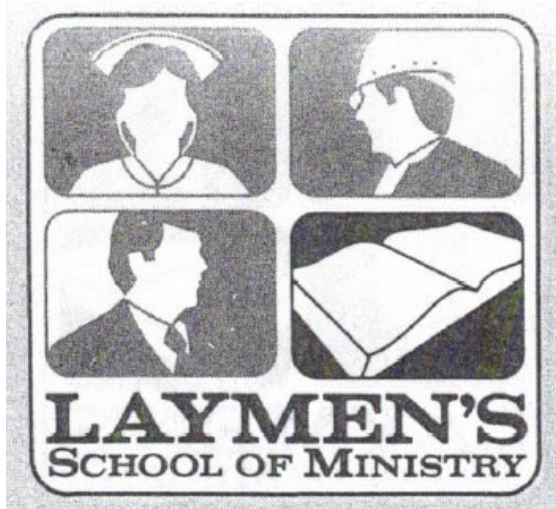


Lesson 8:

Devoted Love – Knowing Elohim

Congregation of Yahshua
Growing in Yahshua – Part 1 - Foundations

This study is adapted from Laymen's School of Ministry's Foundations for Christian Growth and has been modified in certain areas to align with the beliefs and doctrines of Congregation of Yahshua, Pittsburgh. We acknowledge and appreciate the time and effort it took to create the study and we pray that Yahweh continues to bless the people and work of Laymen's School of Ministry.



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Congregation of Yahshua
Growing in Yahshua – Part 1 - Foundations

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the previous lesson, we learned that when we are born again, the old nature is put to death, and we are given a new nature. We are also given the Holy Spirit who is the Presence of Yahweh in us. The Holy Spirit is a gift given to everyone who has decided to put their faith in Messiah Yahshua.

The Holy Spirit is a wonderful Gift. Not only does the Holy Spirit assure us of our salvation, He also poured the love of Elohim in our hearts (Romans 5:5). This love enables us to love Yahweh and to keep His commandments. Yahshua tells us that the first and greatest of all commandments ever given to us is that each one of us should love Yahweh with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength (Matthew 22:36 - 38). Because we have the Holy Spirit, we can fulfill this commandment because the Holy Spirit sheds the love of Elohim in our hearts, and because the Holy Spirit was given to us to cause us (move us, prompt us) to keep Yahweh's statutes (Ezekiel 36:27).

Because of the love of Yahweh poured into our hearts, and because the Holy Spirit moves us to keep the commandments of Yahweh, we can also keep the second greatest commandment, which is that each one of us should love his neighbor as himself (Matthew 22:36 – 40). All the teachings in the rest of the Scriptures depend on these two laws. That means that whenever we do any commandment given to us we are always loving Yahweh.

II. YAHWEH IS LOVE

The Scripture tells us that Yahweh is love (1 John 4:16). That means that every single thing Yahweh does and says is based on love. All the commandments, decrees, and statutes are based on love. The Bible is the inspired word of Yahweh, so every line that Yahweh inspired to write is based on His love.

A. AN ACTIVE LOVE

Today many people equate love with a deep, warm, heartfelt feeling toward an object. Because of that, people have used the word "love" to indicate their deep, warm, heartfelt feelings for food, alcohol, movies, hobbies, people, and frankly anything.

However, Yahweh's love is based on selfless sacrifice. It is an active love that does good toward another. While Yahweh may have deep, warm, heartfelt feeling toward His children, His love has primarily been shown, not on how He feels toward us, but on what He does for us. Romans 5:8 says, "But Elohim demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Messiah died for us."

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While we were sinners, we committed iniquity and were hated by Yahweh because Psalm 5:5 says Yahweh hates all workers of iniquity. It is difficult for us to understand how Yahweh can love sinners and hate them at the same time. But Yahweh's ways are uncommon to most people, and we should not impose man's way of love and hate on Yahweh.

Yahweh hates all workers of iniquity, and His wrath remains on them (John 3:36). Yahweh does not destroy them right away because of His great mercy (Lamentations 3:22). He gives them a chance to repent and turn to Him through His Son, through whom He showed and continues to show His great love. Yahweh is just and must punish sin so a time will come when mercy runs out on the ungodly and they must then pay for their own sins in the Lake of Fire.

