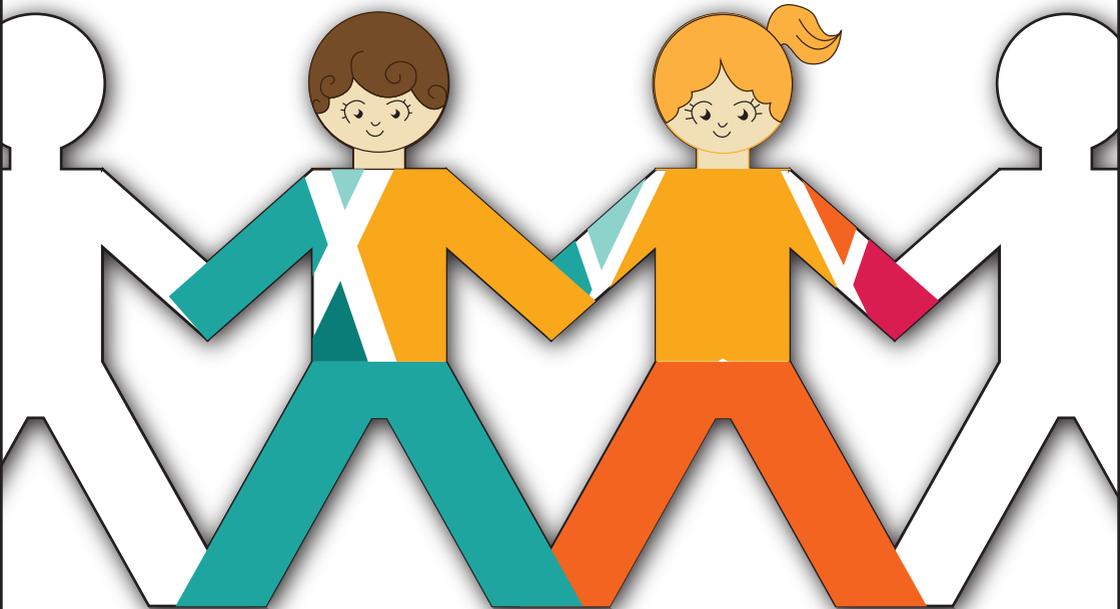


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The Ten Commandments



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CHURCH



THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

LIVING LIFE UNDER THE PROTECTION OF
A LOVING FATHER

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#1 “YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME.”

EXODUS 20:3

What does this mean?

We should worship, love and trust in God more than anything else. God began the 10 Commandments this way: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:2-3). This First Commandment sets the tone for the first four commandments, which can be summarized as, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:5). Jesus Christ called this summation the great commandment (Matthew 22:37-38).

Jesus’ example

Jesus set the example of putting God first. Even after fasting for 40 days, He responded to Satan’s temptation by saying, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). Living by every word of God involves a commitment to always listen to what God teaches us in the Bible and not to lean on our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5-6).

In facing Satan’s temptations, Jesus also quoted, “You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve” (Matthew 4:10). He expounded on this when He pointed out that we can’t serve God and serve the god of materialism (Matthew 6:24). He said our focus and priority must be to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33).

God’s greatness and our response

The First Commandment is a reminder to focus on the awesome power and majesty of our Creator God. God’s power was on display when He thundered these commandments from Mount Sinai.

“Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off” (Exodus 20:18).

Respect and awe of God's power is not a bad thing. Moses told the people the result that our loving Creator wanted: "And Moses said to the people, 'Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin'" (Exodus 20:20).

Wise King Solomon explained, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7).

And Jesus Christ put things in perspective for His disciples: "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). We humans tend to fear other people we can see and forget the Almighty God we can't see.

But Christ followed this up with a discussion of our awesome God's purpose and love for us. The God who notices every sparrow that falls and who knows the number of hairs on our head tells His faithful followers, "Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:31).

The right type of fear of God is not terror or torment, but reverence and deep respect that recognizes God's almighty power and puts God first. This healthy respect should grow into a deep appreciation of God's love and His laws and way of life. We must grow from obeying God out of fear to obeying God out of love (1 John 4:18; 5:3).



We break the First Commandment by not putting God first

There are many pitfalls and temptations that can lead us to disobey the First Commandment. This commandment is not just about pagan gods and false religions. Anything that we put as higher priority than the true God causes us to sin.

