

Ten Commandments

Exodus 20:3 to 17; Deuteronomy 5:7 to 21:

- (1) You shall have no other gods before Me.
- (2) You shall not make yourself any carved image or any likeness of anything that is in the heavens above, on the earth beneath, or that is in the oceans.
- (3) You shall not use the name of the Lord your God in vain.
- (4) Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy.
- (5) Honour your father and mother.
- (6) You shall not commit murder.
- (7) You shall not commit adultery.
- (8) You shall not steal.
- (9) You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.
- (10) You shall not covet your neighbour's house, his wife or anything that belongs to your neighbour

The Ten Commandments were a covenant contract and are very frequently mis-quoted, misused and misunderstood. A lot of people do not know what the Ten Commandments are, who they were given to, or why. Three months after the Israelites left Egypt, the Lord gave Moses the Ten Commandments and the Law while he was up Mount Sinai (Exodus chapters 19 to 23). Moses wrote the Law down (Exodus 24:4), but the Lord Himself wrote the Ten Commandments with His own finger on two tablets of stone (Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 9:10). These two flat pieces of stone were small enough to be carried by one hand (Exodus 34:4; Deuteronomy 10:3). They and the Law were given to the Israelites for two purposes; (1) to teach the people what the Lord expected of them regarding their code of conduct, and (2) so they would be made aware of sin. The Apostle Paul said; "If it had not been for the Law I should not have recognised sin. I would not have known about covetousness and I would have had no sense of guilt if the Law had not said; you shall not covet" (Romans 7:7).

Since the time of Jesus, these commandments, although originally given to the Israelites, are now for the whole human race to adhere to. Jesus said, 'Do not think that I have come to do away with the Law or the Prophets (that includes their prophecies); I have not come to do away with them, but to fulfil them (fulfil the Law and the prophecies). For truly I tell you, until the sky and earth pass away, not one of the smallest letters will pass from the Law until all these things have been accomplished. Whoever then, breaks one of the least important of these commandments and teaches others to do so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of heaven, but he who practices them and teaches others to do so, shall be called great in the Kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:17 to 19).

In the above verses it is made clear, that the Ten Commandments and the instructions given to the Israelites as a code of conduct for human behaviour, is to be adhered to by everybody. The first five commandments deal with our relationship with God, and the second five commandments deal with our relationship with each other. We will attempt to explain the full meaning of each commandment, one by one.

Commandment number (1): 'You shall have no other gods before Me' or 'Do not have any other gods before Me, besides Me, or instead of Me'. That is not just talking about idols. That commandment is telling us not to put anything before the Lord God; be it our spouse, marriage, children, friend, any person, pets, job, a desire, food, influence, motivation or any earthly thing we might have in our lives between us the Lord. It means that we give God total pre-eminence or we are deemed not to be worthy. 'He who loves father, mother, son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me' (Matthew 10:37). 'If anyone comes to Me and does not disregard (that is to disregard them in comparison with their attitude towards the Lord) his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters and his own life; cannot be My disciple' (Luke 14:26).

There are other 'gods' that are not so obvious. Some people have more time for their pets than the Lord. If people stay home from church because their dog is ill, then they are putting the dog before the Lord. Worse still, if people bring their dog to church then they have made the dog their idol. If someone has a pet that takes the place of a child, then that pet is an idol; they idolise their animal. Idolising an animal, especially a dog, can bring the influence of an evil spirit. 'Deliver my life from the power of the dog' (Psalm 22:20). If women spend an hour applying make-up and beautifying themselves, then they have made themselves an idol. Putting anyone, anything or ourselves before the Lord is making that person, thing or ourselves an idol; a god, and that is sin. If we love anyone or

anything more than the Lord, then that person or thing is our god, but if we love the Lord and put Him first, then He is our God. That is what He means by our not having any gods before Him. Everything must come after Him in our lives, never before.

Commandment number (2): 'Do not make a graven image or any likeness of anything that is in the heavens, on the earth or that is in the water (oceans)'. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I, the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third or fourth generation of those who hate Me; but showing mercy to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments'. That means we are not to make images or idols of any persuasion. We are not to make statues or images of people, angels, sea creatures or anything else God created. We are not to bow down and worship anybody or anything. God only, is to be worshipped. Commandments one and two go hand-in-hand. Idolatry is a serious sin. Not making graven images of any kind means idols or false gods of any description, and we are not to bring idols into our homes (Deuteronomy 7:26). Buddha's, Hindu gods, wooden masks, Egyptian gods etc are all idols and even the people who make idols are cursed by God (Deuteronomy 27:15). Remember, the curses for such things are passed on down to the generations that follow. When the Lord said not to have any gods or idols before Him, He meant what He said.

