

APPENDIX A

Additional Commands

Of course, there are many additional commands of Jesus, but we could not include them all in the main body of this book. This appendix gives you some additional opportunities, to encounter Christ through His words.

1. Be Born Again

Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again’” (John 3:5–7).

By physical birth we become citizens of this world. Jesus is saying we must have a second birth—a new birth—that is spiritual and by this, and only by this, we become citizens of the kingdom of God.

Prayer: Dear God, thank You for loving us so much You sent Your Son to take the penalty for our sin and give us new spiritual life in the kingdom of God. Help us to communicate with our unsaved friends, so they will know that they *must* be born again.

Praying It into Practice

Picture three people you know but who don’t yet know Jesus. Ask God to draw their hearts to Himself and to give you opportunities to love them in such a way that they see

Jesus in you. Pray that God will give you opportunities to share your story and to speak to them about the Jesus Who lives in you.

2. Do Not Murder.

You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, “Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment” (Matthew 5:21).

Jesus did not come to destroy the Old Testament law. He made it stronger by teaching that not only the sin is wrong, but even the thought of sinning is wrong and makes one liable to judgment. Jesus was pointing out that under the New Testament system, it is not enough that we do not kill. We should not even allow our anger and angry words to “kill” or damage another person emotionally or spiritually.

Prayer: Lord, help me to avoid actions that You condemn, but also words and attitudes that could hurt others, and offend You.

Praying It into Practice: Can you think of anyone who has been harmed by your words or actions? If so, find a way to apologize and ask for forgiveness. Ask the Father to forgive the harm you have done and to make your relationship with this person more loving.

3. Settle Matters Quickly

Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand

you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny (Matthew 5:25–26).

In most cases one goes to court to protect one's rights. In the economy of Jesus, it will save much grief, and we will not only avoid court trials but many other trials, if we are willing to surrender our rights and allow Him to fight on our behalf. Notice there is nothing said here about who is guilty. Jesus says settle with an accuser out of court whether you are guilty or not.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to avoid offending others, and guide me if someone wants to haul me into a court trial. Show me if there is a better way to settle, and help me to relinquish my right to be right. By doing this, may Your name always be glorified in and through my life.

Praying It into Practice: If you are currently involved in or potentially involved in a legal matter that could be settled out of court, prayerfully consider how to do so. If not, you may know people who are in this situation. Pray for them, asking God to help them settle their differences in a godly way.

4. Do Not Commit Adultery

You have heard that it was said, “Do not commit adultery.” But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:27–28).

Too often we want to see how far we can go toward sin without destroying our souls. We should be striving instead to see how near we can draw to God so that He can

continually transform us into holy people. It is the earnest desire of the soul that constitutes good or evil. Just as the desire to do evil is sin, so the desire to do right is righteous.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to be so full of Your love and so cleanse my heart by the Holy Spirit Who purifies the heart by faith that I will be free of evil desires and acts.

Praying It into Practice: Read the story of the woman caught in adultery in John 8:1-11. Remember a time in your life when God restored you and rescued you out of your sin. Allow that feeling of gratefulness to rise up in you and give Him thanks. Ask Him to fill your heart with a deeper longing to live out a holy life.

5. Be Merciful

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful (Luke 6:36).

We are to be merciful, especially to relieve the miseries of the distressed, just as God is ever disposed to give all necessary help and support to those who are miserable and needy. Jesus also tells us that being merciful comes with a blessing: “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (Matthew 5:7).

Prayer: Lord, help me to show mercy rather than judgment. Teach me to be more like You in my relationships with those who need mercy.

Praying It into Practice: Be mindful of the opportunities the Father gives you to show His mercy to another. Is there someone who owes you something whose debt can be forgiven so that Jesus is glorified? Ask God to show you someone who needs a touch of God's mercy from you today.

6. Do Acts of Righteousness Secretly

Be careful not to do your "acts of righteousness" before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven (Matthew 6:1).

Whether doing deeds of kindness, giving gifts, or praying, do it in secret for God, not to try to get favor from people and not to draw attention to yourself and to your piety. Jesus made it clear that we are to let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify the Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16). We are to have a witness before men, but the kind that glorifies the Father, not ourselves. Motive is important.