Pride, that common human failing, breaks this command by putting self above God. As James wrote: "But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" (James 4:6-10).

We need to seek God's help to see things from God's perspective - to get outside our own selfish worldview.

The Bible also warns of the common human failings of forgetfulness and neglect (Deuteronomy 8:11-19). Both good times and bad times can test our commitment to put God first. How we respond in our trials shows Him whether we always put God first.

Questions for discussion

1. How can good and legitimate things in our lives become Idols?
2. What happens to those who worship false gods (i.e., images)?
3. Does that sound very happy? What does it mean to be "put to shame"? In what ways are you tempted to boast or brag about things that are not God--maybe your house, school, sports teams, friends, money, music accomplishments, or clothes?
4. Read Psalm 96:1-6. According to this text, why should we not worship idols? In contrast to the worship of idols, what are some ways this text suggests we worship God?

#2 “YOU MUST NOT MAKE FOR YOURSELF AN IDOL OF ANY KIND OR AN IMAGE OF ANYTHING IN THE HEAVENS OR ON THE EARTH OR IN THE SEA.”

EXODUS 20:4-6 (NLT)

What does this mean?

Because we love and worship God, we should not make our own pretend gods.

“You shall not make for yourself a idol any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”

God commands us not to make idols or any representation of Him. Nothing we can make can compare with the Almighty God—human handiwork would only give us a false image of the true God. We are not to use statues, pictures, jewellery or anything else to represent God or as a physical aid in worshipping Him.

This commandment, of course, also prohibited idolatry of pagan gods that are not gods at all. The apostle Paul agreed that the idols are nothing, but pointed out that “the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons” (1 Corinthians 10:20).



The image of God

Obviously, we are not to worship human heroes or stars or to love ourselves with a narcissistic self-love. But there is a sense in which we humans are in the image of God.

At the creation, God said: “‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:26-27).

God wants us to become like Him in character, love, choices, attitudes and approaches. We are to let Christ live in us—to strive to live always as He lived (Galatians 2:20; 1 John 2:6; 1 Peter 2:21). We are to live godly lives and reflect the light of God “that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Idolatry and the Second Commandment today

How does the Second Commandment apply in our modern, materialistic world? People today still tend to worship the works of their own hands (Jeremiah 1:16). Idolatry is often connected with coveting—the desire to have more of the things the rich and famous have (Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5).

God does not want to be worshipped as pagan gods were (Deuteronomy 12:29-32). We are also told not to worship angels or saints (Colossians 2:18; Revelation 19:10). Instead we are to worship God in spirit and truth.

As Jesus told the Samaritan woman: “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24). We are not to worship the creation. Instead, the creation should help us appreciate our great Creator.

The apostle Paul wrote: “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without

excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things” (Romans 1:20-23).

It’s fascinating to read how Paul explained this to the pagan philosophers in Athens, using the analogy that the true God is the One they called the unknown God. “God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things” (Acts 17:24-25; read the rest of the account in verses 22-31).

We must not let physical things cloud our understanding and worship of the Creator God.

Questions for discussion

1. Read Acts 17:24-25. Who is it that provides all that you need? What does this text tell you about God? What does this text tell you about the kind of people we are? Does God have needs?
2. Read Isaiah 43:10-11. Was there anything before God? Is there anything besides God that can save? (God has no equal, especially something we craft with our hands. Nothing can stand next to him as an equal.)
3. What are some examples of man-made images that are worshiped in our society?
What idols are you personally most tempted to worship above God?
4. God is jealous for our hearts. How are you jealous for the hearts of those you are in relationship with to be worshiping God first? How could you grow in this area?
5. The second commandment addresses “the iniquity of the fathers on the children.” This speaks to the consequences of sin. How have the sins of your forbears affected you? How have you seen this played out in other families?

#3 “YOU SHALL NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD YOUR GOD IN VAIN.” EXODUS 20:7

What does this mean?

Because we love and worship God, we should not use his name to curse, swear, lie or cheat. Instead we should call his name whenever there's trouble, whenever we pray, and whenever we praise and thank him.

