

# 119

## MINISTRIES

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### **Weightier Matters**

Sometimes obeying one command causes us to break another; is that okay? What does it mean when we hear the phrase “weightier matters” in Scripture? Isn’t all sin the same in the eyes of the Father?

These are serious questions with serious consequences based upon how one answers them. So, let’s take some time to test the concept of “weightier matters” to the Word and see what we come up with.

### **What is Weightier?**

#### **Matthew 23:23**

*“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.*

We’ll begin with the word “weightier” found in Matthew 23, the only place in Scripture we find the phrase “weightier matters.” In Greek, this is the word for weighty, ἀρύτερα (barutera), it has a meaning heavy or important based upon the context.

The meaning conveyed in Matthew 23:23 is not related to literal weight. So, Yeshua is using this word figuratively to indicate something of greater importance. So from this verse we see Yeshua stating that justice, mercy, and faithfulness are of greater importance than the tithe of mint, dill, and cumin.

Note, however, that the tithe is still important to Yeshua, just not as important as justice, mercy, and faithfulness. Yeshua still says it’s not to be neglected.

Our focus here is on what Yeshua was saying the weightier matters are, but what do justice, mercy, and faithfulness actually mean?

The word for “justice” in the Greek here is κρίσιν (krisin). This word carries a meaning of a judgment between right and wrong in a legal sense.

This is the word for mercy, ἔλεος (eleos), meaning mercy, pity, or compassion.

Finally, this is the word for faithfulness, πίστις (pistis), meaning faith or belief, a conviction in something.

So we see that making right judgments, having compassion for our neighbors and having a strong faith, belief, or conviction are all more important to our Creator than the tithe of mint, dill, and cumin.

We want to be clear, here, regarding what Yeshua is saying about the tithes of the Pharisees. Tithing is part of the commands of YHWH, they are to be completed in a certain prescribed manner. Yeshua fully supports the tithing when speaking to the Pharisees. However, remember, in Yeshua's day the temple still existed and the Levitical priests still served. We do not have these things today and therefore we cannot tithe in the manner prescribed by the Creator. For more on this topic, please see our teaching titled "[Tithing: Is It For Today?](#)" The point Yeshua was making is that while the Pharisees did keep the letter of the law by tithing, they were not keeping in mind the weightier matters of the law.

The question remains, "How do we know we make right judgments?"

The answer: We have the Torah to tell us what is right and what is wrong.

#### **Psalm 119:1-4**

Blessed are those whose way is blameless,  
who walk in the law of the LORD [YHWH]!  
Blessed are those who keep his testimonies,  
who seek him with their whole heart,  
**who also do no wrong,**  
**but walk in his ways!**  
You have commanded your precepts  
to be kept diligently.

Note again, verse 3

"who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!"

Not walking in His ways is doing wrong. Walking in His ways is defined as loving God in 1 John 5:3.

#### **1 John 5:3**

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

How do we have compassion on our neighbors? We love them as described by the Torah and reiterated by Messiah among others.

Do not take vengeance nor bear a grudge, Leviticus 19:18.

#### **Leviticus 19:18**

**You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge** against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD [YHWH].

Love one another as Messiah loved, John 13:34.

### **John 13:34**

A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another: just as I have loved you**, you also are to love one another.

Be kind, tenderhearted and forgiving, Ephesians 4:32.

### **Ephesians 4:32**

**Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another**, as God in Christ forgave you.

And

Have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind, 1 Peter 3:8.

### **1 Peter 3:8**

Finally, all of you, **have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.**

Read Romans 12 for additional ways that we should be living.

How do we have belief or faith?

By believing, committing, and trusting in God and His Word (see Hebrews 11:1,6 & James 2:18).

Now that we have reviewed what it means to make right judgments, have mercy (compassion), and what faith is, we can look closer at what weightier matters are.

### **What Are Weightier Matters?**

So what are weightier matters? They are things having to do with making the right decisions according to the Torah (Loving God), loving our neighbors, and having faith in the Word (without faith, it's impossible to please God and there is no salvation). Does this sound a little familiar?

### **Matthew 22:36-40**

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

The greatest, or most important, commandment is to love God. The second most important commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself. So we see that what matters is loving God, loving people, and having faith. These are important concepts to keep in mind as we look at more Scripture that shows where weightier matters come into play with the Messiah.

### **Matthew 12:1-4**

At that time Jesus [Yeshua] went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.” He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him:

how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?

**Matthew 12:5-7**

Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless.

**Matthew 12:10-12**

And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might accuse him. He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

**Luke 14:2-5**

And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. And Jesus [Yeshua] responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away. And he said to them, "Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?"

We have just read four examples where Yeshua made it a point to show that while the Torah is there and important, there are times that something more important occurs that allows what appears to be the breaking of the Torah, or sin.

Yet, we also know that if Yeshua had sinned—that is, transgressed the Torah—he could not have been our perfect sacrifice and the Creator's provision for our salvation. So, what do we do when two Torah commands appear to contradict each other?