Prayer: Father, so often I act in ways to be seen by others because I need the approval of men. Show me how to die to self in such a way that I am able to act and pray in ways that bring about heavenly rewards rather than earthly accolades or attention.

Praying It into Practice: Ask the Father to help you practice being obedient to this command during the coming week. Intentionally do a kind deed, give a gift of time or finances, and pray for someone whose need or situation has been brought to your attention by God. And let each be done anonymously and in secret.

7. Do Not Judge

Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you (Matthew 7:1–2).

When you feel like judging, Jesus says, “First take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye” (Matthew 7:5). In other words, judging is God’s job. Once you have condemned a person during the time he probably most needs spiritual help, you have probably cancelled out your opportunity to minister to him. Jesus is saying, be forgiving, be generous in mercy, and be understanding. Don’t condemn.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, forgive me for the many times I have passed judgment on another person without considering my own sin. Help me to see others with Your great love rather than with a mouth or heart that condemns.

Praying It into Practice: Whenever you catch yourself saying or thinking something judgmental or condemning about another person, ask the Lord to put a guard over your mouth or your mind.

8. Don’t Throw Pearls before Swine

Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces (Matthew 7:6).

In this command, Jesus tells the crowd not to persist in offering what is sacred or of value to those who will not appreciate it or understand its worth. Jesus warns His disciples to use their time wisely and to focus on the places of greatest receptivity.

Prayer: Gracious God, so often I try too hard to please those who are not open to the gift of life You offer instead of seeking those who are hungry and thirsty to know Jesus. I recognize that all are on Your heart, so give me a prayerful heart to pray for those who are resistant and an open spirit to see those who are searching for a loving Savior.

Praying It into Practice: You have a priceless gift to offer others in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet there are many who, sadly, will choose to “trample” what is sacred under their feet and who will abuse you verbally for making an attempt to give them this gift. Ask God to give you divine appointments with people who need the good news and who would gladly embrace Jesus.

9. Watch Out for False Prophets

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? (Matthew 7:15–16).

Jesus also warns us with these similar words: “The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45). What a person speaks reveals what is in his heart. A true prophet does the work and will of the Father. A false prophet teaches that what God condemns is okay, and can lead us into great spiritual danger. God commands us to protect ourselves by looking carefully at the fruit produced in a person’s life.

Prayer: Righteous Father, I desire to have only good come from my mouth and my actions. Cleanse my heart and plant within me a deep desire to do and say only what comes from You, as Jesus did. May others see the Jesus in me and want what they see and experience for themselves.

Praying It into Practice: Ask God to help you to be a good listener and a careful observer so that you can easily discern an evil person who could lead you into spiritual danger. Prayerfully consider those whom you call friends who do not demonstrate fruit in their lives, and begin to ask the Father to use you to be a godly example to them or to give you courage to walk away from a harmful relationship with them.

10. Guard Against Hypocrisy

Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying: “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” (Luke 12:1).

Yeast or leaven is often used as a symbol of evil or corruption in the New Testament. The idea is that a small amount of it is able to ferment a large amount of dough. Likewise, a small amount of hypocrisy or false doctrine can do a lot of damage to the kingdom of God. Jesus is teaching here not just that we should avoid hidden sin, but that we must not deceive ourselves and others by claiming to be righteous while we are sinning.

Prayer: Righteous Father, You know every thought before I think it, every word before I say it, and every action before I take it. Guard my heart in Christ Jesus so that I might not sin against You. Yet, when I fall, as I know I will, give me the integrity to come clean before You quickly, so that I will not be tempted to cover up my sin with a mask of hypocrisy.

Praying It into Practice: Make it your practice to prayerfully take stock each day of how well you have obeyed Jesus. Make Psalm 139:23–24 part of your prayer: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” As God reveals sinful thoughts, words, or actions to you, quickly repent and ask for His forgiveness. This important daily act will guard you from hypocrisy.

11. Guard Against Greed

Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15).