This Third Commandment is recorded in Exodus 20:7. To not take God's name in vain means to not take it lightly and to never use God's holy name as a thoughtless, hateful curse! This is perhaps the most common and lightly treated sin today, as profanity is splashed all over our television and movies. But God tells us to stop using blasphemy and filthy language and to bless rather than curse.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Colosse, “But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth” (Colossians 3:8). He also gave this instruction to the church in Rome, “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse” (Romans 12:14).



Reverencing God and representing Him properly

Instead of using His Name in vain with profanity, we are to reverence God and represent His name well. Jesus Christ called on His followers to set the right example so people would glorify God's name. "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16).

In contrast, Paul warned that our wrong actions could defame God's name: "You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonour God through breaking the law? For 'the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,' as it is written" (Romans 2:24, alluding to Old Testament passages such as Isaiah 52:5 and Ezekiel 36:22).

Prayers and praise, not profanity

Jesus told us that God's name should be "hallowed" in our prayers (Matthew 6:9). This is translated "kept holy" in the New Living Translation and the Modern Language Bible. Since God's name represents the greatness and glory of who he is, it is right for us to view his name with a healthy degree of reverence. Do you know what "reverence" means? It means deep respect for someone or something. In light of who God is, we should show deep respect for his name. The Bible gives us some reasons why we should show reverence for his name, and oftentimes those reasons focus on God's acts of power.

Consider these verses from the book of Psalms:

Psalms 8:1 says, "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens."

Psalms 66:1-3 says, "Shout for joy to God, all the earth; sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise! Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you"

Psalms 75:1 says, "We give thanks to you, O God; we give thanks, for your name is near. We recount your wondrous deeds"

Do you see a common theme in these verses? The psalmist connects the name of God with his mighty deeds, the evidence of his glory that we can see. We should show deep reverence for the name of God because it represents all that he is and can do. And God is limitless in what he is and can do! We should never misuse his name because of this.

Praying in Jesus' name

It is amazing that Jesus Christ gives His followers the awesome privilege to pray using His name! "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:14).

We must not misuse this privilege; it is not like a genie in a bottle. We are only to ask according to His will, not selfishly. As the apostle John wrote, "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him" (1 John 5:14-15).

Instead of using profanity, we are to "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Colossians 3:17).

The Third Commandment states, "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain" (Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11). "In vain" literally means to use God's name in an empty or trifling way, without appropriate reverence for God.

A pervasive cultural habit is using the name of God in the phrase "oh my ...!", which has become so commonplace it now has its own abbreviation (OMG) for text messaging.

In addition to blatantly saying God's names, there are euphemisms that have modified the same names into less explicit or softened forms. Webster's Dictionary has this definition of euphemism: "The use of a less direct word or phrase for one considered offensive." Could Christian unknowingly be breaking this command?

Questions for discussion

1. Is there anything wrong with using the euphemisms below?
Why or why not?

God

Gol, Golly, Gosh, Gad, ye gad/s, by George, by Jove, Almighty

Jesus or Christ

Geez, Gee, Sheez, Gee-wiz (Jesus-wizard), cripes (Christ), Jeepers, by Jingo, Jeezers, bejeezers (by Jesus)

Initials of Jesus Christ

Jiminy Cricket, Jiminy Christmas, Jumpin' Catfish, Jeepers Creepers, Jeezy Creezy, Judas Christopher, Jason Crisp, etc.

Lord

Lordy, Lawd, Lawdy

2. How about other euphemisms that Christians often use. Can we unwittingly ask God to condemn ("damn") a person or thing to hell? Euphemisms for condemn include darn, durn, dang, doggone and dangnation. Is there anything wrong with using this kind of language if we're only kidding?

3. How have you maligned the name of God with your speech or actions?

4. How could you honour God and still love others well when you hear someone else use God's name irreverently (disrespectfully)?

#4 “REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY.”

EXODUS 20:8-11

What does this mean?

Because we love and worship God, we should develop a healthy cycle of work and rest. Also we should love and respect the preaching of His Word, singing congregationally and fellowshiping with His people. Because of this, Sunday morning service should be a priority. Above all, when we become a Christian, Jesus becomes our ultimate Sabbath rest.