Commandment number (3): 'Do not use the Lord's name in vain'. We must never ever use the Lord's name as a swear word, an expletive, a word signifying surprise, a word to emphasise a point etc as many people do today. That is blasphemy, and blasphemy or taking the Lord's name in vain, is sin. Even using shortened or altered versions of Jesus' name in jest, is blasphemy. Unless one is praying and is speaking to the Lord, using the phrase, 'O my God!' is blasphemy. If people continue to blaspheme, then they could be turned over to the devil to be taught the hard way not to do it, like the Apostle Paul once did to two new Christians (1 Timothy 1:20). Twisting scripture, mis-quoting, using the Lord's name lightly and taking scriptures with His name out of context, are all using His name in vain. To apply the sacred name of the Lord with that of a false god is iniquity of the worst kind. To mock or abuse the written Word of God is also sin.

Commandment number (4): 'Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy'. The word Sabbath means 'rest'. The Sabbath day was given to the Hebrews for a day off to rest and be refreshed, both for the people and their working animals so they did not overwork. God ordained it so families could relax and be together for one whole day every week, from the ancient equivalent of Friday at sundown to Saturday at sundown. 'Six days you shall do your work, but the seventh day you shall rest and keep the Sabbath, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your servant and the stranger may be refreshed' (Exodus 23:12). 'Six days you shall work but on the seventh day you shall rest' (Exodus 34:21). The Jews celebrate the Sabbath as part of their covenant with God – not as part of the Law. 'Wherefore the Israelites shall keep the Sabbath to observe it throughout their generations, a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the Israelites forever; for in six days the Lord created the heavens and earth, and on the seventh day He ceased and was refreshed' (Exodus 31:16 & 17).

Some people use the Ten Commandments as their guide, thinking somehow they will please God if they attend church on a Saturday morning, but Jesus Himself introduced Sunday as the day for Christians to assemble together. Jesus said He was Lord even of the Sabbath Day, and it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8 & 12; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5). The Sabbath rest day was never given as an instruction to the early Christian Gentiles; it was given only to the Israelites. Many modern Christians think it applies to them too, but the New Testament shows us the Gentile Christians did not celebrate Sabbath – only the Jews did, and they still do. Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week, and He had the very first meeting with His disciples on the first day of the week, so Jesus Himself started the brand new church, the brand new covenant, with that very first meeting on a Sunday evening, and the apostles continued with that theme. 'On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early while it was still dark ... then on that same first day of the week, when it was evening ... Jesus came and stood among them' (John 20:1 & 19). The Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday and ends at sundown on Saturday. Jesus rose early in the morning after the end of the Sabbath – Sunday morning, and in John we read about the very first meeting Jesus had with the disciples after He had risen; on the same Sunday evening. That is why the Gentile Christians in the New Testament, assembled to worship God, shared communion (broke bread), listened to Paul preaching and took up their offerings on the first day of the week – Sunday – not on the Saturday. 'And on the first day of the week when we were assembled together to break bread, Paul preached to them...' (Acts 20:7). 'On the first day of each week, let each one of you put aside something and save

it up as he has prospered, so that no collections will need to be taken after I come' (1 Corinthians 16:2). In the days of the early church, there were people who tried to insist Christians meet on the Sabbath, but Paul dismissed them and said they were not to insist they meet on the Sabbath. 'Therefore let no one sit in judgement on you ... with regard to a feast day or a new moon or a Sabbath. Such things are only the shadow of things that are to come, and they have only a symbolic value' (Colossians 2:16 & 17).

Commandment number (5): 'Honour your father and your mother'. This commandment is mentioned several times in the scriptures in various ways. We are commanded to obey our parents and honour them as our parents, to treat them well, and take care of them in their old age. 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is just and right. Honour your father and mother, for this is the first commandment with a promise – that all may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth' (Ephesians 6:1 to 3). This commandment is the only commandment with a promise, indicating the importance God places on the relationship between parents and children. God has parents standing in on His behalf on earth as far as children are concerned because they represent Him on earth. This commandment is placed straight after the commandments to put Him first and above all things. First we must honour God, then we must honour those whom He has put in charge over us. By honouring our parents, we are honouring God and the result is a long life. The duty to one's parents stands second to one's duty to God. The relationship between God, parents and their children is ordained and designed by God, and this God-given concept is sometimes treated with little importance, or forgotten in our modern world and the consequence of this is causing untold suffering for families and society as a whole. Honouring is more than just obeying. Obeying is doing what has been asked of us; honouring is the attitude with which we obey. For example, if a child is asked not to stand on the seat at church and he sits willingly, he is honouring and obeying his parent. However, if the child sits and sulks, he is obeying but not honouring. According to the scriptures, it is the parents' responsibility to teach their children about the Lord and His commandments (Deuteronomy 4:10; 6:7; 11:19; Proverbs 22:6). The Lord teaches and instructs adults, most of whom become parents, then onwards from that, the role of parenting is to train our children in the ways of the Lord, but kindly, not provoking them to anger or discouraging them (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21).