I don’t think Jesus was saying it’s wrong to save. Rather, it is wrong to be so driven to store up goods for yourself that you are not rich toward God. Covetousness is the inordinate desire to have more and more. Even when covetous people have plenty, they are not satisfied.

Prayer: Lord, may You alone be all that I need. Help me to look to Your hand to supply all of my needs and be satisfied. As You bless me, show me how to be a blessing to

others. May I never hold on to my possessions tightly, knowing they all belong to You. Please give me a spirit of generosity to guard my heart from greed.

Praying It into Practice: Is there anything you own that you feel you could never give up? Have you made possessions into idols? Do you have collections of things that have no eternal value or significance? Could someone in need use what you have, monetarily or otherwise? Prayerfully walk through your home, office, garage, closets, and so forth, and ask the Father to show you what might serve Him more fully if you were to give it away.

12. Keep Your Lamps Burning

Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him (Luke 12:35–36).

In the context of a parable, Jesus commands us to be ready for His return: “You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him” (Luke 12:40). He also states that it is not possible for anyone to know the day or the hour of His return. Even the angels and Jesus Himself do not know (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32).

Living in continual preparation and expectation of the return of Jesus means we must be acutely aware of our words, thoughts, and actions at all times. Being attentive to the imminence of Jesus’ return keeps our spiritual growth sharp and kingdom-focused.

Jesus want us to be “watching” (Luke 12:37) and “ready” (v. 38) “even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night” (v. 38).

Prayer: Father, I have been living my life completely unaware of the reality of Your return. Forgive me for setting aside my readiness in favor of other things and my watchfulness by turning my eyes and heart toward things that are not kingdom-focused. Help me to prepare by showing me what it means to be dressed for service and to keep my lamp lit continually so that I am well prepared to welcome You.

Praying It into Practice: How do you, or can you, prepare yourself for the return of Christ moment by moment? Consider this question, and take steps to make yourself more watchful and ready each day as you allow God to transform you into the image of Jesus.

13. Harvest Field Duties

Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matthew 9:37–38).

Uniquely, Jesus gives us both a command and a prayer request in this passage. Praying to the Lord of the Harvest to send out workers into His harvest field is perhaps one of the most significant prayers we can pray. While it is important for God to send qualified and uniquely gifted people into each “harvest field,” however, we must always consider the possibility that He will choose to use *us* (even if we feel unqualified) in response to the very prayers we (or others) have prayed. When He calls us, it is always a good fit, whether or not we can see it, and He will prepare us for His purposes. There is

always a harvest field where we can be used when we are willing to be placed there by God's divine appointment.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, how often I have prayed this prayer and expected You to raise up others to go. Help me to consider where You would have me go to be Your worker. May I listen carefully to Your urging, whether it is to walk across the street to my neighbor, to go on a short-term missions trip, to serve in a local ministry, or to move to the ends of the earth. Soften my heart to be willing to obey.

Praying It into Practice: Take some time to experiment with God as you pray the prayer written above. Step out in obedience as He shows you how to be His hands and feet for the sake of His kingdom. You will be amazed at how He will use you!

14. Deny Yourself

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it" (Matthew 16:24–25).

Jesus was clear in telling us there is a price to pay for being His follower. The cross can be different things for different people. Many, especially in lands where Satan has been in control for centuries, pay the price through persecution and being rejected by family and village. Some are even martyred. In our privileged culture, we need to recognize that our cross is the giving up of our rights to be vindicated or to "be right" for the sake of living like Jesus.

Dying to self is a daily choice for a believer. The world hates us as it hates Jesus. Yet, if we are willing to give up our lives, our comfort, our rights for His sake, then He promises great reward: “For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done” (Matthew 16:27).

Prayer: Father, the idea of dying to self is never appealing to me. Show me how to yield my will to Yours and to give up my rights into Your capable hands.

Praying It into Practice: Prayerfully read the biographies and stories of others who have given up comfort and security or even their very lives to live for Jesus. Recognize that God may never call you to such levels of sacrifice; however, prepare your heart by willingly taking small steps to crucify the worldly desires of the flesh and learn to live less selfishly to more fully follow Jesus.