Exodus 20:8-11 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 “Six days you shall labour and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. 11 “For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

This is an Old Testament command that New Testament believers are not required to obey the letter. If we did, we would have to make Friday sundown to Saturday sundown a rest day and all work on that day would be sin. We would also be mandated to attend church on Saturday. However, The Old Testament Sabbath points toward our final salvation, and this salvation is in Christ, we are fulfilling the primary purpose of the Sabbath command when we put our faith in Christ. It is in him that we find the rest that we need (Matt. 11:28-30). The requirement for rest has been transformed to focus on Christ rather than a day of the week. If we have faith in him, we are entering God’s rest and we are therefore keeping the spiritual intent of the Sabbath. There are also other principles that we can glean from this command and in so doing observing the spirit of the Sabbath.

You may have already observed that the first three commandments deal strictly with our relationship to God. Many erroneously believe that the Ten Commandments are strictly civil laws governing our relationships with one another. But they encompass the whole of a person’s life and

place the highest priority on our relationship with the LORD, for He is the foundation of all moral, ethical and civil laws. The Fourth Commandment is the pivotal law which bridges the commandments dealing with God and the remainder which deal with Man. Viewed in its historical context, it was revolutionary, for its purpose was the physical and spiritual refreshment of the working population, freeing them from their bondage to labour in order to rest one day each week, no matter their station in life. And its basis and model was God Himself!

The commandment, simply stated, is to 'remember the Sabbath day' and 'to keep it holy'. The word 'Sabbath' means 'to rest; to cease; to cause to cease'. It is imperative to always observe the context of a word in order to determine its specific meaning. In this context, 'Sabbath' embraces all facets of the meanings: being a day of 'rest' as God rested after six days of creation, being a day when our labours 'cease', and being the seventh day, it causes the week to cease.

A Day for Rest

The principle of the Sabbath rest may be the easiest to do, but deceptively difficult to obey. How many times have we used this God given gift to squeeze in an extra day of work? God knows, even if we do not, that our minds and bodies need regular rest in order to operate at peak efficiency. Our physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual welfare depends on periods of refreshment, which God has commanded us to take. For sure, this imperative was revolutionary in a time when masters required their servants to work 7 days a week, and most working people did the same. The fourth commandment supplants that work schedule with one that values the worker more than the work. However, we have reverted back to viewing people, not for who they are, but for what they can do for us. Today, we don't seem to have enough time to get everything done that needs to be done ... or at least that's what we think. Work has become a god to many, and the source of their significance, security and self-worth. This commandment seeks to guard us from that mistake. God is saying through this commandment that if we can't complete our work in six days, then we're too busy because we're busier than God Himself! There is something wrong and we need to rethink whether we are taking on too much or whether we are doing

too many nonessentials. One thing is true, and that is that God values us more than what we can do for Him. If we will obey His command and place Him first in our lives, He will ensure that all our needs will be added unto us.

How to Live By This Commandment

There are several ways you can begin living by this commandment:

Turn it off

Take a day when you unplug your life. No TV. No internet. No computer. Just spend the time being with your family and friends. Get away from the hustle and bustle of daily life and spend time appreciating what God has provided.

Use the time wisely

We're used to constantly being on the go, so sometimes when we get rid of some distractions, we replace them with other ones. Be sure to focus your time wisely on your relationship with God.

Schedule well

There is nothing that ruins a day of rest more than the idea that you have so much to do the next day. Learn to prioritize tasks and chores.

You're not lazy

We live in a world that values work above all else. Some people may think we're just being lazy or slacking off by taking a day of rest, but we're actually building up our relationship with God. There's nothing lazy about a day of rest. It's what we need spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

Don't miss church service

The Sabbath was meant to be a time of spiritual reflection and prayer. We miss the point when we unnecessarily stay away from the Sunday Morning service.

Questions for discussion

Read 2 Timothy 3:16,17 How do these verses describe the importance of listening to the preaching of God's word? What are some of the benefits of knowing God's word?

Read Matthew 11:28-29. Why does God care about our resting? Where is true rest found? Are there ways that you need to do a better job of truly resting in Jesus?

How have you struggled with "resting?" What does "rest" mean to you? What are some ways you'd like to try to incorporate more Sabbath time into your schedule?

For Christians, the finished work of Jesus provides our ultimate rest. In what practical ways can you lay down your efforts, striving, and work and rest in the perfect, finished work of Christ?



#5 HONOUR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER

EXODUS 20:12

What does this mean?

