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Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is
The Jesus Follower and the Law
Exodus 19-20
November 5, 2017, Jeff Germs

Since Kick Off Sunday in September we have been on a biblical journey through the entire Bible from Genesis, the first book in the Bible, to Revelation, the last book, in a quest to discover the big picture of what God has been up to so we can get an idea of how he wants us to be involved in his plan now. This journey is going to take over a year, so we will finish up some time next fall.

Last week we looked at Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt where they had been held captive as slaves for over 400 years. What we saw was that God gave them many opportunities to strengthen their faith and trust in him. Over and over again they defaulted to their most natural response to their situation. They chose to whine and complain instead of trust that God had their best in mind.

God actually had a vested interest in ensuring that Israel would flourish as a nation. If they didn't it would reflect on his character, because he had called them and made a promise to them.

It's the same with us as followers of Jesus. God has called us for a purpose and has promised that everything will work out for the best for those who love him, and are called according to that purpose. God has a vested interest in us as his people. It matters to him that we trust him with all our life situations, and our future. When we don't, it reflects poorly on his image in us and it reveals a whole lot about what we really believe about God.

We also saw last week that God uses us despite our limitations, and failed histories. We saw how God used a very insecure pessimistic person in Moses to lead the greatest rescue mission the world had ever seen. That is so encouraging for me personally, because, like every person who has ever lived, I have a checkered history and I haven't always had a positive attitude. If it depended on me and my wonderful positive thinking for God to accomplish great things, my future would be pretty bleak indeed.

We saw last week that our God is able to accomplish infinitely more than we ask for or imagine, and all for his glory in the church. That's what Paul told the Ephesian Jesus followers in Ephesians 3:20-21.

There was a bunch more drama as the Israelites wandered through the desert. They had more things to complain about, and God continually met their needs. A couple months into their wanderings they camped out near the foot of Mt. Sinai.

I have been to Mount Sinai in Egypt. It is nothing like I had envisioned. We didn't *camp out* at the foot of the mountain, but we did stay at a Catholic monastery there. At midnight we rode camels up part of the mountain and then we hiked the rest of the way to the summit so we'd be there in time to watch the sunrise.

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As the sun began to peek over the horizon the Sinai wilderness came into view. It was spectacular. So different than what I had expected. I tried to imagine the Israelites wandering there, and Moses climbing up the mountain. Until I had seen it with my own eyes, in my mind, Mount Sinai was covered with trees. That is not what it looks like at all. It is almost completely barren.

After we had enjoyed the sunrise and had a time of prayer and worship we hiked all the way down. I can't remember how long it took, I only remember that by the time I got to the bottom I thought I was going to die. It was hot and dry. I didn't have enough water. I was also hungry and longing for breakfast. I have bad knees and downhill treks are hard on me. I was 52 years old when I made that trek. I was very tempted to complain.

Moses was over 80 when he summited the mountain. And he did it at least eight times. If you read the narrative you would remember that Moses had to climb back up the mountain to reinscribe the Ten Commandments on slate tablets after he threw them down in a fit of rage when he came down the mountain and found that all the people were engaged in pagan revelry and idol worship because they thought he was taking too long to come down. So, back up he went to meet with God again to get a new set of tablets.

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It was in that barren wilderness that God met the needs of the Israelites. He continually invited them to get their hearts right and learn to trust him. We often want our circumstances to change before we will trust him. What God wants to do is get us to the place where we will trust him in the middle of whatever it is we are going through. **In the middle of your barren wilderness experience God is inviting you to trust him.** That is *the* big life lesson for the follower of Jesus.

Let's back up a bit and read a few verses from chapter 19 of Exodus for context. Then we will skip down to chapter 20 where God gave Moses the Ten Commandments and then we'll take a look at them to see how they relate to us in the 21st century.

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Exodus 19:1–8 (NLT)

¹ Exactly two months after the Israelites left Egypt, they arrived in the wilderness of Sinai. ² After breaking camp at Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai and set up camp there at the base of Mount Sinai.

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³ Then Moses climbed the mountain to appear before God. The Lord called to him from the mountain and said, "Give these instructions to the family of Jacob; announce it to the descendants of Israel: ⁴ 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You know how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

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⁵ Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. ⁶ And you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.' This is the message you must give to the people of Israel.

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⁷ So Moses returned from the mountain and called together the elders of the people and told them everything the Lord had commanded him. ⁸ And all the people responded

together, “We will do everything the Lord has commanded.” So Moses brought the people’s answer back to the Lord.