15. If Your Brother Sins

If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that “every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.” If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector (Matthew 18:15–17).

Here is an important formula for dealing with an offender. The pattern is designed to bring reconciliation, to win back the brother (or sister) rather than to shame another person and ostracize him or her from fellowship—unless the person chooses to continue in sinful habits. Those who choose the sinful path should still be loved, and every attempt should be made to lovingly restore them to fellowship if it has been necessary to remove them from community for a season (Galatians 6:1).

Prayer: Lord God, show me how to be godly when another sins against me and to utilize the scriptural pattern You have laid out. Sometimes it is much easier to tell others about another's offense instead of having the courage to go to him or her in love. Teach me to be good at reconciliation for the sake of my relationships and those who are in community with me.

Praying It into Practice: Think about someone in your community of believers who has sinned against you or someone you know. If the situation has been resolved, was it according to God's plan as described in Matthew 18? If it has not been resolved, stop now to pray for those involved, asking God to intervene in the midst of the situation. Perhaps He will show you how to share this loving command from Jesus with those who may need to remember His instruction in this matter.

16. Don't Be Fooled

Then he said to his disciples, “The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. Men will tell you, ‘There he is!’ or ‘Here he is!’ Do not go running off after them” (Luke 17:22–23).

A parallel passage in Matthew 24:4–5 states the command this way: “Jesus answered: ‘Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, “I am the Christ,” and will deceive many.’”

This command is a warning against being fooled by false Christs. When Jesus truly appears, He will make it perfectly clear it is He! We don’t need to be left wondering if we will recognize Him, for the Holy Spirit will show us truth. Those who may claim to be the returning King should never sway us, for our hearts are centered upon the One Whom we long to see. Men and circumstances may try to say otherwise; however, because the kingdom of God is within us (Luke 17:21), we can avoid the temptation of “running after them.”

Prayer: Father, guard my heart from being deceived by those who claim to be Christ when they are not. Keep me watchful and ready, prepared by Your Spirit and Your holy Word for the return of Jesus orchestrated by Your command alone!

Praying It into Practice: Have you ever been gullible and taken in by a fast-talking sales person? Think about how you can guard against being duped by the enemy of our souls, who wants to put counterfeit Christs in our path to distract us from keeping our eyes on God alone. Many will be led astray prior to the coming of Jesus. Ask God to keep you from being one of them and to show you how to help others to be on guard as well.

17. Don't Separate Husband and Wife

"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh' ? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate" (Matthew 19:4–6).

This command makes it clear that easy divorce wasn't in God's plan when He created man and woman in the beginning. It's a higher standard than many want to follow in our time. Marriage vows are sacred and must involve a lifetime commitment. Our culture has glamorized adultery and has perverted marriage in so many ways. Finding people who are fully committed to one another until death is growing more rare, even among Christians. Much of the trouble in our society comes from a disregard of the sanctity of marriage and the disintegration of the family as God originally created it.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to keep my marriage vows sacred, and to honor the command You have given to be committed to my spouse for life. Take us through the struggles and difficulties of life by keeping our eyes fixed upon You alone, for You have given us to one another to serve Your kingdom.

Praying It into Practice: Whether you are married or not, it is important to recognize the value Jesus placed upon the union of a man and a woman, and that this relationship has been instituted for His special purposes. Write down the names of any couples you know who are engaged. Pray diligently for them to understand fully the importance of the

commitment that lies ahead of them. Pray also for any couples you know whose marriages are struggling. Ask God to bring healing and restoration into their relationships for the honor and glory of the Father.

18. Let Little Children Come

People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them (Mark 10:13–16).

This command was given by Jesus to His disciples because they were rebuking the people for bringing their children to see Him and be blessed by Him. The disciples knew that Jesus had many demands on His time and attention, and they didn't realize how important the children were in Jesus' eyes.

Most rulers want around them those most mature and learned and gifted. It seems to me that the message Jesus was conveying to those who would take responsibility for building His church is that the requirements for entrance into His kingdom are not complicated or severe. Even, no, especially, a child can qualify, because it takes the innocent faith of a child to enter.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, You have shown me how important children are to Your heart. Help me to treasure the little ones in my own family and in my sphere of influence by never

standing in their way spiritually. Allow me the privilege of nurturing their simple yet powerful faith as they receive Your kingdom into their hearts.