Because we love and worship God, we shouldn't ignore or anger our parents, but we should love, honour, obey and think highly of them.



“Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.”

The first four commandments define how God wants us to show love for Him. This Fifth Commandment begins a series of six commandments that show us how to love other people—starting from our earliest years in the family.

In a way, the Fifth Commandment connects the two sections, since God reveals Himself as our loving Father. No father deserves honour as much as our Heavenly Father! Yet the Bible shows that humanity, and even those chosen to be God's people, have often failed in showing that honour and respect to our Creator God.

God pointed out this much-too-common problem in Malachi 1:6: “A son honours his father, and a servant his master. If then I am the Father, where is My honour? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence?”

This Fifth Commandment helps us see how learning respect and honour in the family setting helps prepare us to show honour to our ultimate Father.

The first commandment with promise

The apostle Paul reiterated the Fifth Commandment, emphasizing that it’s the “first commandment with promise: ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth’” (Ephesians 6:2-3). All of God’s commandments are given for our benefit, but this one is especially highlighted by God for the blessings that it brings for the individual, the family and society in general.

Paul expands on this subject of family relationships with commands to both children and parents: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right” (verse 1). A smooth functioning society and happy relationships are based on respect and obedience to authority. It is much easier if we learn this early in life—without requiring the harsh taskmasters of boot camp, prison or being fired.

God wants us to learn to “honour all people” (1 Peter 2:17). We must submit to authority, “For there is no authority except from God” (Romans 13:1). This does not mean God condones repressive, heavy-handed leadership. He holds parents, teachers and other leaders to a stricter judgment (James 3:1).

Honour shouldn’t end when we leave home

Family is a lifetime commitment, reflecting the permanence of the family relationship we are called to in becoming children of God. As the apostle John wrote, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1).

God intends for us to continue to show respect and honour for our parents long after we leave home and perhaps even more as they age and may require support and care. Jesus Christ showed the hypocrisy of some who tried to get out of honouring and supporting their elderly parents:

“Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, ‘Honour your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God”—then he need not honour his father or mother.’ Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition” (Matthew 15:3-6).

God wants our honour to extend throughout our parents’ lives.

The vital parental role

The apostle Paul also commanded parents: “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). To the Colossians Paul added, “Lest they become discouraged” (Colossians 3:21). Parents must not shirk their teaching role, but must do it in a way that is encouraging and doesn’t provoke their children.

The “training and admonition of the Lord” is explained more fully in the book of Deuteronomy. God told parents: “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Deuteronomy 6:5-7).

The parental role is a vital one, and it is challenging. It is worthy of respect.

Questions for discussion

What makes it most difficult for you to honor your parents? How will you worship God by doing this well?

If your parents are actively sinning against you, in what ways can you still honor them?

If you are a parent, how can you encourage your children to do this in a way that causes your children to worship God and not you?

If you are a parent and you don't feel that your kids or adult children are honoring you appropriately, what should you do or not do about it?

Read Proverbs 13:1 In what ways do your parents have more experience than you? In what ways has your parents' disciplining been a blessing for you? Parents, share a story of how you saw the blessing of Proverbs 13:1 in your life when you were young. What wisdom did your parents impart to you? How could you impart this wisdom to your children?

#6 YOU SHALL NOT MURDER EXODUS 20:13

What does this mean?

Because we love and worship God, we shouldn't hurt or harm other people, but instead we should help them like a friend would.

God is the giver of life. He breathed into the first man the breath of life (Genesis 2:7), and His plan is to give every human being a chance at real life—eternal life as His sons and daughters in His Kingdom. Jesus Christ said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). He desires for everyone to repent and have salvation—eternal life (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). This physical life is a training ground for that future life.



God values life highly. He tells us to choose life: “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19).

God showed the value of human life by requiring capital punishment for the murder of another person (Exodus 21:12, 14). Accidental killing, of course, was treated differently (Exodus 21:13; Numbers 35:11).

The spiritual intent of the Sixth Commandment

Jesus Christ expounded on the Sixth Commandment to emphasize its spiritual intent. He told us not to become angry without a cause or to allow anger to cause us to do violence or even abuse another person verbally:

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ [“meaning empty head,”The Nelson Study Bible note] shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire” (Matthew 5:21-22).

