort to live up to the will of God. The key word is effort. I am not perfect and make no claims to be. I am sure that there are many people who would be more than willing to testify to my imperfection and my history of sin.

I have, in spite of my sins, always believed in the existence of God. My effort to live up to this belief is only a few years old. Through this effort, I have discovered that I need to re-repent every day.

I have also discovered that the instructions in the Bible are practical and based on a solid foundation of common sense, logic and good will. Looking at them objectively, they stand up to and agree with both experience and disciplines such as psychology, sociology and even physics. They are instructions worth following.

These writings are intended to show what I see when I read the Bible. They concentrate on what looks to me to be the key points made by the Bible. They are also intended to help people see that the Bible is useful and applicable to the modern world when read with common sense and objectivity. The Bible is an illustration of God's will and the things that happen to people, communities and nations according to their reaction to God's will.

If these writings are successful, the person reading them will be able to read the Bible without superstition and understand it for what it is, a working model of God's will. These writings are not meant to be independent, they should be and are intended to be investigated. They are meant to make you question what you have been taught and to inspire you to find out for yourself.

The only way to find out if they are true is to read the Bible yourself. Part of the message of the New Testament is that you can communicate directly with God through prayer. Use your own eyes, the ones that God gave you. God needs no middle men. Accept responsibility for the life that God gave you. Find out for yourself. Read the Bible.

For  
Beginners

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# Introduction

The Ten Commandments have been called the basis of western civilization. Their influence has extended far past the Hebrew culture to which they were first given. Three of the worlds' major religions use them as a basis for their laws.

The Ten Commandments were not the first body of law set down in writing. The first were Hammurabi's laws which were characterized by the concept of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." Hammurabi's laws were very fair, ruthless but fair.

The main differences between the the Ten Commandments and Hammurabi's laws is the difference between action and motivation. Hammurabi's laws guided and reacted to the results of a man's actions. They were designed to keep order in a relatively large society. The Ten Commandments pertain to both action and motivation.

The Ten Commandments prohibit eight things and encourage two others. They are all things that relate to mental and cultural health as much as or more than they relate to maintaining order within a society or community. This is the main difference between Hammurabi's laws and the Ten Commandments.

Hammurabi's laws maintain order within a society by threat of punishment. The Ten Commandments maintain order AND lay the ground work for a happy population with a clean conscience and a harmonious society by instructing people to control their desires, the source of the motivation of most acts that are labeled unacceptable in society. The benefits and intentions of following the Ten Commandments are more important than any consequences of transgressions.

These gifts from God to man through Moses are a prescription for mental, spiritual and social health. They are a road map to peace and health. The following pages are an attempt to illustrate the purpose, meaning and benefit of each Commandment.

# First Commandment

There is only one God,  
have no others.

Purpose: Fairness, Truth.

God made all things. He deserves the recognition for this. God is relatively lenient. He asks for recognition and often seems to accept as little as a lack of slander.

Benefits: Man relieves himself of some of the burden of existence by acknowledging God. God is the ultimate confidant through prayer. He never tells and can solve your problems.

Psychological studies have shown that gratitude is good for mental health. Sincerely thanking God brings on a general feeling of peace and well being. Short of that, just knowing that He exists and has your best interests at heart is a comfort. Denying these things is a stressful and destructive experience.

God wants his people to willingly choose Him. This is why He gives us instructions, the ability to recognize the results of our actions., and the power to choose our own courses.

# Second Commandment

Do not worship graven images.

Purpose: Truth, discouraging self deception.

Replacing God with something from His creation is an insult and an injustice to Him. It is a lie to both God and the one who makes this mistake.

Benefit: Recognizing Truth.

Recognizing the truth is necessary for survival in God's creation. If a man fools himself into believing that a piece of material can have or represent the power of God, he is taking a step toward other delusions which will occupy his time with things that will not benefit him. He will lose his ability to recognize opportunities and duties in the real world. He will put his faith in things that have no life and cannot justify that faith.

A person who adopts a lie as truth ends up lying to themselves about other things. This results in that person losing their ability to tell true from false and wrong from right. When false assumptions are used to make decisions, the conclusion will be false also, it cannot be correct. The confusion that results from falseness can destroy lives, families, communities and cultures.

The man with his eyes open to the truth is more likely to see the solutions to his problems and the way to deal with crisis. A good willed, objective mind will develop strength and courage by fulfilling duty and developing wisdom. This is built into God's creation. It could be the purpose of existence.

## Third Commandment

Do not make wrong use of God's name.

Purpose: Respect

Using God's name implies His authority. Man is NOT God. Saying His name obligates the speaker to live up to God's standards. Man can not make promises for God!

Benefits: Humility and Freedom.

Using God's name, wether habit or oath, does several things. As habit, it lowers the impact that His name can and should have when used. It shows a lack of respect for Him, and arrogance on the part of the person speaking. It is an insult to Him and a disservice to those who are on the verge of understanding and/or joining God.

As an oath, it equates God's integrity with the integrity of the person stating the oath. This is false from the start. God is not the one making the promise. Asking God for help in keeping a promise will help, but making a promise in God's name is an unfounded claim on divinity, no matter what the intent.

Recognizing his place in the scheme of things makes a man humble. The richest, most powerful man on earth is humbled by the size of the universe. The perceptive man can see that even the smartest or strongest man is a prisoner of circumstance, which is created by God. Understanding how little is actually within our grasp is beneficial and healthy.

Humility plus faith in God releases a person from worrying about things that only might happen. The energy freed by such a release can be redirected to whatever things the person CAN influence, which is as free as man can get in this world.

## Fourth Commandment

Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.

Purpose: Rest

The meaning of the word "sabbath" is "to rest." God created our bodies to need rest. Man is charged with taking care of his body and this commandment is God's instruction to take care of the body, mind and soul that He gives man.

Benefits: Rest provides an opportunity for several things to happen. The body uses rest to heal and regenerate itself. The mind uses rest to calm down and rethink perceptions and reactions. The soul needs rest to cure itself of destructive feelings and emotions.

Man needs rest to correct imbalances caused by the rigors of the life that he has chosen or inherited. The Sabbath is the opportunity and the responsibility that God gives man to take care of His gift of body and life.

## Fifth Commandment

Honor your father and your mother.

Purpose: Respect for creation, self respect, love, family solidarity.

Benefits: Acknowledgement and regard for your origins is necessary for your own self respect. If you look down on your source of life, you will have serious doubts about your own qualities. Honoring your parents opens yourself to their achievements or potential.