We looked into the weightier matters previously. Do you remember what the weightier matters were? Making right decisions regarding the Torah (loving God), loving our neighbors, and having faith.

Let's apply these principles to some of the situations we just read.

**Applying the Weightier Matters**

In Matthew 12 Yeshua tells how David ate the bread of the presence when he was hungry; this was bread set aside for the priests only, according to the Torah. Yet we don't see how David was condemned for this action by Messiah.

Why might this have been? What was the weightier matter here, saving bread meant for priests or preserving the lives of David and his men? In this case, the weightier matter is life of men (loving neighbors) over saving bread for the priests.

Again in Matthew 12, Yeshua points out that the Levitical priests are required to maintain the temple every day, even on the Sabbath. They don't get to have the Sabbath off as do others. For others, the penalty of not resting is death. Why might the priests be held guiltless? What's the weightier matter?

Loving God by keeping the temple holy for YHWH and making the daily sacrifices for Israel (loving others) is of more importance than the priests resting.

Matthew 12:10-12 has Yeshua telling the Pharisees that even they would help an animal that had fallen into a ditch on Shabbat. For those who may not be familiar, the Torah stated that your brother's donkey or ox must be helped if it had fallen into a ditch. That requirement appears to be at odds with resting on the Sabbath, which is Yeshua's point.

The weightier matter is showing love to your brother and the animal by helping them (doing good), even if it's on the Sabbath.

Are you beginning to see the pattern here and how the weightier matters are working? It is more important to show love than it is to simply follow the letter of every law.

It could be said that while the truth of the law is important, following the spirit of the law shows us the weightier matter.

The spirit of the law is the intent behind the law, the reason the law is given. In the above examples the spirit of the law, when it comes out of love for God or our neighbor, is greater than the basic obedience of the other law. It is more important to do good (just as Yeshua said) than it is for us to rest.

The spirit behind resting on the Sabbath is that we as men need to rest from our work. The Sabbath is made for man. Showing love is a weightier "spirit" than our need to rest. Does that make sense?

We have now determined what weightier matters are, how they work, and how they are to be applied in our lives.

The question that remains, is whether or not all sin is equal before our Creator. We cover this in greater depth in our teaching titled: [Are All Sins Equal?](#), but we'll briefly touch on it here.

## **Sin Equality**

We have seen that there are weightier matters when it comes to obeying the Torah, thus the natural assumed corollary is that there should be weightier matters when it comes to sin. When we test that, we find there is some truth to it.

There are some sins that carry a heavier penalty than others. For example, when someone commits adultery, the penalty is death with two or more witnesses. However, when someone steals from another, there is a restitution that must be paid equal to what was taken and then an additional 20% added back.

Another example of a differentiation is the unforgivable sin mentioned in Mark 3.

### **Mark 3:28-29**

*"Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"*

There is one sin that is somehow worse than the others, one that will not be forgiven. This again shows

there is at least one sin that is more “weighty” than another. For more on this sin, please see our teaching titled [The Unpardonable Sin](#).

As we have seen there are weightier matters regardless of whether we are looking at weightier sins or weightier instructions for us to follow. Whatever the case may be, we need to be familiar with the Word of God so that we know which path is the better one to take. Perhaps this is one reason we are called to meditate on it day and night.

Psalm 1:1-2

Blessed is the man  
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor stands in the way of sinners,  
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;  
but his delight is in the law of the Lord [YHWH],  
and on his law he meditates day and night.

In regard to weightier matters, we need to keep in mind that YHWH desires that we make right judgments, have compassion for our neighbors, and maintain a strong faith in God’s word.

Before we conclude, here is what we are not saying. We are not saying to put “loving your neighbor” ABOVE loving the Creator. The two greatest commandments work together, not against one another. Obeying the Creator is always number one because it is how we show God that we love Him with all of our heart, soul, and strength. Loving God is the greatest commandment. What we have been discussing are cases where we have two commandments of the Torah that appear to be at odds with one another.

Weightier matters are not to be used to determine whether or not something is a sin. That is what the Torah determines, not us. In other words, it is not a weightier matter if someone is trying to determine if going out to eat on the Sabbath is a sin. Sin is defined by the Creator in His Torah, not by man. If a member of the body is sinning, we are still to correct them in love and not allow them to go on sinning. If we do not correct them, then we are not loving our neighbor and we are not being obedient to (and thus loving) the Creator. For a more complete description of loving your neighbor, we recommend studying Leviticus chapter 19. Again, a situation of a weightier matter only occurs when two commands of YHWH appear to be at odds with one another, or contradict one another.

When we are faced with a decision regarding which commandment to follow if two seem to be in opposition, then we must simply view the spirit behind each commandment. We can do this by looking at the actions using the three lenses just mentioned. This enables us to then know which path is the one that we should walk in.

We hope that this teaching has blessed you.

Remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom

*For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at [www.testeverything.net](http://www.testeverything.net)*

**Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.**

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