Yahweh's love is active. It is fulfilled in action and not in simply feeling. At least two verses in the Bible show us what Yahweh **did** to show us His love toward us.

Romans 5:8 NKJV But Elohim demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Messiah **died** for us.

John 3:16 KJV For Elohim so loved the world, that He **gave** his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Please read all referenced verses.

B. A DEVOTED LOVE

Yahweh is devoted to loving us. The relationship believers have with Yahweh is based on the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31 – 33, Luke 22:20). A covenant is a solemn pledge between two parties. The New Covenant is a solemn pledge between Yahweh and all who believe in Him that Yahweh will be their God, and they shall be His people (Hebrews 8:10). Yahweh made the New Covenant with the house of Israel, but all who believe in Messiah Yahshua are grafted into the same covenant. There is no other covenant that leads to salvation. In 1 Corinthians 11:25 - 26, Paul writes to the Corinthian Gentile believers reminding them of the New Covenant they are a part of.

A covenant is a pledge of devotion. Yahweh cannot fail in fulfilling His part of the Covenant that is, to be our God. We, on the other hand, can fail. But Yahweh gave us His Holy Spirit who cannot fail. Therefore, if we follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, we shall not fail to fulfill our part of the covenant

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that is, to be His people. Because we are following the Holy Spirit, we can be devoted to Yahweh as well.

Romans 8:38 – 39 tells us that indeed nothing can separate us from the love of Yahweh. Yahweh is devoted in love toward us.

1 Corinthians chapter 13 is sometimes known as the “Love Chapter” because in it, Paul explains love to the Corinthian saints. Be sure to read it. In verse 8, he says, “Love never fails (NKJV)”. Some translations say, “Love never ends.” The message is that love never fails to be devoted to whoever is being loved. It doesn’t stop loving.

Yahweh is love. His love is devoted to us, and because He is in us, our love toward Him should be a devoted love.

Please read all referenced verses.

III. LOVING YAHWEH

Yahweh showed us His love by sending us Yahshua Messiah, His only Son, to die in our place. Yahshua speaks of this when He says, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13).”

Yahweh has shown us His great love and has given us His Holy Spirit who has shed Yahweh’s love abroad in our hearts so that we can love Yahweh too. The only appropriate response to Yahweh’s love is to love Yahweh.

In the previous section, we learned that Yahweh’s love is based on action, and it is a devoted love. If we are to love Yahweh with Yahweh’s love, our love toward Him will be based on action too, and it will be a devoted love.

We do not have to wonder how to love Yahweh because He has already told us. In John 14:15, Yahshua says, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” A few verses later in verse 21, Yahshua says, “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”

We love Yahweh by keeping His commandments.

A. KEEPING YAHWEH’S COMMANDMENTS

Yahweh feels love when you keep His commandments. In Jeremiah 31:31 – 33, Yahweh promises the New Covenant. In it He mentions that He was a husband to Israel, but Israel was not devoted to Him. Israel failed to love Yahweh because they rejected His commandments.

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The New Covenant relationship with Yahweh is like a marriage relationship between a loving devoted husband, and a loving devoted wife. The loving husband will do things for his wife to please her, not out of obligation, but out of love. The wife will do the same things for her husband. A marriage based on obligation and not love will be a miserable one.

For us to keep all of Yahweh's commandments, we need to love Yahweh first. The Holy Spirit gives us this ability as we have already pointed out. Earlier in the lesson we mentioned that the Holy Spirit has poured Yahweh's love into our hearts (Romans 5:5) and causes us to keep Yahweh's commandments (Ezekiel 36:27). As you can see, it is impossible to not love Yahweh if you are following the Holy Spirit. Following the Holy Spirit is a choice we make every day. In Romans chapter 8, these choices are laid before us as "walking after the flesh," or "walking after the Spirit." If we walk after the Spirit, we will keep Yahweh's commandments.

