



THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

“The law is an expression of the Lawgiver’s heart and character.”

KEVIN DeYOUNG

DISCUSSION:

- What’s the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear: The Ten Commandments?

The prophet Isaiah wrote, *“The Lord was pleased for His righteousness’ sake to make the law great and glorious” (Is.42:21)*. Since it pleased the Lord to magnify His Law with honor, would it be wise for us to neglect or ignore it? The hymn writer, John Newton, said, “Ignorance of the nature and design of the law is at the bottom of most religious mistakes.” There are two obvious mistakes that often trip us up in our journey through life. First, *mistakes in our relationship or love to God*. Second, *mistakes in our relationship or love for man*. The Ten Commandments address both. Given in an almost entirely prohibitory form, Sinclair Ferguson explains that through the stone tablets given at Mount Sinai, “God was republishing His original blueprint for life...and applying it to the life-setting of sinners. Its negative cast has the goal of preventing them from further self-destruction.”¹ If we would be spared a life of misery now and eternal separation later, then let us look carefully into the Law of God. The Law of God is a rule to instruct us and a hedge to protect us so that we might enjoy the comfort of His love in the transforming discovery of the Gospel of His Son.

A child must learn the letters of the alphabet before they learn to spell or write clearly. Likewise, the Christian must become competent in and conversed with the moral Law of God to successfully live a life that is pleasing to God. Thomas Watson writes, “Though the moral law is not a Christ to justify us, yet it is a rule to instruct us...and to keep us within the bounds of sobriety and piety.” Do you wish to be godly? Do you desire to live sober-minded in life? Then, step with me into the most basic instruction given to mankind. Before defining what the Law is and its misuses, let’s take a brief flyover to survey the landscape and discuss the most basic meaning of the Ten Commandments.

¹ Sinclair Ferguson, *Devoted to God*, p.167

WHAT IS SIMPLE MEANING BEHIND EACH OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS?

THE 1ST COMMANDMENT

¹Then God spoke all these words, saying, ²"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ³You shall have no other gods before Me." (Ex.20:1-3)

This commandment PROTECTS TRUE WORSHIP (*whom we are to worship*).

- Discussion: Why does true worship need direction and protection?

THE 2ND COMMANDMENT

⁴"You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments." (Ex.20:4-6)

This commandment PROTECTS TRUE THEOLOGY (*how we are worship*).

- Discussion: Why does true theology need protection? How does one protect it?

THE 3RD COMMANDMENT

"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain." (Ex.20:7)

This commandment PROTECTS RESPECT FOR GOD'S NAME (*attitude of worship*).

- Discussion: Why does respect for God's name matter? How does disrespecting His name affect us today?

THE 4TH COMMANDMENT

⁸ "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor 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." (Ex.20:8-11)

This commandment PROTECTS RESPECT FOR THE DIVINE DAY.

- Discussion: Why does having a special day to do no work matter? Does this include essential services?

THE 5TH COMMANDMENT

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you." (Ex.20:12)

This commandment PROTECTS RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY.

- Discussion: When authority is disregarded in the land, what are the effects?

THE 6TH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not murder." (Ex.20:13)

This commandment PROTECTS MAN'S LIFE.

- Discussion: Why does man's life need to be protected? From whom or what?

THE 7TH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not commit adultery." (Ex.20:14)

This commandment PROTECTS THE FAMILY.

- Discussion: Why does the family need protection? What are the effects of family disintegration?

THE 8TH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not steal." (Ex.20:15)

This commandment PROTECTS A MAN'S LIVELIHOOD.

- Discussion: What does stealing say about a person? Are there ever occasions where it is permitted?

THE 9TH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." (Ex.20:16)

This commandment PROTECTS A MAN'S REPUTATION.

- Discussion: Why is lying such a serious sin?

THE 10TH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor." (Ex.20:17)

This commandment PROTECTS OUR OWN HEARTS.

- Discussion: Why do our hearts need to be protected from covetousness?

The first time we hear God speaking in the Bible is in Genesis 1. Ten utterances were made ("God said"), which brought order to the cosmos. God said, "Let there be..." (Gen.1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28, 29), and there was—that is, God willed into being that which exists by divine fiat (meaning authoritative decree; Cf. Heb.11:3), and it was good (Gen.1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). In Exodus 20, God utters Ten Commandments, which were designed to protect an orderly society where life can be sustained. Given as the yardstick for civilization, the Ten Commandments cross time and space, culture and race, and serve as the final standard to regulate behavior in every sphere of human endeavor. If the Ten Commandments are ignored, we introduce chaos into society and trouble in our lives.

Commandments 1-4 govern our *relationship with God*. Commandments 5-10 govern our *relationship with others*. Do you wish to find divine direction? The Law is a rule of action. It prescribes our duty to God and man. It is a binding force governing our actions in this sinful state. Luther said, "If even for one day I fail to compare my heart with the law of God, I am sensible of a decline in my devotional feelings...If I give unto the law its proper definition and keep it within the compass of its office and use, it is an excellent thing...but if I translate it to another use and attribute unto it which I should not, then do I pervert not only the law, but also the whole Scripture."

APPLICATION:

THE COMMANDMENTS and CHRIST—Identify two ways that Christ perfectly kept and fulfilled the Law.

THE COMMANDMENTS and THE CHRISTIAN—Think about ONE of the ways the commandments are broken in:

- **Our nation.** Discuss the consequences.
- **Our church.** Discuss the ramifications.
- **Your life.** Share how falling short has affected your life.

What is your takeaway from this lesson?

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