Praying It into Practice: Much of the church sidelines children, making it even more difficult for them to come to Jesus as they get older. Ask the Father to show you how to have the faith of a child, and to see the kingdom of God as they do. Seek ways to nurture and strengthen the faith of children in your family or church family.

19. Practice Servanthood

Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:43–45).

The mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus to ask that one of her sons be allowed to sit on Jesus' right hand and the other on His left when He came into His kingdom. Mark 10:37 says it was the sons themselves who asked this.

Jesus used this occasion to teach how to become great in the kingdom of God. And as He did on many occasions, He taught just the opposite of what the people of the world expected. To become great you must be a servant, and to be first you shall be slave of all. Then to make this pattern most convincing, He added, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (v. 45). Jesus Himself is the ultimate example of how to follow His own command.

Prayer: Father God, so often I want to be noticed rather than work behind the scenes and to be first instead of last. Teach me what it means to become great by becoming a servant and a slave to others so that I might become more Christlike.

Praying It into Practice: Ask God to help you find ways to serve others that are not common for you. Perhaps you will allow another to take your place in line, or you will anonymously take on a task for someone that you would not normally do. Live your life sacrificially in this way for as many days as you can, and see how God transforms you.

20. Wash One Another's Feet

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them" (John 13:12–17).

Jesus acknowledged that He was the disciples' Lord and Teacher. Jesus "knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God" (v. 3), but that did not excuse Him from the position of a humble servant. He wanted the disciples to understand, by showing them the full extent of His love (v. 1), that a servant is not greater than his master. If He, their Master washed their

feet, they, His servants, are not so great that they should be excused from washing feet. And as we obey, we will be blessed. What an important lesson for us today.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, You have given me, by Your humble example, a way to allow others to be more important than myself. May I always be willing to wash the feet of others and to serve them wholeheartedly. Give me the heart of a true servant.

Praying It into Practice: Humility is a difficult discipline sometimes; yet, it keeps us from pride. Ask Jesus to show you someone you could serve today, even if you are busy or don't feel like it.

APPENDIX B

Commands Given to Others

Sometimes Jesus gave commands to others, which have much wisdom and practical application for His followers today. Here are a few of them to consider.

1. Worship the Lord Your God and Serve Him Only

Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only’” (Matthew 4:10).

Jesus gives us a clear lesson here about how to handle the temptations of Satan. Luke 4:8 repeats the command to worship and serve only the Lord God.

We are to resist Satan with the Word of God, which Jesus did successfully three times in the wilderness. Jesus is our supreme example. The Bible says that He “has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin” (Hebrew 4:15). Jesus lived as a boy, young man, and man, so He knows everything you and I face. He fought all the battles we have to fight, and He was successful. He was the only one who was ultimately and supremely successful in the battle against Satan, for He never sinned.

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for the example of Jesus. Help me resist temptation through skillful use of the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. Teach my heart to worship You when I am being tempted, so that I am able to withstand the attacks and gain the victory.

Praying It into Practice: Whenever you are tempted, quickly go into worship mode. Worship is prayer! Either turn on worship music or sing a song of worship to the Lord. You can also go to the book of Psalms, and read or sing a passage to Him. By doing one or all of these things, the Holy Spirit will draw your heart and your thoughts back to the Lord Your God, the only One you are to serve.

2. Do Not Put the Lord Your God to the Test

Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test'" (Luke 4:12).

God's Word is truth, and when Jesus tells us, in the context of speaking to Satan, not to test God, we are not to doubt that He means what He says. It is not a suggestion. It is a command. And it is repeated in Matthew 4:7. To go against God is not trusting Him and is considered sin. It is as simple as when a child pushes the boundaries of a parent's instruction to see if he or she will be punished for doing so. Unless God tells us specifically to test Him in something, which He clearly does in Malachi 3:10 related to tithing, we are clearly not to push the boundaries of God's commands. We are to follow Jesus' example in the wilderness; He refused to put God to the test.