Yahweh indeed feels love when we keep His commandments. Mark 10:17 – 22 records the story of a young man who was very wealthy. He asked Yahshua what he (the young man) must do to inherit eternal life. Yahshua reminded Him of the commandments and the young man said that he had been doing them since he was a youth. Yahshua's response to this, as recorded in verse 21, was love. The young man was on the right track, but he lacked one thing to be complete: to sell all his earthly possessions and give to the poor, follow Yahshua, and he would have eternal belongings.

Yahshua has not called everyone to sell their earthly possessions and give to the poor. But we all should be willing to when asked. This is part of being a disciple of Yahshua as explained in Luke 14:25 – 33. This is part of our **loving devotion** to Him. Just as Yahshua left all that He had in Heaven for us, we should be willing to leave all that we have for His sake. In the end we shall have Him, and He is all we need.

When we keep Yahweh's commandments, we show our love toward Him. As we continue to keep His commandments, we build intimacy with Yahweh, and we get to know Him deeper and deeper. We shall talk about this later in this lesson.

When many people who call themselves, "Christians" hear the term "keeping God's commandments" today, they have a negative feeling towards the term. These negative feelings are because of false teachings about Yahweh's commandments. Let us examine some of these false teachings and show that they are false. If you have believed any of these false teachings, you will need to **renew your mind** and think correctly toward Yahweh's commandments

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because it is not possible to know Yahweh and build intimacy with Him without keeping His commandments (1 John 2:3 – 6).

B. FALSE TEACHING ABOUT THE COMMANDMENTS

All false teachings are dangerous and once found to be false should be rejected immediately. If you have taught or promoted any of these false teachings, or any false teaching whatsoever, you ought to repent of it immediately. All false teachings lead away from Yahweh, and when false teachings are perfected, they erode faith in Yahweh, or they promote faith in a counterfeit Messiah. A counterfeit Messiah can never lead to salvation.

Many churches today have correct teaching, but also incorrect teaching. If a church is to grow to perfection (mature in Messiah Yahshua), it cannot have any false teachings. All false teachings must be repented of immediately they are discovered. Yahweh has never tolerated a mixture of correct and incorrect teaching among His people, and that's why He has stated several times that His people should be **careful** to follow His commandments. Please see Deuteronomy (NKJV) 4:6, 5:1, and 5:32.

The following are common false teachings about Yahweh's commandments found in churches today and should not be tolerated among Yahweh's people.

1. Yahshua “fulfilled” the Law

Those who hold to this teaching say that according to Matthew 5:17 - 20, Yahshua fulfilled the Law, and therefore those who follow Him do not have to keep the Law. This teaching is false for many reasons, but here are two reasons.

The first one is that Yahshua in the same passage said that we should not even think that He has abolished the Law. He said that until Heaven and Earth pass away, no part of the Law shall be done away with. We see that when Yahshua comes again, His people shall be keeping the Law as prophesied in Isaiah 56:1 - 8.

The second one is that if Yahshua fulfilled the Law and in fulfilling taught or caused others to break the Law, He would have violated Deuteronomy 4:2 and taken away from the Law. If Yahshua added or took away from the Law, He would have sinned. If Yahshua sinned, then He can't be Elohim and our salvation is worthless. We are not saved.

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Besides, if Yahshua took away the Law then murder, lying, stealing should not be sins. But they are!

Yahshua indeed fulfilled the Law, not by abolishing it, but by doing what the Law requires in the way that it was originally intended by Father Yahweh. He gives examples of doing the Law the right way in the following verses. Please read Matthew 5:21 – 30.

Those who claim to have Yahshua living inside them, Yahshua who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, ought to fulfill the Law as Yahshua did, by doing what the Law requires.

Believers ought to stay away from this teaching and should not tolerate it or promote it.

2. Gentiles should keep only a few commandments

This teaching acknowledges that Yahweh gave the commandments to the Jews and Gentiles only need to keep a few of them. The passage cited is usually Acts 15:19 – 21. This teaching is false for several reasons, but here are two reasons.

The first one is that in Acts 15:21, the disciples expected the Gentiles to be hearing Moses (a term referring to the Law) every Sabbath day as stated in verse. As they are hearing the Law every Sabbath day, they would learn it, and start to do it.