Family is your first lesson in love. Whether it is a lesson in happiness or forgiveness, it shapes your attitude toward life and your attitude toward other people. The choice you must make is between reacting to things or choosing your actions.

God made families just as He made man. Family is a person's introduction to society and human interaction. It is the first group that a person is a member of. Groups need a method of focus to function effectively, this is why groups need leaders. Parents are appointed by God to lead their families.

The word Honor is important in this commandment. Honor is different from respect in that a person can be honored by people who disagree with them. Honoring parents enables a family to operate cohesively despite arguments or differences of opinion.

## Sixth Commandment

Do not murder.

Purpose: Respect for God's creation of life, His love for justice and His instruction of forgiveness.

Benefits: Peaceful co-existence between people in spite of disagreements and quarrels is the immediate benefit of this commandment. Solutions to future problems and possible friendship are the long term benefits. Death is final as far as earthly existence is concerned and murder destroys any possible benefits or contributions that the murdered person may have made to individuals or society in the future.

This commandment reinforces the idea of forgiveness, because intolerance and revenge are two of the most common motivations for murder. If God killed everyone that insulted Him or that disagreed with Him, there would be no men left on the earth.

## Seventh Commandment

Do not commit adultery

Purpose: Respect for God's creation of marriage and the vow that is sworn to Him by the man and woman who are joined.

Benefits: When two people keep the promises that they make to each other, the bond of trust is made and grows stronger. This trust breeds peace of mind in both people. Peace of mind gives them the self confidence to create and inspire a strong and secure family.

Most of the problems between human beings are caused by individual insecurity or feelings of inadequacy of one kind or another. Secure parents produce secure children and secure children become secure parents who produce secure children. Emotionally secure people are the foundation of a strong and peaceful society.

## Eighth Commandment

Do not steal.

Purpose: Respect for God's choice of gifts to us.

Benefits: Peace of mind and trust between men are the benefits of this commandment.

Both thief and victim suffer when the crime of stealing is committed. The victim suffers an obvious loss. He also suffers from the fear that his other possessions are vulnerable. This takes the place of constructive thought in his mind.

The thief suffers from a constant need to watch his step and his word. He must perpetuate many lies and deceptions to cover his crime. These create inner conflicts that will eventually destroy him.

Trust is established when men know that they have nothing to fear from each other. The presence of trust allows people the freedom to help each other in both good and bad situations.

This kind of trust is the basis of all communities. All of the most stable communities are examples of this trust. People would not form communities if there were not some benefit to them. This kind of trust is above personal likes and dislikes. It allows neighbors to have disagreements and even arguments, but still be secure that they can get essential help if they need it, and be secure that their homes and lives are safe.

## Ninth Commandment

Do not give false witness

Purpose: One of God's attributes is Truth. Love for the truth is part of loving God.

Benefits: Perceiving, acknowledging and accepting the truth makes a person able to act correctly in any situation. Honesty with oneself and others is the path to success. Dishonesty clouds the perceptions of everyone involved with the deception, both the deceiver and the deceived. Honesty illuminates and educates everyone involved.

Honesty between people creates trust and trust facilitates cooperation. Cooperation is the original basis of society. Society exists only when people work together for mutual benefit. Anything else only WAS a society.

Justice depends on honesty. Without honesty, laws are just an act of manipulation on a public stage. When people accept a false witness as true, they sow the seeds of their own bondage. True justice can only exist with true witness.

When Truth rules a society, the courts are used only to settle the results of accidents and mistakes.

## Tenth Commandment

Do not covet

Purpose: Respect for God's choice of blessing.

Benefits: Coveting is in the same family of feelings as envy and jealousy. These are some of the most selfish and destructive forces in human nature. They are responsible for everything from broken friendships to crime to wars.

Coveting is based on one person wanting what another person has. This is not always an act, it can be a thought or ambition. This commandment attacks the root cause of most of the problems in any society.

This commandment is an instruction for personal and social peace and harmony.

When man overcomes the desire to have what others have, he is freed to be content with what he has and/or can create and/or earn according to his talents and means. When man is content with these things, he can concentrate on making himself and others better in environment, body, mind, and soul. It is easier to live love when a person frees themselves from the desire to possess or control.

# The Real Rules

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# Introduction

Before the ten commandments, God pretty much let man run loose. He made covenants with Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and some others.

The Ten Commandments are a part of those covenants (which were actually reaffirmations of his original one with Noah) in that God gives us instructions instead of just picking the people who come by righteousness naturally. The Ten Commandments were the first of many efforts by God to give the descendants of Noah et all every possible opportunity to recognize and live a good and holy life.

God has always been very lenient with mankind. There was only one time that He sent a punishment to the entire earth, even though He could have rightfully done so at any time in recorded history (and could rightfully now). It is written in the Bible that He did this only because He saw no hope of mankind ever living according to His Will. He was even merciful with this massive punishment, saving Noah from the flood and promising with a covenant to allow all of Noah's descendants the opportunity to live in His Will.

God has honored this covenant in spite of numerous transgressions by the majority of mankind. He has reaffirmed this covenant with selected men such as Abraham and Moses. He has repeatedly tried to make it easier for man to live according to His Will by providing such things as the Ten Commandments, the words of the prophets and the life of Jesus Christ, which progressively spell out in terms understandable to anyone who looks or listens, the instructions for living life in accordance with His Will.

His good will does not stop with these gifts. He makes every day, hour, minute, and second an opportunity for any person to change their ways and adopt His will as their motivating force. God's gift of life is both a challenge and an opportunity for men to fulfill their purpose in His creation.

## Sin

Sin is the failure to follow God's rules. This failure can be intentional or accidental. Whether through ignorance, neglect or malice, a sin is a sin. There is a special sacrifice for sins of ignorance in Leviticus 5: 14-19.

It is written in the Bible and other places that sin is the result of mans' rebellion against God's rule. This rebellion is really the result of mankind following his own wishes rather than God's Will. Except for a very few people, this rebellion has nothing to do with any ill will toward God. Most people would go so far as to say that they think the world would be a better place if the Ten Commandments were followed by everyone, while admitting at the same time that they do not always follow them.

The root cause of sin is selfishness, the attempt of an individual to satisfy their desires no matter what the consequences to themselves or anyone or anything else. This selfishness is often caused by an attempt to compensate for a person's fears and insecurities. Faith and trust in God are the real cures for these feelings.

All of the rules that God has passed to man are designed to help man avoid the consequences of breaking the rules of His creation. These rules are for the benefit of His creation. The results of sin are their own punishment. It is no different from putting a hand in a fire with burns as a result.