There is righteous anger (God gets angry at sin, as Hebrews 3:17 shows), but it must be controlled as God tempers His anger with patience and mercy. This is shown in Joel 2:13, where Joel encourages us to throw ourselves on God’s mercy: “So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm.”

Hate is murder

The Bible shows that hate is the attitude of murder. The apostle John wrote: “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:15).

The Bible also shows the dangers of our words and that we can murder with our tongues (Proverbs 18:21). “Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:5-8).

We must replace hate—the attitude of murder—with love, shown by action: “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. ...

But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:14, 17-18).

We are not to hate even an enemy, but to love, bless, do good and pray for them. As Jesus Christ taught in the Sermon on the Mount, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:43-45)

Questions for discussion

Are there certain types of people or people groups that you have a harder time seeing as a reflection of God's image? Why? Is this sin?

What are some ways that society diminishes or demeans others that is considered socially acceptable?

Is there someone specific whom you have not honored as a creation of the holy God? How will you repent to that person and begin to honor them rightly?

When you are demeaning another in your mind and heart, what other emotions are you most often feeling? What does this reveal about what you believe that is not true? What could your group do to honor the life God has created in a practical way?

#7 “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.”

EXODUS 20:14

What does this mean?

Because we love and worship God, we should lead an innocent and good life in word and action, and we should love and honor our spouse. God intended the sexual relationship between a husband and wife to be an exclusive, intimate bond to strengthen the marriage relationship.



The creation account shows God’s wonderful intention for men and women and for the marriage bond. “And the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.’ ...

“And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

“And Adam said: ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:18, 21-24).

So the prohibition of extramarital sex—adultery—was designed to protect the sanctity of marriage and show the importance of faithfulness.

The spirit of the Seventh Commandment

Jesus Christ expanded on the Seventh Commandment to show the spirit of the law. He said even looking lustfully is mental adultery: “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell” (Matthew 5:27-29).

Some people in the first century, as today, felt that natural appetites must be fulfilled. The apostle Paul described this approach and countered it in his first letter to the Corinthians. “Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods [this was their argument], but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body” (1 Corinthians 6:13). Paul explained that the God who created our bodies and who wants to live in us, wants us to be pure.

We must flee from sexual immorality: “Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body” (1 Corinthians 6:18). We must not give in to sexual lust and temptation, following the example of Joseph who fled from the advances of his master’s wife (Genesis 39:6-20).

All sex outside of marriage is prohibited

Any type of sex outside of marriage is prohibited. Paul said premarital sex, adultery, homosexuality and other sins would keep a person out of the Kingdom of God: “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

But God provides a way out of wrong sexual lifestyles and sins through repentance and conversion: “And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11). God offers to wash away our sinful past and give us a clean, pure heart.

Sex in marriage is pure and good: “Marriage is honourable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4). Don’t let society cheapen sex into a biological drive, an itch to be scratched or a hedonistic extreme sport. Read Solomon’s warnings about the lure of immorality and its consequences compared to the joy of committed love (Proverbs 5:1-20).

Solomon’s poetic conclusion is: “Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love. For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, and be embraced in the arms of a seductress?” (Proverbs 5:18-20).

Questions for discussion

Read John 8:2-11. How does Jesus treat the woman who had committed adultery? Does Jesus say that her sin is no big deal? How can adulterers be forgiven? Why was Jesus so easy on her?

Read Genesis 2:21-25. Who is the author of the marriage of Adam and Eve? What boundaries did God create in this text? How do we know that God approved of their relationship?

Read Mark 10:6-9. Who originally created marriage? Based on this text, why should a husband and wife stay together?

Read Ephesians 5:22-27, How are wives supposed to resemble the church? How are husbands supposed to resemble Jesus? How does Jesus show his faithfulness to the church? Why is committing adultery such a big sin?

#8 YOU SHALL NOT STEAL EXODUS 20:15

What does this mean?

Because we love and worship God, we shouldn't take other people's money or property or cheat them. Instead we should help them improve and protect what belongs to them.

Many human laws have been made to try to protect personal possessions and property from those who would seek to take them for themselves. But the intent of God's Eighth Commandment goes deeper.



Many forms of stealing

Stealing can take many forms, including cheating someone or even delaying paying someone what you owe him or her: “You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. ... You shall not cheat your neighbour or rob him. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning” (Leviticus 19:11, 13).

