
The Laws of the Church of Christ

D&C 42

Eight days after the Prophet Joseph Smith had arrived in Kirtland, Ohio, he received this revelation in the presence of twelve elders. The revelation was originally known as “The Laws of the Church of Christ.” The purpose of the laws was to help the Saints become “a righteous people, without spot and blameless” and “be endowed with power from on high” (D&C 38:31–32).

The law is a description of the proper way to act in personal and moral situations. The law mirrors the Ten Commandments given to Moses and in so doing suggests a moral standard of equality under which “all are under equal obligation to obey, and have an equal chance of obtaining the reward of obedience.”¹ The law also mirrors the beatitudes given by Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. The word *beatitude* means “to make happy,” “to attain the blessings of heaven,” and “to be fortunate.” The Ten Commandments and the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount outline the pathway to eternal happiness.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that obedience to the law or commandments of God leads to blessings from on High: “There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—and when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:20–21).

¹ Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, *The Doctrine and Covenants Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965), 238.

Obedience to the commandments is an expression of our love for Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. The Savior said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). President Russell M. Nelson told a particularly provocative story of a university student who faced the consequence of not keeping the commandments:

When I was a young university student, one of my classmates urgently pleaded with a group of us—his Latter-day Saint friends—to donate blood for his mother, who was bleeding profusely. We went directly to the hospital to have our blood typed and tested. I’ll never forget our shock when told that one of the prospective donors was unfit because of a positive blood test for a venereal disease. That infected blood was his own! Fortunately, his mother survived, but I’ll never forget his lingering sorrow. He bore the burden of knowing that his personal immorality had disqualified him from giving needed aid to his mother, and he had added to her grief. I learned a great lesson: if one dishonors the commandments of God, one dishonors mother, and if one dishonors mother, one dishonors the commandments of God.²

The primary song, “Keep the Commandments” outlines the reward for obedience—

Keep the commandments;
Keep the commandments!
In this there is safety;
In this there is peace.

He will send blessings.
He will send blessings,
Words of a prophet:
Keep the commandments.
In this there is safety and peace.³

² Russell M. Nelson, “Our Sacred Duty to Honor Women,” *Ensign*, May 1999.

³ Barbara A. McConochie, “Keep the Commandments,” *Children’s Songbook* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2002), #146.