

Sierra Vista SDA Church Newsletter

May – June 2024 Edition

If You Love Me Keep My Commandments

(John 14:15)



The 15th-century Florentine politician and author Niccolo Machiavelli in his book, "The Price", wrote, "It is better to be feared than to be loved, if one cannot be both," arguing that fear is a far better motivator than love, and an effective leadership tool.

Although throughout centuries, countless politicians and business leaders enthusiastically embraced Machiavelli's thinking, God's leadership is entirely opposed to fear because in His Kingdom, there is no fear, only love (1 John 4:18). And God's love is best depicted in His Law, the Ten Commandments, which is also the ideal standard for Christian behavior.

In Mark 12:28-31, we read how a teacher of the law approached Jesus asking which of the commandments is most important. Jesus responded that the most important of the commandments is to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." And He added that the second most important commandment is to "love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these." Jesus here condensed the entire law into two concepts: Love for God and love for neighbor which takes us back to Exodus 20 where God wrote in stone with His finger the Ten Commandments. By obeying the first four commandments we demonstrate our love for God and by keeping the remaining six we show love for our neighbor.

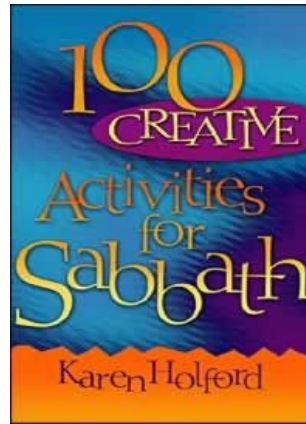
So, knowing all this, why would anyone want to get rid of the Ten Commandments? What is wrong with loving our Creator and loving our neighbor? Absolutely nothing! The Commandments are not only for the Jews, they were not nailed to the tree, or done away with at the cross. The Commandments are just as important today as they were back then when God wrote them in stone.

It is also important to underline the fact that no one will be saved by keeping the Commandments (Rom 3:20) - we are all saved by grace, through faith (Eph 2:8, 9), while living in obedience to God's Law is only an expression of the fact that we are saved (1 John 5:2-4).

The purpose of the law is not to save, but to point out the sin in our lives (Rom 7:7) and to direct us to Christ where forgiveness of sin can be found.

"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:10-12). A.G

100 Creative Activities for Sabbath



At Janelle Miller's initiative, starting with this Newsletter we will publish excerpts from Karen Holford's book "100 Creative Activities for Sabbath" published by Pacific Press. It is designed to give parents and children ideas to make the Sabbath an enjoyable, meaningful experience that unites the family and lifts us to God. Karen Holford is the Family Ministries Director for the Trans-European Division of Seventh-day Adventist Church, she's an accomplished author and presently lives in Hemel Hempstead, UK.

Idea #30 "Design an Animal" - Suggestions on how to do this as a family. Create instructions for your child or family to design an animal. For example, the instructions might be to design an animal that could live happily on the top of your apartment block or in the yard at school or that would be an ideal pet to suit your family. Make the instructions as detailed as you like and be very creative about where the animal might have to live.

Think: What would it eat? How would it move? What color would it be? What shape would it have? Think how God would have designed an animal. This is meant to "Encourage an appreciation of the challenge of creation and the wisdom of God to create creatures perfectly suited to their different habitats. He has also created each one of us with careful thought to suit the environments in which He has placed us."