The second one is that Yahshua commanded the disciples in Matthew 28:18 – 20 to teach all nations **everything** He had taught them. He did not have one law for the Jews and a separate one for the Gentiles. If the disciples asked the Gentiles to do one thing, but the Jews another, they would have violated Yahshua's command. The disciples did not violate Yahshua's commandments.

Yahshua claimed to be one with Father Yahweh, and we do see Him being one with the Father because the Father always had the same law for Israel and for the Gentiles as recorded in Numbers 15:15 – 16.

Believers ought to stay away from this teaching and should not tolerate it or promote it.

3. No one can keep the whole law

Another false teaching is that no one person can keep the whole law perfectly. This teaching supposes that if you break one law then you are guilty of all and you are condemned for life. It is true that if you

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break one law, then you are guilty of all as James says in James 2:10. So this teaching concludes that it is impossible to keep the whole law perfectly. This teaching is false for several reasons, but here are two reasons.

The first one is that this teaching does not acknowledge that in the law itself is repentance. In Leviticus 4, Yahweh gives several sacrifices one should do if he or she broke the law. Yahweh provided a way to be restored to righteousness if you broke the law, and that teaching is in the law itself. The one who breaks the law and repents of his sins according to what the law says should be done when one breaks it, **is still keeping the law.**

The same is still true for those who are in Messiah. Messiah Yahshua is the ultimate sacrifice, and if we break the law, we repent to Yahweh through Yahshua. Yahshua is our Advocate before Yahweh. We repent of our sins, confess them, and Yahshua's sacrificial blood washes away our sins.

When we break the law, we repent, and we are forgiven. Yahshua did not break any law, therefore He did not need to repent. Yahshua was, is, and will forever be sinless.

The second reason is that this teaching fails to acknowledge verses that show that Yahweh's people kept the law blamelessly as is stated of Zechariah and Elizabeth, John the Baptist's parents, in Luke 1:6 or of Abraham in Genesis 26:4 – 5.

This teaching is false, and believers ought to stay away from this teaching and should not tolerate it or promote it.

C. RENEWING YOUR MIND

The false teachings mentioned above are prevalent among those who claim to be Christians. Believers ought to be careful to follow all of Yahweh's Word and not fall into deceiving doctrines.

The Word says that a believer cannot claim to know Yahshua if he or she does not keep Yahshua's commandments (1 John 2:3 – 6). We are going to see below how keeping the commandments builds intimacy with Yahshua. So critical is this keeping of commandments to knowing Yahshua, that Yahshua will reject those who believed in Him yet refused to keep His commandments. He will say I never knew you workers of lawlessness (commandment-breakers) (Matthew 7:21 – 23 ESV).

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The demons believe in Yahshua, but they do not keep His commandments. One must believe in Yahshua and keep Yahshua's commandments. Then you shall begin to develop intimacy with Yahshua.

If you have believed these teachings, you need to repent of them, and you need to have your mind renewed. Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you the truths of Scripture and look through Scripture with the lens of love. You cannot build intimacy with Yahshua if you choose to neglect some or all of His commandments, just like a Godly married man will fail to build intimacy with his wife if he chooses to break some or all of his marriage vows.

The Holy Spirit within us has poured Yahweh's love into our hearts – the same love with which Yahweh loved us. We can then love Yahweh back with His own love. The Holy Spirit also moves us and empowers us to keep Yahweh's commandments. 1 John 5:3 NKJV says, "For this is the love of Elohim, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome."

IV. REMAINING IN HIS LOVE

When we obey Yahweh, Yahweh feels loved. When we continue to obey Yahweh, we build intimacy with Him. Intimacy is a deep oneness with another being. In His prayer recorded in John 17, Yahshua prayed for this oneness between us and Him and the Father. He said in John 17:11 that we believers should be one as Yahshua is with the Father. In verses 20 – 23, Yahshua says that the Father is in Him, and He is in the Father, and He prays that we may be one in Them, Him in us, and the Father in Him, and that we may be **perfectly** one as He and the Father are perfectly one. Intimacy is oneness.

