

The Commands of Yeshua ~ Part 16

In my last post, we began a new mini-series on the character traits that Yeshua expects us to possess concerning others by exploring His command to love one another. This love was obviously directed towards our family and other Believers. In this post, we will look at "loving our enemies" and "turning the other cheek."

Concerning Others ~ Part B

"Let your light shine before people, so that they may see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

2. Love Your Enemies

"Nevertheless, to you who are listening, what I say is this: 'Love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." (Luke 6:27-28)

This command goes against our natural tendencies. We prefer to get even, to seek justice, to stand up for our rights, or to defend our honor or reputation. But to show love to our enemies challenges us at our core. In some ways it is a test of our resolve as Believers, and it reveals the level of commitment we have for Yeshua. We show love to our enemies not because we actually and genuinely love them but because we actually and genuinely love Yeshua. But in loving our enemies and doing good to those who hate us, we see the potential for our enemies to become our brothers and sisters in Yeshua.

Application: Yeshua's goal is not to make our lives more comfortable or prosperous; His primary goal is to redeem the lost before they enter into eternity without Him. Loving our enemies is a major part of that plan. If we are unable to love our enemies, we are not fully able to love Yeshua either. Will you choose four people you have the most trouble liking and pray for them today? Will you send them notes of encouragement? Will you do something this week that proves to them you are a follower of Yeshua?

3. Turn the Other Cheek

"If someone hits you on one cheek, offer the other too; if someone takes your coat, let him have your shirt as well. If someone asks you for something, give it to him; if someone takes what belongs to you, don't demand it back." (Luke 6:29-30)

Yeshua says to respond in love when faced with hatred, cursing, and physical abuse. How important are your belongings to you? Your books, your power tools, your camping gear, your electronics ~ Oh NO not my smartphone ~ your car equipment and accessories? Are they more important than your relationships with people? Are they more important than having an opportunity to share the Besorah with a lost person?

This command hits at the issue of your priorities and how they may conflict with the priorities of Yeshua. Yeshua was unencumbered with stuff. He did not have a car or boat to maintain, nor did He have an art collection or cabin at the lake. I don't think He had a wheelbarrow or shovel once He began His ministry. He had absolutely nothing to distract Him from His purpose on the earth. There was nothing to compete for His attention, nothing to waste His time, nothing with which to fritter away the hours in solitude. People and His relationship with His Father were the only two things that mattered to Him. Every time we add another collectible or tool, or upgrade our many other items we store in our garage, we take time away from eternal matters. We must hold onto our things loosely and never allow them to become more important to us than the people around us. Whatever we have should be used for eternal purposes rather than personal, private pleasures.

Do you still resent that person who broke something of yours, or who never returned your book, or who inadvertently scratched your car? If you do, you love your things more than you love people. We can call it

good stewardship, taking care of our investment or a host of other things; but what do you think Yeshua would call it? How many of your things would be impressive to Him? I wonder how many more people could be reached with the gospel if the money spent on collectibles, trinkets, unnecessary upgrades, and toys was used in mission work around the world. We can't take any of it with us, and much of what we leave behind will be sold off, thrown out, or stored away by those we leave it to. The goal for the Believer is not worldly investments but kingdom investments. We store in heaven all that is truly important, and it waits for us to finish our time on the earth.

- ***"If someone wants to sue you for your shirt, let him have your coat as well! And if a soldier forces you to carry his pack for one mile, carry it for two!"*** (Mathew 5:40-41)
- ***"If someone sues you, come to terms with him quickly, while you and he are on the way to court; or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer of the court, and you may be thrown in jail!"*** (Mathew 5:25)

Some things are just more important than our comfort or convenience. We are ambassadors for Yeshua (see 2 Corinthians 5:20) and represent Him at all times. This will often require us to be inconvenienced, to sacrifice our time or resources, or to face the wrath of others who are enemies to Yeshua.

We are individuals doing our part in a much grander plan of which Yeshua is the architect. Giving in to the demands of others for the sake of Yeshua, settling differences quickly for the sake of Yeshua, and sacrificing our resources for the sake of Yeshua will not go unnoticed by Him who rewards His faithful ones accordingly. No, we are not to be doormats or slaves to the whims of others, but we are to be servants of Yeshua, who should be quick to volunteer when Yeshua gives an assignment. We are not to be needlessly walked over or abused by our enemies or constantly cheated by selfish and arrogant people; instead we are to die to self, take up our execution stake daily, and follow Him where He leads us. We are not the slaves of others but the servants of Yeshua. There is a significant difference.

Application: There is sometimes a fine line between being good stewards of our possessions and our possessions being stewards of us. If you have anything that takes more of your time than you give to ministering to people, your possessions are far too high on your priority list. Would you have trouble leaving everything behind and following Yeshua today? Dusting collectibles, polishing a shiny boat or car, retuning that engine to get it perfect, or making room for yet another piece of art for your wall are likely not as worthwhile to Yeshua as they are to you. Everything has its place, but do your things have their right place in your life? Are you spending more time plotting to get even with someone who has hurt you than you do praying for them? Have you thought about how to make your enemy your brother or sister in Yeshua?

Remember always the words of Yeshua: ***"If you love me, you will keep my commands."*** (Yochanan 14:15)

In my next post, we will continue in this mini-series on the character traits that Yeshua expects us to possess concerning others by looking at forgiving and being reconciled with others.