God made the world and all of its inter relationships. He has made the rules by which his world operates available through both mans' built in ability to understand and through His prophets for those who refuse or are afraid to see.

Slander is the only direct sin against God. Probably because all other sins are indirect, causing harm to the sinner and the part of God's creation that is the victim.

The idea of sin is meant to motivate people to do the right thing. God gives us these rules to help us make ourselves, each other and the rest of His creation have good lives. This is God's Will.

## Guilt

Guilt is the state of being responsible for the breaking of a rule. This includes both intentional and accidental actions. Guilt includes the willingness or intent to break a rule.

People who listen to their conscience can feel something that they call guilt. This is really a combination of feelings. These can include such things as remorse for having done something wrong and a fear of punishment. In order to feel this way a person must be honest enough to confess their transgression, at least to themselves.

There are two possibilities when guilt is present. One is to hide the transgression to avoid consequences. The other is to make things right. Making things right, whether through atonement or apology illustrates a desire for forgiveness. Admitting guilt is the first step toward forgiveness.

The Hebrews of the Old Testament used burnt offerings as sacrifices to symbolize restitution for their sins and a plea for removal of the guilt associated with their sins. People use many different methods to attempt to atone for different transgressions. Everyone wants to be blameless.

God created man without the burden of guilt. Man has brought guilt upon himself, however, as the Garden of Eden story illustrates. God's use of guilt is as a motivation for men to adopt His laws as their guiding principles. He only uses punishment in conjunction with unrepentant guilt.

All earthly punishment is built into God's creation, but He leaves numerous opportunities for forgiveness in His construction. Unable or unwilling to comprehend the responsibilities of free will, men often bring any number of guilty consequences upon themselves. Many of these consequences are based on the fact that men are often reluctant to forgive themselves or each other.

Guilt can be a punishment or an opportunity. Guilt is a signal that something is not right. A person's reaction to guilt determines the future state of their mental health and their soul. Properly handled, guilt is an opportunity for improvement.

## Punishment

Men use punishment to influence the actions of those who break whatever laws are being enforced by whatever group is in power at the time. Men determine guilt and enact a punishment. God's punishments are built into the universe that He created.

Ignorance and accident are more easily pardoned by men than intentional or malicious transgressions. The difference between the judgment of man and the judgment of God is the difference between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law. Men look at actions. God looks at souls.

God rarely goes out of his way to enact any kind of punishment, and when he does, he goes out of his way to give anyone involved a chance to change His mind. The warning of impending punishment is always accompanied by an "if/then" relationship. It is usually of the form, "if you stop doing this wrong thing and start doing this right thing, then there will be no punishment." All through both the old and new testaments, the message is that if a person or group of people will follow God's rules, then He will forgive and help them through their lives and trials.

According to the Bible, God would rather have a repentant sinner than a law abiding hypocrite. Man, with his laws based on action, often ends up rewarding and exalting a law abiding hypocrite, because good actions can mask evil intent. God will forgive a sinner who is sincerely remorseful and willing to change his way of thinking and acting. Mans' laws rarely, if ever, contain such provisions in a workable form.

Mans' laws use punishment as a form of social revenge, intended to influence actions through fear of retribution. God established His laws as a way for men to live happy and useful lives. God always offers a way out of consequence through the act of repentance.

Men often confuse life's trials with punishment. God allows trials and tribulations in order to test and strengthen his people. When faced and handled correctly, these things which men classify as troubles contribute to a person's fortitude and wisdom. When these crisis' are faced with faith in God, they strengthen ones' relationship to God, their community and themselves.

## Forgiveness

Forgiveness is God's invitation for men to join him. It is His promise that He will allow anyone that decides to follow His laws and principles to start over with a clean record. It is a gift and an opportunity from God to mankind. Forgiveness is a demonstration of God's compassion and patience with his rebellious creation.

God built forgiveness into the universe. He made each day new, each second another chance to do things correctly. He made most of your mistakes painful or humiliating instead of deadly. He made you able to learn from them if you pay attention.

Forgiveness is also a challenge. It must be earned by having the faith in God to believe the sincerity of the offer and the courage to repent, which means changing from one way of life to the way of life that God prescribes. The task is only as difficult as the person involved makes it. The reward is God's peace, strength and other benefits that can only be known by those who accept the gift of God's life.

Forgiveness is also part of accepting forgiveness. A person must forgive themselves and those who have wronged them if they are to understand and live up to God's offer of forgiveness. This is both part of the challenge and part of the benefit of the opportunity. The challenge is to let go of the impulse for revenge and to obey the rule of love. The benefit is the release from the burden of anger and the beginning of the peace of mind that results from living love.

Forgiveness is part of the solution to the world's problems. If each person, tribe, town, state, and country would forgive their enemies and agree to work for mutual benefit, then wars would cease and hunger would become a thing of the past. This would require that greed, personal power, and other SELFISH ambitions be abandoned. It would also require that every person take responsibility for themselves and stop relying on their families, employers and governments for things that they can and should do themselves.

Jesus instructed us that we must "Love our neighbors as ourselves." Folk wisdom says that you must be able to help yourself before you can help someone else. Both of these statements are true. and they both apply to forgiveness. You must forgive yourself before you can forgive someone else or accept God's forgiveness.

Forgiving yourself requires that you be aware of your sins. It means that you must admit to yourself that you have made the mistakes and know what they were. Justifying or rationalizing your actions is a common mistake. Before you can fix something, you must know that it is broken, what is wrong with it and be willing to recognize and admit it.

The next step is admitting to God that these things have happened or been done. Then you must have an honest and determined desire to do things right. This sets the stage for changing your life.

## Faith

Faith is believing that God is real and entrusting your life to Him. It is a simple and to some people obvious concept. People who believe only in things that they can see and feel find it more difficult.

Faith is a decision that is consciously made by the person involved. After much practice, time and implementation it can become second nature, but it is never subconscious. In order to be true and beneficial, it must always be conscious.

Faith is proven by the action of accepting God's rules and ways and using them as life guidelines. Habits, attitudes and actions must often be altered to be in tune with God's will and instructions for man. Any difficulty rests with the doubt and skepticism that is encouraged by living in human society. This is why Jesus used the innocent, doubtless faith of a child as the standard for having faith.

Faith is a power in itself. Pure faith releases the power that God has built into all of us. It is written in the Bible that true faith can move mountains. This is true. God, however, knowing his creation, tied the power of faith to the proper use of His gift of life. The power of faith flows from God and cannot be used without knowing Him.

The simple act of doubt cancels the ability to use the power of faith. This prevents faith from being used against God's will. It also protects His creation from improper use of His gifts.

