

50 Commands of Christ - 14 - (#46-47)

46. Keep my commandments—*John 14:15*

How can we show Jesus that we love him? *1 John 5:1-4*

What are the commands of Jesus that we should obey?

Does God reward obedience? *Gen 22:15-18, Deut 10:12-13, 28:1-14, Job 36:11, Isaiah 48:17-18, Jeremiah 7:22-23, Matthew 5:6, Revelation 3:10*

If I don't obey his commands, does that mean I don't get into heaven? Is there a penalty for disobedience? *Ephesians 5:6, 2 Corinthians 5:10*

When you hear you have to obey commands, what comes to mind? (Obeying your parents, teacher, Army sergeant, prison guard, boss, priest, or someone else.) How does Jesus compare with other people you've had to obey?

How can we more want to obey the Lord? *Psalms 51:12, 86:11, 119:4-5*

47. Feed my sheep—*John 21:15-17*

Most Bible commentaries focus only on the question, "do you love me?" that Jesus asks Peter three times and ignore the command, "feed my sheep." Is loving Jesus more important than feeding his lambs and sheep?

More accurate Bible translations list three slightly different commands:

- 1) Feed my lambs, i.e., feed, teach, support, nourish people new to the faith.
- 2) Tend my sheep, i.e., care for, rule over, keep together people who are believers
- 3) Feed my sheep (same as #1 but sheep imply more mature believers)

In a totally practical sense, how would you personally carry out this command of Jesus to "feed my lambs?" How about "tend my sheep?" And "feed my sheep?"

Jesus often describes his followers as sheep. That's kind of insulting, isn't it? What other meanings could you read into it? *Numbers 27:16-17, Psalm 119:176, Isaiah 53:6, Matthew 9:36, 1 Peter 2:25*

50 Commands of Christ - 14 - (#46-47) - Leader's Guide

46. Keep my commandments—*John 14:15* - If you love me, you will obey what I command.

How can we show Jesus that we love him?

1 John 5:1-4 - ¹ Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. ² This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. ³ This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, ⁴ for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

Does God reward obedience?

In Moses' second discourse to the Jews when they were about to cross the Jordan into the promised land, he said, (Deuteronomy 10:12-15, New Living Translation) - ¹² “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? He requires only that you fear the Lord your God, and live in a way that pleases him, and love him and serve him with all your heart and soul. ¹³ And you must always obey the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good.

Job 36:11 - If they obey and serve him, they will spend the rest of their days in prosperity and their years in contentment.

Isaiah 48:17-18 - ¹⁷ This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: “I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. ¹⁸ If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea.

Matthew 5:6 (Contemporary English Version) - God blesses those people who want to obey him more than to eat or drink. They will be given what they want!

Is there a penalty for disobedience?

In the Old Testament, there were major penalties for disobedience. In general, these penalties do not seem as harsh in the NT. Nevertheless, God has little patience with those who are disobedient. For example,

Ephesians 5:6 - Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

2 Corinthians 5:10 - For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

When you hear you have to obey commands, what comes to mind? (Your parents, teacher, Army sergeant, prison guard, boss, priest, or someone else.) How does Jesus compare with other people you've had to obey?

The big difference is (or should be) that in most cases you had to obey or were required to obey, whereas with Jesus you should *want* to obey him. Also, you probably loved your parents, but not others that you've had to obey. So your motives for obeying are quite different.

Psalms 51:12 - Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Psalms 86:11 (Contemporary English Version) - Teach me to follow you, and I will obey your truth. Always keep me faithful.

Psalms 119:4-5 - ⁴ You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed. ⁵ Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees!

47. Feed my sheep—*John 21:15-17* - ¹⁵ When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

¹⁶ Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me?”

He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

¹⁷ The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.”

Most Bible commentaries focus only on the question, “do you love me?” that Jesus asks Peter three times and ignore the command, “feed my sheep.” Gallons of ink have been used by commentators discussing the fact that Jesus uses *agapao* (to love unselfishly and sacrificially—the type of love God has for us) the first two times, but then uses *phileo* (to have brotherly affection or love) the third time.

One school of thought is that if (as seems probable) the original conversation took place in Aramaic (or possibly Hebrew), there would not have been any

difference expressed because both Aramaic and Hebrew have only one basic word for love. Thus it seems best to regard the interchange between *agapao* and *phileo* in these verses as a minor stylistic variation of John, consistent with his use of minor variations in repeated material elsewhere, and not indicative of any real difference in meaning.

Many commentators feel that the main, and indeed only, meaning of this passage is that when we fail him, Christ lovingly restores us, just as he did with Peter. We can never fall too far from Jesus' love. They ignore the second part, "feed my sheep."

So I ask, is loving Jesus more important than feeding his lambs and sheep?

My opinion is that both are important. Indeed, feeding the sheep (Jesus' followers) is the way Jesus wanted Peter (and us) to show our love for him.

With respect to the two words used for "feed," on his web site, Laurence A. Gonzaga has more on the subject: Both of the terms, *boske* and *poimaino* actually do mean "feed." However, there is a nuance here which is important for apologetics purposes. We know already that Jesus had appointed Peter to be his vicar here on Earth, the rock upon which the Church would be built (Matt 16:18). Here, Jesus is giving him a command to do two things in service to the Church, to "feed" by giving spiritual nourishment (*boske*), and to "feed" by juridical governance, that is by shepherding the flock and ruling over them (*poimaino*).

There are a number of other references to followers of the Lord (and Jesus) being like sheep.

Numbers 27:16-17 - ¹⁶“May the LORD, the God of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over this community ¹⁷ to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the LORD's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd.”

Psalms 119:176 - I have strayed like a lost sheep. Seek your servant, for I have not forgotten your commands.

Isaiah 53:6 - We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Matthew 9:36 - When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

1 Peter 2:25 - For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.