Whenever I read that last verse I always laugh. ...***all the people responded together, “We will do everything the Lord has commanded.”***

Good intentions, but not much follow through. They actually promised at least two other times to do everything the Lord commanded them. In chapter 24:3 and 7, after Moses had detailed all the laws God gave him they said they would absolutely follow all his decrees. We know how that played out. It didn’t take them very long at all to break their promise. I think they did have good intentions, but like us, they most naturally moved away from God.

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It was two months after they left Egypt. They were camped somewhere near the foot of Mount Sinai. They stayed there for just over eleven months and during that time Moses made several treks up the mountain where God gave him the law that is laid out in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. There were a total of 613 laws given.

Some of the laws had to do with their worship of Yahweh, the one true God. Many of them had to do with how to get along with each other. We need to keep in mind that up until this time, the Israelites had no law. They had been living in captivity as slaves in Egypt. The only law they knew was Egyptian law. They did not have their own laws to govern how to get along with each other. This was all brand new territory for them.

Let’s take a look at the centre piece of the terms of God’s covenant he made with the Israelites, through Moses, the Ten Commandments.

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Exodus 20:1–17 (NLT)

1 Then God gave the people all these instructions: 2 “I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery. 3 “You must not have any other god but me. [1st Commandment]

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4 “You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. [2nd Commandment] 5 You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me. 6 But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands.

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7 “You must not misuse the name of the Lord your God. [3rd Commandment] The Lord will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name.

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8 “Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. [4th Commandment] 9 You have six days each week for your ordinary work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you.

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11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.

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12 “Honor your father and mother. [5th Commandment] Then you will live a long, full life in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

13 “You must not murder. [6th Commandment]

14 “You must not commit adultery. [7th Commandment]

15 “You must not steal. [8th Commandment]

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16 “You must not testify falsely against your neighbor. [9th Commandment]

17 “You must not covet your neighbor’s house. You must not covet your neighbor’s wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor.” [10th Commandment]

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Along with these ten commandments are over 600 other commands in the Torah. I think the obvious question for us is how do these relate to us today? If you read most of the other commandments, you would have a pretty tough time trying to find any relevance to us in twenty first century Campbell River.

The Ten Commandments are easy to relate to, for the most part. We all know we are not going to get along well in society if we go around killing people. Some of the others are a bit tougher to fit into life in 21st century Campbell River.

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So, **how do we decide which ones we are bound to** in our time, and which ones were culturally specific for God’s people at that time?

Here are just a few as an example. Some are do’s and some are don’ts. Some are applicable to us and some not so much:

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- 1. Men must not shave the hair off the sides of their head — Lev. 19:27**
- 2. Men must not shave their beards with a razor — Lev. 19:27**
- 3. Men must not wear women's clothing — Deut. 22:5**
- 4. Women must not wear men's clothing — Deut. 22:5**
- 5. Not to tattoo the skin — Lev. 19:28**

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- 6. Not to make a bald spot in when you are in mourning — Deut. 14:1**
- 7. To repent and confess wrongdoings — Num. 5:7**
- 8. To say the Shema (Deut. 6:4) twice daily — Deut. 6:7**
- 9. To pray every day — Ex. 23:25**

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- 10. To wear *tefillin* (phylacteries) on the head — Deut. 6:8**
- 11. To bind *tefillin* on the arm — Deut. 6:8**
- 12. To put a *mezuzah* on the door post — Deut. 6:9**
- 13. To blow the *Shofar* on the tenth of Tishrei to free the slaves — Lev. 25:9**

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- 14. The king must have a separate Torah scroll for himself — Deut. 17:18**
- 15. To have *tzitzit* on four-cornered garments — Num. 15:38**

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Some people say the law is divided into three basic types: ceremonial, judicial (or civil), and moral. They try to sift through the laws and decide which are applicable for the follower of Jesus today and which are not. That seems a bit like a big guess at best.

God spoke through the prophet Jeremiah about 900 years after God gave Moses the law.

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Jeremiah 31:31–33 (NLT)

31 “The day is coming,” says the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. 32 This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant, though I loved them as a husband loves his wife,” says the Lord.

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33 “But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after those days,” says the Lord. “I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Because God knew that the proclivity of all humankind was to wander away from him he said there will come a day when instead of a law written on stone tablets, he will write the law on the hearts of humankind. He will turn our ought to's to want to's. That day came with Jesus.

Remember, for those of you who were here for our sermon series on the book of Galatians over two years ago, we learned that God gave the law for a specific purpose.