Some people call the power of faith supernatural, but this is a diversion. All things that happen are based on the natural laws made by God as the framework of His creation. Supernatural is just a word that people use to describe things that they fear beyond respect and do not understand.

The main point is trusting God and living for His will. Any powers that accompany pure faith are RESPONSIBILITIES that cannot be used selfishly. Any appearance of power is really knowledge and understanding that God supplies to those of pure faith.

Repentance seals the contract of faith. Repentance is the consummation of the acceptance of God's offer of forgiveness and a person's declaration of faith. Repentance is a decision to follow God's instruction and the action of putting these instructions into practice. Repentance is a person's proof that they are serious about accepting God's will, no matter what the sacrifice, obstacle or other kind of difficulty.

## Repentance

Repentance seals the contract of faith. Repentance is the consummation of the acceptance of God's offer of forgiveness and a person's declaration of faith. Repentance is faith in action. Repentance is acting on the decision to live life according to God's will in the form of His laws.

Repentance is past atonement and into the enactment of God's will. The repentant sinner uses the guilt of their sins to motivate them to living God's instructions of love, justice and forgiveness. They use the lessons of their sins as guidelines on how to be merciful toward the sins of others and grateful for Godly actions.

True repentance opens the soul to the spirit of God's will. The spirit of God's will opens a person's eyes to what is right and what is wrong. The spirit of God's will is what puts a person beyond the law, because when a person follows the will of God, all their actions will be within the boundaries of

the law.

Repentance is not always easy. Even the best people sometimes blind themselves to God's will through ambition, pride, fear and many other self centered weaknesses. This is why forgiveness is a standing offer.

Repentance is an ongoing process. Sincere repentance often requires reaffirmation of faith, reacceptance of forgiveness and daily rerepentance. It requires re-examination of what repentance is and what should be done about it. It requires constantly researching what God's will is. Even if the same conclusion is reached, the way that it is done might be improved. Jesus and the prophets spoke more often about the right WAY than the right CONCLUSION.

Some sources announce the rewards of repentance and living in God's will using such terms as salvation and everlasting life, but the real and ultimate reward is the same as getting home from a long and difficult journey. The true reward is the satisfaction and comfort of knowing that you have survived and are finally back where you belong. The reward is peaceful existence and peaceful rest. The reward is being truly alive. The reward is knowing that you have done your best and explored the limits that God built in you for His purpose.

Paradoxically, it can also and simultaneously be viewed as the beginning of a new trip. The benefit being the knowledge that you have finally found the correct road and can be assured that you will reach the right destination, as long as you stay on the right road. Faith will give you the confidence that you will be given the strength and fortitude to handle all parts of the journey. Forgiveness is the knowledge that you can get back to the right road in the event of mistakes or wrong turns. It is always your decision to remain on or get back to the road of repentance.

## Prayer

Prayer is talking to God. Prayer is recommended by all branches of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and most other religions, the Bible, Jesus and even by some disciplines of psychology.

Prayer has side benefits in addition to communication with God. An honest prayer often answers any questions in it because of the honesty. The act of being honest is beneficial in and of itself. When prayer is used to ask for help, it often defines previously hazy problems and clarifies the situation of the person praying. Prayers put forth in complete faith help to create peace of mind. Done properly, prayer has only benefits.

Correct prayer is not always as easy as it may sound. The first requirement is complete honesty. Since God knows all truth anyway, it is important for a person who intends to pray to be completely honest with themselves before a prayer is attempted. When a person is honest with themselves, it usually leads to a request for forgiveness being included with their prayer. This realization of the need for forgiveness usually leads to another part of a proper prayer.

Humility is the acknowledgement that each person is very small in the scheme of the world. Humility is the absence of extreme self importance, the absence of self righteousness. Humility knows that there are many other people in the world who have equal or greater needs than its own. Humility knows that it is imperfect and can always improve, no matter how well it is doing at the time. Humility knows that it gets God's unrequested and unrecognized help every day in the course of its life.

Faith is KNOWING that God will help anyone that sincerely asks. Faith looks for and accepts answers other than the ones that it expects or wants. It takes miniscule faith to pray, but it takes absolute faith to accept the answer to a prayer.

Jesus gave us the perfect prayer. This prayer illustrates a prayer of faith and acceptance of God's will. Anyone who uses this model and understands what they are saying creates a state of total listening

within themselves. This prayer transcends ideology and other human allegiance, it puts the person using it into a state receptive to God's will, but ONLY if the person is AWARE of what they are saying.

The most common name for this prayer is "The Lord's Prayer." It is found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. It was Jesus' example of how to pray. It has been translated from Aramaic to Hebrew to Greek to the King's English to almost every language on this earth. It has been adopted and adapted by every form of Christianity. It has been enlarged and/or condensed each time, but can still be understood by anyone who makes a serious attempt to understand it. It deserves its own chapter and it is the first step of honest faith maintenance.

God does not need our prayers, He accepts them as a favor to us. It is a mechanism that He has provided for our benefit. He listens as a parent who is concerned for His children. Prayer is a line of communication that bridges the chasm of ignorance that man has allowed to form between himself and God. It must be done properly to be effective. The soul that God gives man NEEDS prayer.

## Some Thoughts About the Lord's Prayer

From my childhood church

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us each day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our debts,  
as we forgive our debtors.  
Lead us not into temptation, and deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom  
and the power  
and the glory forever.  
Amen

From Luke 11:2-4 The New English Bible

He (Jesus) answered, "When you pray, say,

"Father, Thy name be hallowed;  
Thy kingdom come.  
Give us each day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our sins,  
for we too forgive all who have done us wrong.  
And do not bring us to the test.

These are two translations of Jesus' instruction on how to pray. Whether they have been embellished, shortened or altered only the people who translated them from Aramaic to Hebrew to Greek to English know and maybe they cannot really know.

Translation is a very intangible enterprise and what a translator thinks is correct one day may seem a near miss the next. The similarity between them is a triumph of Jesus' genius for simplicity in his teachings.

Jesus was asked for an example of proper prayer and he responded with a form which is appropriate for faith both strong and weak. It both instructs the person praying and asks God for things which are in line with His will. Although it is written that God will take into account all prayers which are offered in sincere faith, this prayer is really the only prayer that is ever necessary. It covers all the necessities of imperfect human existence.

The first line IS obedience to the first commandment, "There is one God and you shall have no others before Him." Its simplicity is an illustration of being humble, it is not cluttered with extra words. It acknowledges the holiness of God's name and existence.

The second line is both a request and a declaration of willingness to accept God's will. This request is a person's illustration of their love for God and his intentions. The willingness is an illustration of faith and trust.