A. BUILDING INTIMACY WITH YAHSHUA

In John 14, Yahshua tells us about building intimacy with Yahweh. When we build intimacy with Yahweh, we build intimacy with Yahshua, and when we build intimacy with Yahshua, we build intimacy with Yahweh. Because Yahweh and Yahshua are one. Their oneness is intimacy.

John 14:21 – 24 NKJV reads

21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and **manifest Myself to him.**"

22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?"

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23 Yahshua answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make **Our home with him.**

24 He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me.”

In verse 21, Yahshua promises to manifest, that is to reveal, Himself to anyone who keeps His commandments. Then Judas (not Iscariot) asks Yahshua how Yahshua will manifest Himself to anyone who keeps His commandments.

Yahshua says that when a believer keeps His commandments, Yahshua and the Father will come and make Their home with that believer. A home is a place of oneness with everyone that dwells there. People who live in a home together get to know each other very well. It is the same with Yahweh.

When we repent of our sins and believe Yahshua’s Gospel, we are born again and receive the Holy Spirit. That is the Father and Yahshua dwelling in us. When we obey Yahweh’s commandments, the dwelling place of the Father and Yahshua becomes like their dwelling place in Heaven where their commandments are always obeyed, and where They are one. Yahweh’s will is done in us as it is in Heaven. Heaven, Yahweh’s dwelling place, comes in us, and we are one with Yahshua and the Father. We have intimacy with Elohim and there is oneness.

B. REMAINING IN INTIMACY WITH YAHSHUA

We cannot build intimacy with Yahshua if we love Him today, but not love Him the following day just as a husband cannot build intimacy with his wife if he loves her today but does not love her the following day. That marriage will not be a happy one. It is the same with Yahshua. We will not build intimacy with Yahshua if we keep His commandments today but refuse to keep them the following day.

After Yahshua spoke of how a believer can build intimacy with Him in John 14, Yahshua then spoke of how to remain in intimacy with Him in John 15. Yahshua gave Himself as an example. He said in John 15:9 – 10 (NKJV)

9“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide [remain] in My love. 10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”

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Yahshua said that He kept the Father's commandments and abided in His love. He told us to do the same thing. He said if we keep His commandments we will abide in His love.

If we keep on keeping Yahshua's commandments, we will remain intimate with Him and we will know Him and He will know us. We shall never be afraid of Him saying, "Depart from Me, I never knew you."

1 John 2:3 – 6 NKJV

3 Now by this we know that we know Him [Yahshua], if we keep His commandments.

4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

C. THE CHOICE TO LOVE

Love cannot be forced. It is a choice. No one can force anyone to love a person. Yahweh does not force us to love Him. Yahweh chooses to love us, and He gives us the same choice to love Him back.

The greatest and first commandment starts by saying, "You shall love Yahweh your Elohim with all your heart..." The Holy Spirit has poured Yahweh's own love into our hearts.

The simple truth is this: "A believer obeys Yahweh's commandments because the believer loves Yahweh."

Here's a statement made from a brother in the faith,

"It's like a marriage covenant. I have a wife and there are rules in our marriage. One of them is I cannot sleep with other women. Now do I follow that rule out of fear, obligation, or frustration? No. I do it out of love. I know that if I sleep with other women, it will break my wife's heart.

It is the same thing with Yahweh. I obey His commandments because I love Him, not out of fear, or obligation. I know I have free will. I can walk away from the faith if I want and forsake Yahshua. Elohim doesn't make me obey Him. It is my choice.

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Because of the Holy Spirit I received at salvation, the love of Elohim has been poured into my heart. The Holy Spirit moves me, prompts me, and guides me to obey the commandments of Elohim as was promised in Ezekiel. But I can still choose to ignore the Holy Spirit and do what I want. I can choose to follow the flesh instead of the Spirit. But I choose not to.

I choose to obey the Holy Spirit because I am in love with Elohim. Just as sleeping with another woman would break the heart of the wife I love, so breaking the commandments of Yahweh would break the heart of the God I love.