Prayer: Lord, help me readily to do only what is right in Your sight, and not try to see how much I can get away with.

Praying It into Practice: Whenever you are tempted to test God, quickly ask Him to give you the strength to withstand the temptation and divert your heart and mind to something that will serve His kingdom rather than your own!

3. Fill the Jars

Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water”; so they filled them to the brim.

Then he told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.” They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, “Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now” (John 2:7–10).

The lesson here for us is the example of those who obeyed Jesus’ commands. When Jesus tells us what to do, it is always rewarding to do it. The servants obeyed completely. If they had obeyed only in part, the reward would have been only in part. Very likely, in this situation, the servants obeyed without understanding what they were doing. Many times we have to do that. Obedience is an outgrowth of faith, and when one really believes in Jesus and in His power and authority, one can obey without questioning and can enjoy great rewards.

Prayer: Help me, Jesus, to always do what is right, and what pleases You. Thank You for the generous rewards You give to those who follow Your commands.

Praying It into Practice: Has God ever impressed the face or thought of another person in your mind or upon your heart as you have been praying? When He does so, consider this a prompt to action. Stop to pray for that person, or if you feel you need to call or

write a note of encouragement, don't put it off. Do it right away. Such practice will teach you obedience with great benefit!

4. Be a House of Prayer, Not a Den of Robbers

On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it 'a den of robbers'" (Mark 11:15–17).

This commandment says to us that we are to have respect for the house of God as a house of prayer for all nations. Jesus entered Jerusalem toward the end of His stay on earth and walked into the temple and cleaned house. He drove out those who were buying and selling and overturned the tables of the money changers, and then made the statement above. I'm not sure our churches are really houses of prayer. It's been said that you can measure the popularity of the pastor by how many come to hear him preach Sunday morning and you measure the loyalty to Jesus by how many come to prayer meeting. Too many churches have committed to programming rather than prayer to build the church.

I have a little devotional book by E. M. Bounds titled *The Power of Prayer* with a message for November 26 about the importance of prayer for each day of the year. He taught that without prayer "a church is like a body without spirit; it is a dead, lifeless thing.... Prayer should be the chief attraction for all spiritually-minded churchgoers." It is

by prayer that the church achieves success in growing the kingdom of God. It is by prayer that we are to send laborers into the harvest fields.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to learn from the zeal Jesus had for the house of God. Use me in my church to help make God's house a house of prayer for all nations.

Praying It into Practice: If you haven't done so already, start praying for the leadership of your church. Pray that they will be people of prayer committed to seeing the church become a house of prayer for all nations. Ask God to show you how you can raise the level of prayer in your own life, family, small group, and church.

5. Worship in Spirit and Truth

God is a spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

With this statement, Jesus revealed to the Samaritan woman that the time had come when spiritual worship of God was about to be established in place of the Jewish rites and ceremonies. In describing for her the proper way to worship, He taught one of the most important and most sublime truths for us today. God is a Spirit. He is pleased with that which resembles Himself. If we are to please Him, then our worship must be in spirit. It must spring from the heart. And it must be in truth, not just in sincerity; that is, it must be thoroughly guided by the Word of God.

The way to make our worship spiritual and thus pleasing to God is to learn more and more of the Word of God, and then let the Holy Spirit Who inspired that Word draw us out in true spiritual worship according to the teachings of that Word.

Prayer: Lord, I thank You for the privilege of worshipping You. Help me to worship You in spirit and in truth, inspired by Your Word.

Praying It into Practice: As you read His Word, ask God to show you a creative way to worship Him in spirit and truth. It might be through singing Him a new song or dancing before Him. You could write a psalm of praise to Jesus or paint Him a picture. Allow the Spirit of God to inform your own spirit about how He likes to be worshipped.

6. More Commands When Jesus Sent Out the Twelve

In Matthew 10:1–42 and Luke 9:1–6, Jesus gave more commands when He sent out His twelve disciples. Let me suggest that you read through these passages prayerfully and decide for yourself how much of what Jesus instructed His disciples on that occasion should direct you in your service for Christ.