The third line is an admission of insecurity. God always provides for His creation. His creation receives all that its faith opens its eyes to. The third line is also a statement of gratitude and an admission that God's creation is dependent on His charity. It shows that the one praying does not take God for granted.

The fourth line is a confession that man has made himself imperfect and that he falls short of living up to God's will. It is another expression of humility and a request that God's mercy and patience continue.

The fifth line is a promise that very few people keep. (Yes, I speak for myself.) It is an acknowledgement that people who desire God's mercy must show the same to those around them. This line shows the desire of the person praying to live according to God's will.

The sixth line is a request for protection from wrong within and without. It is a request for guidance through the trials and tribulations of daily existence. It is an expression of doubt about our own judgement, and the need for help from God in making decisions and carrying them out. It is also an illustration of man's misinterpretation of the events around them, because everything that God allows is an opportunity for His creation to grow and gain strength.

Is anything beyond these lines clutter? God is the only one entitled to that judgement. Reference to both testaments and the teaching of Jesus seems to suggest that the honesty, sincerity and faith of the prayer are what God will use in his judgements. Only God and the individual who is praying can know.

## Maintenance

Maintenance is a daily thing. It is the same as practicing anything else. When you practice for something, you try to make it so routine that the actual contest is no different than practice. With practice, concentration becomes more important than ability. Concentration becomes the vehicle for ability.

Maintenance of devotion to God requires daily re-evaluation of your actions, motivations and results. It requires a constant upgrading of your awareness of your thoughts, the way you make them real and what happens when you carry them out. The ends does NOT justify the means, but neither does the motivation justify the action. This is a glimpse of the narrow gate that Jesus spoke of.

When you attempt to live God's will, there are many ways to err. It is a mistake to think, "What would I do if I were God?". The correct thought is, "What would God do if He were me?" In truth, both of these thoughts can be pitfalls. You must always ask God for guidance and use the understanding and insight that He has given you when you must make a decision and/or an action.

The best thing is to pray and listen. Listen with your ears, your eyes, your mind and your soul. Listen like an animal in danger. Listen like a hunter. Listen without expectation. Listen knowing that

there is always an answer, even if not the one that you expect or want. Listen using God's examples of love, justice, and mercy. Listen using God's instructions of faith, endurance and wisdom.

When action is necessary, act with love, fairness, respect and intelligence. Your actions always have unforeseen effects. When you act under God's principles, these effects will be beneficial. Refrain from deciding what is right or wrong, good or evil. Use your energy instead to regulate your use of your thoughts, motivations and actions.

The only power that God gives to anyone is control over their own actions, all else stems from this. He has arranged the world so that unexpected things happen to everybody and so that peoples' reactions will affect the outcome of their situations. When asked, He will supply the strength to weather any situation. God IS the solution.

# The Example

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# Introduction

Jesus was the single most influential individual of the last two thousand years. His life was an illustration of the life that God wants us to lead. He was the fulfillment and the illustration of Old Testament principles and prophecies. He released the basic principles of the Jewish religion to the rest of the world. These are some of God's greatest gifts.

One of the proofs of his influence is all the people and organizations that have tried to use his name to their own advantage. Wars have been fought in his name. Governments claim his guidance. His name has been used and abused in numerous other ways. People would not do this unless they recognized his power.

His teachings have been adopted, adapted, distorted, adjusted, diluted and misinterpreted by thousands of religions and cultures. Despite this, anyone who reads the Gospels can decipher and understand the meaning of his instruction. In truth, the only way to know Jesus is to read the Gospels. There is no other way.

The following pages are intended to inspire an investigation into the message of Jesus by whoever is reading. Read this and then read the Bible or read the Bible and then read this, then decide what message you see in the pages.

## Who was Jesus?

Jesus was a Hebrew who roamed his native country teaching a way of life intended to maximize the quality of life for mankind. He was so influential in his teachings that Western civilization rewrote the calendar of history in his honor. Modern western history is measured in hundreds of years since the time of his existence.

He was born into a Jewish culture which had been established on principles of intelligence, justice, love, mercy, self discipline and educating its members in such things. Over the several hundred years between its origin and the time of Jesus, a power structure had been established which spent more time and effort maintaining its status than it did educating its members in its God and His principles. Jesus was a force dedicated to reestablishing the original purpose of the Jewish culture and expanding it to include the rest of the world.

He wrote nothing himself. Indeed, part of his message was that too much emphasis was placed on written words rather than what they meant. He used parables in his teachings in order to emphasize meaning over precise instruction.

He was so successful in his teachings that the power structure he was criticizing became frightened of his influence over their power base. They panicked and arranged for him to be legally assassinated. They preserved their local power, but, despite many underhanded and violent attempts, they could not stop the establishment of the Christian religion which has become many times the size and influence of its Jewish source.

Jesus re-established God's direction among men. God prevails again, as He will every time the people who dispense His word stray from their purpose. This will always happen because honest and intelligent people always recognize the wisdom, practicality and necessity of God and His laws.

## Jesus' Stated Mission, According to the Gospels.

There are many descriptions of Jesus' purpose in all of the Gospels and through out the New Testament. Jesus himself is quoted less often and his descriptions are shorter and more precise than those before and after him. Jesus showed by his actions that he was more concerned with carrying out his mission than with receiving any glory or praise for it.

Jesus spent more time demonstrating his mission than he did describing it. Observing what he did leaves the impression that he wanted to make people know that God will listen to anyone who prays, that all sins are forgiven upon request, that repentance leads to salvation, and that the laws of God are eternal, just and good for those who follow them. His life was an example of the difference between preaching God's law and living it. He lived the truth, told it, was murdered for it and survived anyway.

Starting with the first Gospel in the Bible, Matthew, the first of Jesus descriptions says, "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished." Mt 5: 17-18. It appears that he was aware that some people were already misinterpreting his mission. He decided that it was necessary for him to make sure that people knew that he would follow, uphold and spread the law of God.

The next statement of purpose is in Matthew 9:13 and says, "... I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." This statement illustrates God's willingness to welcome those who desire to return to Him. He told many parables to illustrate this willingness. He constantly invited people to repent and rejoin the family of God. He spent much time forgiving people to facilitate their reunion with God.

The next recorded reference to the effects that he expected to make is in Matthew 10:34-36. He said, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have come not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter in law against her mother in law; and a man's foes will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. ..." Jesus knew that he would be considered controversial. He knew that his presence would force people who believed him to make a choice between obeying man or God. Part of his mission was to encourage people to make that choice and act upon it, knowing that there would be repercussions.