If you love someone, it hurts you when you hurt them. If I break God's commandments, it hurts me too, because He's hurt. I have Godly sorrow and feel sick.

This feeling of oneness, of feeling one another's feelings is what Messiah meant when He said, 'I in them, and You in Me' in John 17 or when Paul said, "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him" 1 Corinthians 6:17. So, I worship Him because of love. That's why if we love Yahshua, we can't help but keep His commandments."

V. SUMMARY

Yahweh loved us first (1 John 4:19). When we were born again, He gave us His Holy Spirit who poured Yahweh's own love into our hearts. The Holy Spirit also moves us to obey Yahweh's commandments. The Holy Spirit empowers us to love Yahweh and keep His commandments. Keeping Yahweh's commandments builds intimacy with Yahweh.

Believers ought to be careful to obey Yahweh in everything. Several believers have been misled into believing false teachings about keeping Yahweh's commandments. This has led many believers to not feel intimacy with Yahweh. Yahweh may feel more like a distant commanding military general than a close, devoted loving Father. Believers who have believed false teachings about keeping Yahweh's commandments should repent of those teachings and renew their minds. If they maintain those teachings, they will fail to build intimacy with Yahweh, and if they persist in them, they may get to know Yahshua at all.

If we follow the Holy Spirit, we will keep Yahweh's commandments. They will not be a burden; they will be a delight. We will build and maintain intimacy with Yahshua, and when He returns, He will not say to us, "Depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness [commandment-breakers], I never knew you." Instead, Yahshua said that those who keep His commandments and teach others to do the same will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 5:19).

VI. LESSON EIGHT – KNOWING ELOHIM – STUDY QUESTIONS

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

A. Day One

- 1) When you repent of your sins and believe Yahshua's Gospel, you receive the Holy Spirit. What does the Holy Spirit do with your heart?

- 2) According to Ezekiel 36:27, what does the Holy Spirit cause you to do?

- 3) What did Yahweh do to show us His love? Provide a Scripture reference.

- 4) Yahweh is devoted to loving those who believe in Him. What does that mean?

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B. Day Two

1) What is greatest and first commandment?

(a) What part of the body is mentioned first in the commandment? _____

(b) Explain how it is possible to keep this greatest and first commandment?

2) How do we show Yahweh that we love Him?

3) If someone asked you, "Why do you keep the Law? Don't you know that Yahshua fulfilled them all so we don't have to keep them?" What would you say to that person? What Scriptures would you reference?

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4) If someone said to you, "No one can keep the whole law." What would you say to that person? What Scriptures would you reference?

5) Have you believed false teachings about the commandments? If you or someone has believed false teachings about the commandments, what should you or that person do?

C. Day Three

1) What is intimacy?

2) Please refer to John 14:21 - 24 New King James Version Bible, and answer the following questions.

(a) Write the name of someone you've seen face-to-face that you love (parent, spouse, child, friend). _____

(b) How does that person know you love them?

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(c) How does Yahshua know that you love Him?

(d) What does Yahshua do when you love Him?

(e) What do Yahshua and the Father do with you when you love Yahshua?

3) How do we build intimacy with Yahshua?

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4) How do you feel about keeping Yahweh's commandments?

D. Day Four

1) How did Yahshua remain intimate with the Father? Please share Scripture.

2) How do we remain intimate with Yahshua? Please share Scripture.

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3) If someone says, "I know Yahshua," but that person does not keep Yahshua's commandments, what is that person called?

4) Does Yahweh force us to love Him? Please explain your answer.

5) In the statement by the "brother in the faith," why does he choose not to break Yahweh's commandments?

6) The following Scriptures have to do with the people of Yahweh keeping the Law, that is, the commandments of Yahweh. Please look at the New King James Version Bible.

(a) Psalm 1:1 - 2 (b) Psalm 112:1 (c) Psalm 119:47

Describe the attitude toward of the law of the people mentioned

in the verses above in one word: _____

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7) Do you feel the same way toward keeping Yahweh's commandments as the people mentioned in the Scriptures in question 6? If you don't, why not, and what should you do to change that?