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Galatians 3:23–25 (NLT)

23 Before the way of faith in Christ was available to us, we were placed under guard by the law. We were kept in protective custody, so to speak, until the way of faith was revealed. 24 Let me put it another way. The law was our guardian until Christ came; it protected us until we could be made right with God through faith.

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25 And now that the way of faith has come, we no longer need the law as our guardian.

So, what was the Apostle Paul saying? The law was the guardian to bring God's people to Jesus. Jesus came. So, what does that mean for us and the law? Let's take a look at another passage from Paul from his letter to the Jesus followers in Rome.

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Romans 10:1–4 (NLT)

1 Dear brothers and sisters, the longing of my heart and my prayer to God is for the people of Israel to be saved. 2 I know what enthusiasm they have for God, but it is misdirected zeal. 3 For they don't understand God's way of making people right with himself. Refusing to accept God's way, they cling to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law.

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4 For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God.

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Galatians 5:1 (NLT)

1 So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law.

Okay, so, if Paul is correct in saying, we are done with the law, what do we do with what Jesus said in Matthew?

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Matthew 5:17 (NLT)

17 "Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose.

That last phrase is key. Jesus came to accomplish, fulfill, satisfy, or complete the law. So, which of the Old Testament laws did Jesus satisfy? Do we sift through the 613 and come up with some sort of system to try to make sense of it?

If we tried that, I would think that if we had ten different people attempting the same thing they would come up with ten different answers as to which laws are applicable now and which were specific to that time. So we have a quandary. How do we solve it? The truth is we don't have to. Jesus was asked a similar question by one of the experts in Jewish law.

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Matthew 22:36–40 (NLT)

36 "Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?" 37 Jesus replied, " 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."

That is why on our side walls to my left and to my right we have these two commands, Love God, and Love People. Jesus satisfied all 613 laws in the Old Testament.

Let's go back to the Ten Commandments that God gave Moses in Exodus.

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Exodus 20:1–17 (NLT)

- 1. 3 "You must not have any other god but me.**
- 2. 4 "You must not make for yourself an idol.**
- 3. 7 "You must not misuse the name of the Lord your God.**
- 4. 8 "Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.**

Notice that the first four commands were about how the Jews were to relate to God. It all starts from who God is. He must be first. There was to be nothing or no one who would get between the worshipper and God. God was to be respected and feared, even to the point of not using his name lightly. The Sabbath rest was to be practiced to show that they trusted God. So, the first four are all about how the worshipper related to God.

The last six are about how people were to relate to each other, and they flowed out of the first. Because God is like this, you...

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5. ¹² **"Honor your father and mother.**
6. ¹³ **"You must not murder.**
7. ¹⁴ **"You must not commit adultery.**
8. ¹⁵ **"You must not steal.**
9. ¹⁶ **"You must not testify falsely against your neighbor.**
10. ¹⁷ **"You must not covet**

So, when Jesus said there are two commands that sum up all the rest, this is what he meant. We love God, and out of that love for God, we love each other. Paul actually said there is only one command that sums up all the commands.

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Romans 13:8–10 (NLT)

⁸ Owe nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God's law. ⁹ For the commandments say, "You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet."

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These—and other such commandments—are summed up in this one commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God's law.

So, Paul says there is one law that sums up all the rest. Why does Paul say there is one, when Jesus clearly says there are two? Because the way we love God is by loving others. **We don't love God by dutifully reading our Bible or going to church or giving our tithes and offerings.**

Loving God will include these things. We can grow in our love for him by spending time with him in his Word and in prayer and tithing and things like that. However, we can't think we are loving God if we simply do these things, out of obligation, and at the same time treat others unkindly. We love God by loving each other. Jesus said, if you love me you will obey my commands (John 14:15). That is why Paul and Peter and James and John continually encourage us to never stop growing in our love for others.

There are really only two ways we show our love for God, by loving others and learning to trust him.

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John 13:34 (NLT)

³⁴ So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.

This new commandment doesn't replace the old; it is how its is fulfilled. Jesus completely satisfied the law by dying in our place. His death on the cross paid the penalty for every sin we have ever committed or will ever commit.

When a bride and groom say their vows to each other in front their guests and God, they are making a holy covenant to love each other, to not let anyone get between them. They are covenanting to each other that they will forsake all others for each other.

That is the same as the covenant God made with his people. God is a jealous lover. He longs for total devotion from us as we live with him in intimate relationship. As we get to know him, we grow in our trust of him. That kind of implicit trust leads to obedience. That is how we show our love for him.

When he begins the covenant law he started with who he is, and not only why he deserves their trust, by why it is *best* for *them* that they trust him. He used language of a perfect parent caring for her young. "I brought you to myself to care for you. You are my people. You matter to me. I want you to trust me implicitly with your life."