The Gospel of Mark has been determined by scholars to be the oldest, least edited and most objective of the Gospels of the New Testament. It appears to be the best Gospel to study for information about the actual life of Jesus. Many scholars are convinced that Mark is one of the sources used to create the other Gospels. READ IT.

The first reference in this gospel to Jesus describing his mission is in Mark 2:17. It is a quote of his desire to call people to rejoin the family of God. There are several passages in Mark where Jesus describes the final days of his mission. They are specifically, chapter 8:29-32, 9:31, and 10:33-34. These chapters and verses quote Jesus predicting his arrest, execution and return.

Mark 14:61-62 quotes Jesus answering a blunt question about God being his father. Although he is God's child, Jesus very rarely emphasized this fact. The truth is that there are many places in the gospels, such as Mark 1:34, where Jesus tries to keep his identity from being publicized. It appears that he did this because his mission of teaching, forgiving sins, and being a living example of God's will was the part of his mission that he wanted to emphasize.

The Gospel of Mark contains the fewest references to Jesus declaring or defining his mission. It contains many accounts of the acts and teachings of Jesus that illustrate his mission. It illustrates the standard that Jesus is for those who believe in and adopt his instruction.

The Gospel of Luke quotes Jesus as using a passage from Isaiah to define his mission. Luke

4:18-19 uses different words in different translations and interpretations but basically says that Jesus has been anointed with the Spirit of the Lord and that he has come to give good news to the poor, free those held captive, give sight to the blind, liberate the oppressed and proclaim the year of the Lord. This passage effectively describes what he did with his life on earth. He affirms the scope of his teaching mission at the end of the same chapter. Luke 4:42 quotes him as saying that he was specifically sent to give the good news of the kingdom of God to “the other towns also.”

Luke 5:31 agrees with other gospels in quoting Jesus as saying that he came because “it is not the healthy that need a doctor, but the sick. I have come ...to call sinners to repentance.” The fact that he had to say this illustrates one of the biggest obstacles to his mission. The emphasis that people place on status and material success causes them to be more concerned with rewards than with the well being of themselves and their fellow man. Many people who considered themselves to be righteous expected a reward for it. This is a part of the blindness that Jesus often spoke of.

Luke 9:22 describes Jesus predicting his fate at the hands of the Jewish religious leaders and the local Roman authorities. This is something that all the gospels agree on. It appears that Jesus knew from the start about the fate of his mission.

Luke 12:49-53 confirms again that Jesus knew that his message would cause dispute, disagreement and divisions. The power of his teaching can cause arguments just as severe as any between political opponents. It adds an introductory quote of Jesus saying, “I have come to set fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until the ordeal is over!” These lines appear to refer to both his mission, its conclusion and its ultimate result.

The gospel of John is the youngest, most zealous and most extreme of the gospels. It is the most controversial of the gospels, there is much disagreement about when it was written and who wrote it. It contains quotes and accounts not found in the other gospels. It puts a stronger emphasis on the endowment of eternal life than the other gospels.

The first account of Jesus stating a form of mission is in John 3:13-17. He says that he came down from heaven to give people the opportunity for eternal life. He also says that he came to save the world rather than judge it. John 4:26 quotes Jesus claiming to be the Messiah in answer to the words of a Samaritan woman.

John 5:19-23 quotes Jesus saying that he will do only what God shows him that He wants him to do. In short, He says that he came to do God’s will. John 6:38 says the same thing, “I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.” John 6:51 quotes Jesus saying, “...I will give ... my own flesh; I give it for the life of the world.”

The Gospel of John contains many quotes of Jesus stating his mission. They range from judging the world to saving the world. In John 10:16 he is quoted as speaking of welcoming people outside of the flock of Israel. He is quoted many times predicting his execution, and its significance as the blood atonement sacrifice for man’s sins.

Taking all the quotes of Jesus defining his mission from the different gospels and comparing them shows that they are all different combinations of words that lead to the same main ideas. Jesus’ mission was to bring mankind the information that God is real, that He loves His creation, and the instruction that God wants us to live our lives according to His rules so that we can have good and peaceful lives, and that He will forgive our mistakes and sins if we have faith in Him and repent by changing our wrong and bad actions and adopting His instructions. Jesus used his own life to demonstrate all of the above and gave his life as the final atonement sacrifice to release us from the burden of our sins.

Is glorifying Jesus the same as adopting his instruction? What would Jesus say to your answer to this question? Read ALL the gospels and you will find the answers to these questions. The answers are in the total message, not in a single line. The answers are beyond mere semantics. The answers are

ultimately between you and God. The only thing between you and the answers is being honest with yourself.

## Jesus and The Ten Commandments

Jesus used the Ten Commandments both to answer questions that were put to him and as a part of his teachings. He always emphasized the first commandment as the most important. He knew that anyone who loves God with all their heart, mind and soul would automatically follow the other commandments because the true worship of God inspires the spirit of love which is the spirit of His law.

People who asked him questions would sometimes insist on further definitions. They usually did this to either test him or vindicate themselves. Jesus would sometimes surprise these people with parables illustrating the spirit of the Ten Commandments or instructions that took the spirit of the law to its practical and logical conclusion.

These answers were so correct that no one questioned them. They were also disappointing and intimidating to people that followed the letter of the law without the spirit of the law. Jesus' understanding of the law and his boldness in communicating this knowledge were a large part of the motive for the conspiracy that led to his execution.

The spirit of the law of the Ten Commandments is the instruction of love that Jesus made a major part of his teachings. When a person adopts love as their motivating force, they will always act within the Instructions of the Ten Commandments. All of the "Shalt Not" commandments are instructions against malice and selfishness. Living the spirit of love excludes these frames of mind. This is why Jesus distilled the Ten Commandments into two instructions; Love God with everything in you, and love your neighbor and yourself.

Loving God includes a desire for the truth. Knowing the truth opens a person's eyes to the knowledge that helping each other makes life more tolerable for everyone and that a person must be able to help themselves before they can know how to help others. This includes the understanding that accepting or asking for help is just as necessary as offering and being able to help. All forms of assistance and co operation are more effective if all participants are humble about both offering and accepting help.

Jesus knew that the Ten Commandments are much more than just rules to follow because you are supposed to. He built his teaching around them because he knew that God made them as instructions for making life good for men. He tried to change them from legal obligations back into their intended purpose of giving men the knowledge to make their lives more tolerable and fulfilling. He used parables to illustrate their effects and true meaning, their spirit.