The apostle James strongly warned the wealthy people who oppressed their workers and the poor: “Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. Indeed the wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of

Sabaoth. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter” (James 5:2-5).

Companies can attempt to steal from people with misleading advertising and shoddy products and services. Employees can steal from their employers by wasting time or doing personal things on company time.

Lazy people can try to take advantage of the goodness of others, leading the apostle Paul to write: “For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread” (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12).

Getting versus giving

The Eighth Commandment protects personal property and teaches us to respect the property of others. More than that, in its spiritual intent it contrasts two ways of life: getting versus giving.

Consider how the apostle Paul describes the opposite of stealing: “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labour, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need” (Ephesians 4:28).

The Bible repeatedly extols the virtues of giving. Consider these passages:

“He answered and said to them, ‘He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise” (Luke 3:11).

“Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away” (Matthew 5:42).

“So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Jesus Christ summed up the benefits of God’s way of give this way: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

Stealing from God?

The Eternal God is the Creator of everything that exists. Therefore He is actually the owner of the entire universe:

“The earth is the LORD’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein” (Psalm 24:1).

“Who has preceded Me, that I should pay him? Everything under the heaven is Mine” (Job 41:11).

“‘The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,’ says the LORD of hosts” (Haggai 2:8).

It is to our benefit to remember that God is the source of every good gift that we have (James 1:17). So God allows us to enjoy His blessings, and He only asks that we acknowledge Him with a tenth (a tithe) of what He provides.

The Bible warns against stealing from God the tithes and offerings owed Him, but promises blessings to those who do give to Him:

“‘Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, “In what way have we robbed You?” In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it’” (Malachi 3:8-10).

Questions for discussion

When is it hardest for you to trust that God will provide what you need?
When there is something you want more than to obey God, how do you rationalize what you do to get it? How has this cost you?

How do you “steal” in your relationships? Is there something you are avoiding by this theft? Or gaining? How will you repent of this?

God wants his people to have generous hearts. With what, whom, or
When is it the hardest for you to practice generosity?

How well does your group practice generosity? How could you grow in this?

Read 1Timothy 6:6, What reason does Paul give for why godliness with contentment is great gain? How could this verse help us battle a desire to steal? Do you feel content with what you have right now? If not, what do you need to be content?

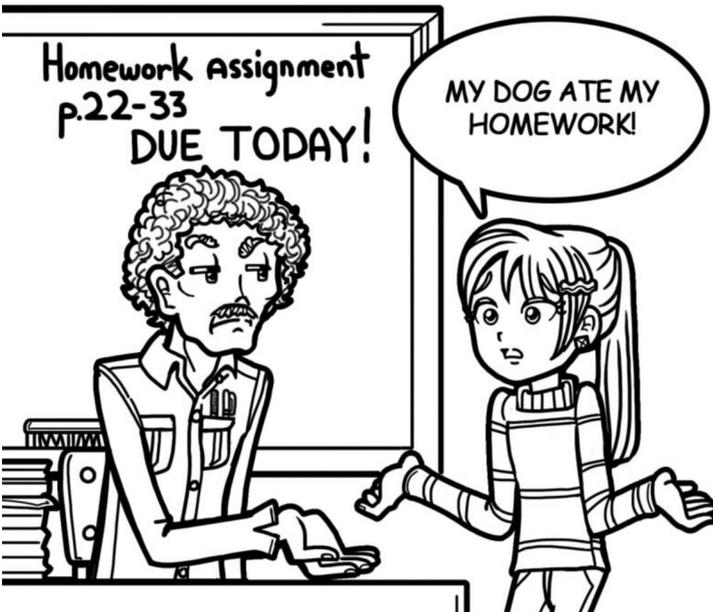
#9 YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS

EXODUS 20:16

What does this mean?

Because we love and worship God, we shouldn't take other people's money or property and cheat them, but instead we should help them improve and protect what belongs to them.

Modern laws about perjury are based on this concept of reinforcing the importance of truth and truthfulness. However the intent of God's Ninth Commandment goes deeper.



God of truth

God is a God of truth. He wants us to learn to hate lying and dishonesty and to love truth. Consider these scriptures about how important truth is to God:

“He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He” (Deuteronomy 32:4).

“His truth endures to all generations” (Psalm 100:5).

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).