That is what God is saying to us right now. Just like he met Moses and the Israelites in the barren wilderness, so he meets us in ours. If you have placed your trust in Jesus he has written his law of love on your heart.

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Jeremiah 31:33 (NLT)

³³ "But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after those days," says the Lord. "I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

That is what we are celebrating today when we partake in the Lord's Supper. Everything we have talked about from the very beginning of this series has been leading towards this time where God would give his people a new covenant based on faith, not law. Jesus changed everything, not just because he died, but most importantly because he didn't stay dead. He defeated sin, death and Satan by rising from the dead so we could have life through him. He died to restore the *shalom* that was lost at The Garden of Eden at the beginning of time. He has loved us with an everlasting love and went to extreme measures to express his love for us.



***Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is
The Jesus Follower and the Law***

Exodus 19-20

Week of November 5, 2017

Objective of this study: To get to the heart of our true motive for obedience.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Psalm 100** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you. **Did anything “jump out at you”?**

Welcome (5 minutes)

Is there a Canadian or Provincial law that you find annoying? Explain.

[It's really important when doing this study that we each think about ourselves specifically and ways we need to grow, not how Christians in general need to grow. Do the hard work of letting the Holy Spirit speak to *your* heart.]

Word/Work (45-60 minutes)

1. Read Ex.19:1-4 and 20:1-3. There is something beautiful and passionate here. What does God say about himself and why he's giving them these instructions of how to live?

“In the treaty language of the ancient Near East the “love” owed to the great king was a conventional term for total allegiance and implicit trust expressing itself in obedient service” (NIV Study Bible notes on Ex. 20:6).

“Usually his (God's) “jealousy” concerns Israel and assumes the covenant relationship (analogous to marriage) and the Lord's exclusive right to possess Israel and to claim her love and allegiance... The “jealousy” of God demands exclusive devotion to himself” (NIV Study Bible notes on Ex. 20:5).

In an intimate love relationship, the people involved want to please each other. Likewise, we want to “find out what pleases the Lord” (Ephesians 5:10). As we go through the rest of this study, let's think about that — what does God show us in these passages about what pleases him?

2. Read Ex. 20:1-17.
 - a. What do these commands show about how to love God?
 - b. What do they show about how to love others?

3. Read Jeremiah 31:31-33.

What does this show us about God's heart? What pleases him, and what is he working on? Why?

4. Read the following passages.

What does God want?

Look for the underlying 'relational-ness' — that is, how loving God and each other matters to God.

(If you don't have time to do all of these passages, you could break into groups, with each group doing one section and then reporting back to the large group. Or some could be done for personal study at home.)

a) Old Testament:

Micah 6:8

Hosea 6:6

Proverbs 3:3

Do the above 3 verses expand your picture of what God was like in the Old Testament? How?

b) Jesus' Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 5:20-24

Matthew 5:27-28

Matthew 5:43-45

Matthew 7:12

How was the righteousness of the Pharisees not relational, not based on love, not based on knowing God and what he wanted?

c) Jesus' last evening with his disciples before his crucifixion:

John 13:34

John 14:15-18

John 15:9-12

5. Thinking back to last week, how does complaining undermine the love relationship God wants to have with us? What does he want instead? See Philippians 4:4-7.

6. To wrap up:

a) What picture is God growing in you, of what he is like and what he wants? You can refer also to what stood out to you from the sermon.

b) Think back to how God reminded the Israelites of key things about himself prior to giving them his instructions of how to live (Exodus 19:1-4 and 20:1-3).

What do you need/want to remind yourself of this week?

Prayer

1. Spend some time in prayer. Start by worshipping God for who he is.
2. **Here are some things you can pray about for the church:**

- A. That, as a church, we would actively and purposefully engage in the mission of Jesus in Campbell River.
- B. Our church board and staff as they lead us to live out the mission of Jesus
- C. River Kids ministry as they reach out to kids in our community.
- D. Our church finances. We are about \$40,000 behind. Pray that God would supply our needs so the mission can be carried on in Campbell River and around the world.
- E. **Our missionary of the month:** - Ngorika Children's Home in Kenya - check them out on our website and on the big chalkboard in the foyer. Pray about how you might be a part of supporting them.
- F. **Our missionary of the week:** Brody and Allison Naknakim with NAIM in Campbell River.
- G. **Local CR church:** Radiant Life Church (Pastor Art and Sally Vanholst). Pastor Art is quite ill and needs a healing touch from the Lord.