He sometimes expressed disappointment when people insisted on looking at them as a means of judgment or a system of punishments and rewards, because this completely misses the point of both the commandments and his teaching. When he encountered this kind of attitude, he would usually suggest to those who claimed to have kept all the commandments that they do something like sell all their possessions and distribute them among the needy. He did this to illustrate the spirit of the law rather than to make life difficult for self satisfied people, although this was not always recognized.

It has been proposed that Jesus released people from the obligations of the law and the Ten Commandments. This is a misinterpretation. He distilled them both to their source, the spirit of God's laws of truth and love. He revealed that using God's will as motivation will always keep a person within the limits of the law, as well as making them a better person for themselves and everyone around them.

# Jesus, Faith, Repentance and Forgiveness

Jesus demonstrated God's mercy through his actions and his teaching. He spent much of his time performing miracles to prove his message of faith. When he was not inviting people to repent and rejoin God's family, he was explaining how to do it and proving that it is possible by believing and following God's way.

The first step that he taught was trust in God. Jesus said that true faith in God could move mountains. He often had to use his own faith to demonstrate the power of faith in God and sometimes criticized the lack of faith of his disciples and his questioners. He always rejoiced and praised the faith demonstrated by people such as the woman who touched him and was cured of her hemorrhaging and the centurion who's son was cured.

Once faith had been declared and/or a miracle performed, Jesus always instructed repentance. He always told the cured to stop sinning and to follow the spirit of God's laws.

People often asked how to do this. He often replied with two instructions; to worship God and to love your neighbor and yourself. He also told them that all sins are forgiven through faith and repentance.

Jesus taught that following God's will is more important than worrying about sins. He knew that concentrating on doing right is more productive than fearing wrong. He showed people that God is more interested in having them carry out his instructions than in punishing them. This is why the message of forgiveness and faith in forgiveness are so important to anyone who realizes the importance of following God's way.

He used the parable of the Good Samaritan as an example of the attitude and way to follow God's will. He chose a Samaritan as the main character to show that God will accept people regardless of sect, as long as they follow His will. He made the Samaritan assist and care for a person unknown to him to illustrate that all men are neighbors and dependent on each other for survival. He made the Samaritan do all this without any expectation or promise of reward to show that God's law must be lived sincerely, as an honest desire for good will toward others.

He used the parable of the prodigal son to illustrate God's willingness to accept the return of anyone who admits their wrongdoing and decides to follow His guidelines. He used the parable of the field owner hiring laborers to illustrate that the gift of forgiveness is equal for all who do God's work. He used many parables in order to give us many different ways to recognize and understand the way to rejoin God.

The most important example that Jesus used was his own actions. He cured people of disease and mental distress by forgiving them himself. He repaid his tormenters with information intended to make their lives better. He publicly forgave his assassins as he hung dying on the cross.

Jesus did more than mere teaching. He demonstrated the truth of his words. He lived up to the standards that he recommended.

He changed the world without a battle, without a weapon of destruction, without a drop of another man's blood. He proved his final point by surviving his own execution. His faith is life, his forgiveness extends forever to anyone who comprehends, and the option of repentance exists until the moment of human death.

## Jesus' Clarifications and Distillations

Part of Jesus' mission and accomplishment was to clarify and simplify the implementation of God's laws. He did this by transcending countless layers of interpretation and revealing the source of the laws, which is good will toward God and man. He sought to make the law understandable for the common man and to remove the perception of a need for a professional interpreter.

Jesus stated that he came to confirm God's law. He emphasized the spirit of God's law over literal and legalistic interpretation of God's law. One of his most emphatic criticisms of the culture of his day was the selfish literal interpretations of the law that had been adopted by the lawyers and religious leaders.

Jesus called these interpretations lip service and differentiated between the lip service worshipers and those who sincerely and honestly worshiped God. He warned against the leavening of the pharisees, meaning their devotion to power and ritual rather than God, and the love of status of the doctors of the law. He called the poor widow's offering greater than the rich man's offering. He called the tax collector's plea for mercy more holy than the eloquent prayers of the learned.

His instructions concerning the law were based on sincere, honest, humble, good willed and pragmatic, thoughtful approaches toward God and fellow men. He showed his followers the simplicity of the concept of God's law and the difficulty and complexity of following it among nonbelievers. Jesus' own life demonstrated the actual danger of living God's will in the face of an insecure local power structure.

One of his instructions was a distillation of the ten commandments. He said that it was enough to love God with all your heart, soul and mind and to love your neighbor and yourself. Anyone who thinks these two instructions through will realize that following them will cause a person to automatically follow all of the ten commandments and better.

A person who is comfortable with themselves will find it easier to be civil to their neighbor. A person who is at peace with God will stand a better chance of being at peace with themselves. The three concepts are inter-related and independent of enforced law.

Before his execution, Jesus gave the disciples what he called a new commandment to "love each other as I have loved you." He wanted them to notice the tolerance, forgiveness, straight forward honesty, truth, and the absolute faith in God that he demonstrated from the beginning to the end of his teaching period. Jesus' demonstration of love was empathetic, honest, forthright, patient and kind. He was able to use reproof in a constructive manner. People knew that he would tell the truth and would not hold their faults against them, that he would always give them another chance to get things right.

Jesus cut through layers of superstition and ritual by making forgiveness available through repentance. He emphasized doing right over the punishment of wrong. He switched the emphasis from the act of ritual to the sincerity of the motivation, which is proven to God by the act of changing the person's daily actions, in other words repentance. He demonstrated by his actions that the healing of man is more important to God than any judgement or punishment enforced by men. Jesus demonstrated and taught people to emphasize constructive thought over emphasizing consequences.

Jesus removed the need for interpretation of the law by simplifying and clarifying it. He took the spiritual water of the law which had been muddied and polluted by centuries of interpretation and distilled it to its spiritual essence. He made it possible to follow the law without the baggage of piles of paper and ink. He showed how to live God's law without precise regulation. He did this by giving us two instructions which cover any situation and all facets of God's law: Love God; and love yourself and your neighbor. This is the ultimate purpose of all the rules and examples contained in the Bible.

## The Most Important Part of Jesus Life

One of the most important errors that people make when studying Jesus is to pay more attention to one part of his life than another. The teaching is just as important as the sacrifice which is just as important as the resurrection. The teaching is our instruction. The sacrifice is our gift. The resurrection is our promise. They are inter-related and cannot be isolated. The gift cannot be accepted without taking the instruction to heart and the promise is not fulfilled without acceptance of the gift.