“Your word is truth” (John 17:17).

The Ninth Commandment is designed to prevent slander and perversion of justice.

As God told Moses and the Israelites: “You shall not circulate a false report. Do not put your hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert justice. ...

“You shall not pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute. Keep yourself far from a false matter; do not kill the innocent and righteous. For I will not justify the wicked. And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the discerning and perverts the words of the righteous” (Exodus 23:1-2, 6-8).

Lying and dishonesty pervert and corrupt hearts and are abominations to God.

Is there anything that is impossible for God? Yes! The Bible says it is impossible for God to lie (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18). He will not do it.

The father of lying

On the other hand, is the father of lies (?). Jesus Christ explained to those who were justifying themselves and sneering at Him: “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44).

The first recorded lie was when Satan, through the serpent, told Eve that God was lying: “Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil’” (Genesis 3:4-5). What a diabolical act of deception—lying by calling our totally trustworthy God a liar!

We long for the day when Satan will deceive the nations no more (Revelation 20:3).

No need to swear

The spirit of the Ninth Commandment goes further than not swearing falsely. Our every word should be trustworthy—there should be no need to swear. As Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount: “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one” (Matthew 5:33-37).

God wants us to replace lying with honesty in our words and our hearts and our thoughts.

Questions for discussion

When are you most likely to lie? Why is it hardest to be truthful then?

Have you used this command to speak the truth as a weapon and sinned by speaking the truth less than lovingly? How will you repent of this?

How else have you been tempted by dishonesty outside of lying with your mouth?

How have you been hurt by lies? How has God comforted you in this? What about “white lies”? Is there ever a time when it’s ok to lie?

Read John 8:44. What are some ways Satan has shown himself to be the father of lies in the Bible? In what ways have you lied?

#10 YOU SHALL NOT TO COVET EXODUS 20:17

What does this mean?

Because we love and worship God, we shouldn't desire to have the things that belong to other people, but instead we should help them protect what is theirs.

"You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbour's."

In modern terms, often includes our neighbour's cars, electronic gadgets, money, prestige, etc.



The heart of the matter

Jesus Christ made clear in the Sermon on the Mount and throughout His teachings that God's law involves more than just our actions. Really obeying the 10 Commandments involves our thoughts and attitudes and approaches.

Even before Christ expanded on the laws, this 10th Commandment added depth to all the commandments by drawing attention to our hearts and motives. Coveting, and all sin begins in our hearts.

"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts,

murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man” (Matthew 15:18-20).

Covetousness and idolatry

God even ties the 10th Commandment about coveting in with the Second Commandment against idolatry. When we put our greed and selfishness ahead of God, it can become idol worship.

The apostle Paul wrote: “Therefore put to death your members which are on earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience” (Colossians 3:5-6).

Paul also made this comparison in his letter to the church in Ephesus: “For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God” (Ephesians 5:5).

Jesus Christ explained, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24). Worshipping wealth separates us from worshipping the true God.

That’s why Jesus Christ also told us, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:19-21).

Bad examples of coveting

The Bible gives many examples of coveting, such as when David coveted Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:1-4) and Ahab coveted Naboth’s vineyard (1 Kings 21:1-6). In both of these cases, this mental sin led to other sins, including murder.

Antidotes to covetousness

When we covet, we give in to a toxic, selfish mind-set that leads to sin and death. Thankfully, the Bible identifies the cure as well as the disease. The antidotes to covetousness include:

Contentment

Paul “learned how to be content with whatever I have” (Philippians 4:11, New Living Translation). He wrote, “I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (verses 12-13, New King James Version).

Generosity

If we learn to be “rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share,” we will be storing up treasure “for the time to come, that [we] may lay hold on eternal life” (1 Timothy 6:18-19).

Faith

We can trust in “the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Timothy 6:17). We can know that God has a glorious inheritance for those who have faith in Him. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Questions for discussion

In what areas of your life are you most discontent or most prideful? Is there any correlation?

If you could change one thing about your life now, what would it be?

How does one grow in humility?

When have you been most content? Why do you think that was?

What thing, desire, or relationship is God asking you to lay at his feet in humble worship?

Read Luke 12:13-21. Did the rich man have his heart set on things of this world or things that are eternal? Can you relate to the rich man? Do you think he was envious?