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From the Pastor's Desk



Greetings to All,

In my comings and goings, here and there – a question comes up occasionally: "Why did Jesus have to die?" or, "Did he have to?" Christians differ on this idea as it is an area that theologians have argued for centuries. I want to begin these few thoughts by saying that Jesus was born to die. His whole life on this earth moved in that direction. God knows that the violation of the law leads to unhappy results. The Bible says "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). Somebody has to die, meaning that earth people were destined to perish. But God Himself, the Creator God, volunteered to take our place before His eternal law. It was decided in a council between the Beings of the God Head – even before the world was. (Zech 6:12, 13; Eph 1:4). To John, it was revealed that the Ancient of Days was involved, (John 3:16) and God the Holy Spirit orchestrated it (Luke 1:35). A body for Jesus was prepared in the womb of Mary (Heb 10:5). So, all three persons of the Triune God – were filled with love and compassion for us and celestial beings who have fallen. As Jesus grew in grace and in favor with God and man, He became certain of his mission (Luke 22:37). He took our sins into Himself and died in our place as a substitute for you and me! The fundamental importance of Christ's death is seen in the fact that it is mentioned 175 times in the New Testament, and in the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. The strange and mysterious service of the sanctuary pointed forward to the supreme demonstration of God's love for us humans, and for all created beings everywhere. If all these references to the death of a substitute on our behalf, were written in red, OT and NT, we'd be amazed at just how red a Bible we'd have. This all reveals just how far God would go to be our substitute and surety. Such love! Desire of Ages says that we will be able to understand it better when we see for ourselves the beautiful place that He left when He became "us". He left the constant presence of the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the adoration of angels, and spent 33 years here with us - as a man of sorrows. He left all that to be the Divine human sacrifice, to pay the debt we all owe to God's law. As sinners, we could never pay such a price, even if we had a million years to try. Only God could provide such a just salvation (Rom 3:26). It was either us, who would die forever, or Him. When we all get to Heaven, we'll fall at His feet in praise and adoration to such a God as He. But, we can start to experience that now. If we choose to give ourselves to Him God will open to us such vistas of joy and peace that we'll desire to be with Him forever. He'll bring into our lives the fruit of praise, thanksgiving, and service. We'll dwell with Him by faith even in the now "in Heavenly places" (Eph 2:6), and as a result, we'll be ready for Him when He comes in the NOT YET. May it be so as we enter the months of spring and summer. May God's healing, and His peace abide with the little church at Sierra Vista.

Love to all, Alvin Schnell.

Church Announcements

Building a Better Brain, Free Seminar – All are invited on Sunday evenings at 5:00 pm. Dr. David Allen, MD presents classes on preventing and reversing cognitive impairment.

Quilts of Valor is a national organization seeking to honor our veterans with the gift of a handmade patriotic-themed quilt. Our church has several veterans we will be honoring in this way. Still, we can only accommodate a few at a time so we are starting with Kisha Collins, Ila Rice, Stephanie Rose, Craig Nazareth, and Isabel Nazareth. *May 5 at 1 pm in the BLC* a presentation from Quilts of Valor will be made and all are invited to attend and honor these veterans. The next presentation is slated for the fall. If you are a veteran and have not received a registration form for QOV, please contact Janelle Miller. We desire to honor all who have served our country and wish to be honored this way.

Caretaker needed for a 55-acre property in St. David AZ in exchange for housing - it can be a single person or a couple. For more information please call Diane Johnson at 928-699-9765.

On April 20, Sonya Romero was baptized by Pastor Alvin. A while back, the audio/visual department asked her to help and she gladly accepted. Presently she is being nominated to be an assistant in the audio/visual department and she has agreed to serve. May God bless her as she walks forward on God's path to the kingdom.



Church Life Notes

March 17 Game Night

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another-and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb 10:24-25). It's such a blessing to be able to meet and encourage each other. Our world is one of challenges, but it is a beautiful thing to come together as a church to support each other. Thanks to everyone who joined us for a wonderful night of games & snacks. We all had a great time with fellowship and laughter.

– Angie Lee



Stuff From a Bible Buff



Where should we begin our expedition into Scripture? Why not with the best-loved verse—John 3:16? In the next several columns, we'll try to unpack this "gospel in a nutshell."

"For God . . ." Didn't get very far, did we?

The Deity referred to by the Jewish author of the Fourth Gospel is known in the Hebrew Bible as YHWH, the Tetragrammaton, (a.k.a. Yahweh, a scholarly guess as to the pronunciation of the divine name that Jews didn't enunciate aloud. "Jehovah," another approximation, is definitely not how God's name was vocalized.) Christians speak of "God the Father."

"God" is the subject (the actor) of the first two verb forms in John 3:16—"loved" and "gave." (More about these verbs in future columns.) This piece of information is important because many have jumped to the conclusion that God the Father is stern and vindictive, whereas God the Son mitigates the Deity's fury against sinful humanity. Without Jesus' intervention, we'd be toast! Or so they assume.

New Testament authors agree that God (not Jesus) initiated the whole plan of salvation. God, in contradistinction to Jesus, is even referred to as "our Saviour" (1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3; Titus 1:3; Jude 1:25). Paul wrote: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). Jesus saw his role as compliance with God the Father's wishes. "I have come . . . not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me" (John 6:38, NET). Although at the present time God has subordinated everything under Jesus (Eph. 1:22), Paul insisted that once God's reign will be firmly established and mutiny will be eradicated that Jesus will at that time hand back the kingdom to God the Father, who will "be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

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