The teaching of the law of God, the law of love, is the introduction to the gift of the offer of forgiveness for the act of repentance. Living the spirit of the law of God is the act of repentance. Repenting gives the person and all that know him/her a new life, a life destined to be more satisfying and fulfilling than any other kind of philosophy or way of life. Living the law of God leads to a life of clean conscience. In short, God will give anybody another chance any and every time that they change their act to match the idea of loving God, themselves and their fellow man.

Jesus used his death and resurrection to illustrate the reality of God's offer of forgiveness for repentance and the promise of a new life. Jesus allows us to use his death as the ultimate atonement sacrifice. The resurrection illustrates the promise of a new life.

Jesus told us how, and showed us that it works, that it is more than just a story. Isolating any part from the other or emphasizing one part over another is not only an injustice to Jesus himself, it distorts the meaning for people who have not yet been introduced to the knowledge that he made available. Denying people access to the truth would anger Jesus more than any injustice to him personally. The total message is more true and more important than any single part of it.

## Jesus' Life as Parable

Jesus taught using parables. He also lived his life as a parable. There are many parables and messages in the example of his life. They can be explored individually, but the truth is that they are all part of the entire message of his life. Each lesson is a subheading about the ways and effects of electing to follow his example.

Jesus' miracles illustrate the power of faith in God. The undoubting faith of Jesus was the source of his miraculous abilities. Some people speak of the power of belief. Jesus was way past belief, he KNEW. His faith was the same as a person knowing that one plus one equals two. There was no question about it. There was no possibility of error.

Jesus used healings and retrieval from the dead to demonstrate that God will give anyone who believes another chance to live in His will. They show that God will accept even the most disfigured of people who return to Him. The liberation of people from demons shows that this includes emotional and mental cripples.

The opposition of the religious leaders shows that anyone who accepts the challenge of living God's will should not be surprised at the condemnation of those who only claim to represent Him, those who worship power. The ultimate power of God will always frighten those who value personal power over justice. These kinds of people will always try to thwart anything that appears to threaten their influence.

Jesus' reactions to his final trials show God's tolerance of human emotion. Jesus acted like any child commissioned with an unpleasant chore. He prayed at Gethsemane for a different cup and he expressed despair as he hung on the cross.

He did the chore anyway, like a good child, . He accomplished his mission in spite of its required pain and suffering. The message was that it is acceptable to God for His children to be unhappy with their lot, but He requires them to fulfill their obligations anyway.

Jesus preached forgiveness and was called the lamb of God. The end of each Gospel illustrates his willingness to back up his promise of forgiveness by acting as the blood sacrifice of Hebrew tradition and proving its effectiveness by illustrating the new life of accepting God's invitation to rejoin His family. Jesus' survival of assassination illustrates the promise of a new life by following God's will.

Jesus' life shows by example the methods, price and benefits of living God's will. He lived faith, demonstrated its effects and survived all attempts to thwart his mission, without falling into the traps of hatred, resentment or revenge. He rejected all attempts to saddle him with political or personal power in favor of giving all who listened to him the opportunity to learn the life of the law of God. Jesus life is THE example, the ultimate role model, the standard by which people should measure their lives.

The parable of Jesus' life suggests only that we must follow his teaching. Partake of the cup given by God. Seek nothing more, accomplish nothing less. All cups are different. Some contain martyrdom, others contain endurance, whether of success or trial only the ones who hold the cup can know. Some cups have honey, others have a sour taste, and others differing mixtures. All of God's cups can be drunk, none have poison. The thing that all cups have in common is the requirement of the law of God's love, faith in God and forgiveness of yourself and others.

There are as many parables in the life of Jesus as there are people to recognize them. The only way to see them is to look. God wants you to know for yourself. The only way to do this is to ask Him for guidance, go and look for them.

## The Message

Hopefully anyone who reads this part will be able to say to themselves that they already know all of this.

All things come from God. Life is a gift, an opportunity and a responsibility. We should be grateful for the gift, take advantage of the opportunity and live up to the responsibility of tending to the gift and the opportunity.

The combination of forgiveness and repentance means that every instant of a life is another chance to get it right , whatever it may be. This is part of the gift, the opportunity, and the responsibility.

The instruction of love is that taking care of ourselves, our family, neighbors, associates, acquaintances and environment will make all life more satisfying and more enjoyable. The instruction is part of the gift. Following the instruction is part of the opportunity and much of the responsibility. Those who follow the instruction know that living love is a reward in itself.

Jesus used his life as an example to encourage mankind to change to God's way of life. He used His life to illustrate the power of true belief in God, the way to live God's will, and as a final sacrifice for all those who live on the verge of true faith and who find it difficult to believe without symbols.

Jesus is the standard by which we should measure ourselves. Forgiveness comforts us when we fall short of this standard. Repentance encourages us to keep trying. Faith is the original inspiration for starting the adventure.

God will listen to our prayers. We can pray directly to God. God needs no middle man, but allows and supplies one for the benefit of people with weak faith.

God's will:

Accept and appreciate (love) God for what He is.

Love and take care of ourselves and each other. (Love your neighbor as yourself)(We are our brother's keeper)

Accept all phases of life (trials, successes, pleasures and pains) with patience, endurance, wisdom and vigor.

Do these and you will automatically be following God's laws. They were made for us to live happy, satisfying lives.

In short, God will give anybody another chance any and every time that they change their act to the match the idea of loving God, themselves and their fellow man.

# Rules of Thumb

# The Two Rules of Thumb

The benefits of the Ten Commandments far outweigh any limitations that they impose. It should be remembered that there are only ten of them. That leaves a whole world of possibilities open to exploration.

For those who think that ten is too much to deal with, God sent Jesus who made them much simpler. When asked what was the greatest commandment, he answered with two instructions. The first was to love God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind. The second was to love your neighbor as you should love yourself. He then stated that all the law and all the prophets stemmed from these two commandments.

Living by the first of these two commandments will inspire and guide a person to fulfill all the rest, because living by and loving the principles of God includes the spirit of love that the other commandments illustrate. The second of these rules stated by Jesus is necessary because of man's natural and willful imperfection. It shows his separation from God and his need for guidance. It is for those who see only what they can physically touch.

God made the world both exacting and lenient. The Ten Commandments are instructions for comfortable living in this world. He also made every day a new day and a new opportunity to do things right.

This opportunity is called forgiveness and the act of taking advantage of this opportunity is called repentance. The offer of forgiveness is there every day of every man's life. God's gift of free will makes it each individual's responsibility to decide to live in the way that is most constructive for themselves and the people around them.

Living for the benefit of yourself and those around you is the ultimate purpose of all God's instruction and correction. Developing the spirit that facilitates this may be the purpose of existence on earth itself. The only alternative to this spirit is self destruction.