Honouring our parents pleases God, and there is no time limit on that. It does not cease when we are older. We must still honour our parents even when we are adults and they are aged. We must do all we can to make their lives liveable. We are to treat them with respect. 'Each of you shall give due respect to his mother and his father' (Leviticus 19:3). The respect we show our parents and grandparents will be observed by our children, thus ensuring the respect will continue on to us when we are old. The only time we can disobey our parents, is when we are asked to do something that contravenes God's will or His Word; even then, however, we must still honour them, just not obey that request. As we read in commandment number one, Jesus said we must never put our parents before Him. Honouring our unsaved parents and showing them respect could be God's way of bringing them to salvation.

We are never, ever to curse our parents because they are God's representatives. If children curse, strike, insult or neglect their parents, then they are in effect cursing and insulting God, and that is blasphemy, and with that comes death. 'Whoever strikes or attacks his father or his mother shall surely be put to death ... whoever curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death' (Exodus 21:15 & 17). 'Everyone who curses his father or mother shall surely be put to death; he has cursed his father or mother; his blood guilt is upon him' (Leviticus 20:9). "Honour your father and your mother and he who curses, speaks evil of, abuses or mistreats his father or mother, let him surely die. But you say a man is exempt if he says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might have received from me is a gift to God,' then you are no longer allowing him to do anything for his mother and father; letting him off from the responsibility of caring for his parents, thus you are nullifying the authority of the Word of God through your incorrect tradition, which you in turn, teach to your children" (Mark 7:10 to 13). Committing elderly parents to a nursing home then forgetting them is not honouring them. Shouting at, abusing, ridiculing and generally treating them with disdain is not honouring them and it is sin. The Lord said the punishment for disobeying parents and not being dutiful to them is so serious, He literally gives those people up to their sin (Romans 1:24 & 30).

Even if our parents have been terrible, violent, abusive parents who did not obey God themselves, we must still honour them as our parents. We do not have to agree with them but we must honour them. We must forgive them and allow God to be their Judge, and they will be judged according to how they

have treated their children, who are scripturally, God-given gifts. 'Behold, children are a gift from the Lord, and the fruit of the womb a reward' (Psalm 127:3). Just as God will judge parents for the way they treated their children, so the children will be judged according to the way they treat their parents. The children of bad parents need to forgive their parents and let God deal with them. There are few things worse than adult children reminding their parents of the mistakes they made, years later, especially if God has forgiven the parents after salvation. That behaviour is not honouring them. No matter how terrible parents have been to their children, we must forgive and honour them if we want a long life and for all to be well with us (Ephesians 6:2 & 3). If we do not honour our parents, all will not be well with us from God. Some people may ask if that applies to step parents, foster parents, adoptive parents, spiritual parents or parents-in-law. Scripturally, yes it does. There are many accounts throughout the scriptures that shows us that non-biological parents have the same place in our lives as natural parents do.

Commandment number (6): 'Do not murder'. That means the killing of any human person, including unborn human babies. Abortion, although acceptable in the modern world, is actually murder just as much as killing an older person is murder. It is the deliberate killing of another human being and God says, "Don't do it." Murder is sin – we all know that, but people don't need to kill each other to commit murder. Just hating your neighbour or holding malice are as evil as murder in God's eyes. 'I say to you that everyone who harbours malice or enmity against a brother (a fellow believer) shall be unable to escape the Judgement' (Matthew 5:21 & 22). 'Anyone who hates his brother in the Lord is a murderer in his heart and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him' (1 John 3:15). We must love the Lord with all our hearts and love our neighbour as ourselves (Luke 10:27).

Commandment number (7): 'Do not commit adultery'. This does not only mean we are not to engage in sex with a married person, it means we are not to have sex with anybody, at all, ever, except our spouse, and that spouse must be of the opposite sex. By far, all kinds of sexual immorality and lust are what anger the Lord most. Sexual immorality is the one and only sin, where the sin is against one's own body, which should be treated as the temple of the Holy Spirit and should not be defiled. All other sins are outside the body. 'Shun immorality and all sexual promiscuity – flee from impurity in thought, word and deed. Any other sin, which a person commits, is one outside the body, but anyone who commits any sexual immorality sins against their own body. Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit Who lives within you, Whom you have received as a Gift from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price, so then honour God and bring glory to Him in your body and in your spirit, which belong to God' (1 Corinthians 6:18 to 20).

Here is a list of sexual sins quoted in the scriptures: fornication [unmarried sex such as in a de facto relationship]; adultery [sex with a married person other than your own spouse]; indecent conduct and impurity [pole dancing, stripping, nudity etc]; licentiousness [disregarding rules of sexual conduct which would include rape, incest, paedophilia, etc]; filthiness and obscenity [pornography and nude 'art']; foul-mouthed, indecent foolish talk and coarse jesting [dirty jokes, double entendre comments, swearing]; sexual vice [sexual vices are exactly what it says ... unnatural devices used in the sex act which have been around for thousands of years]; impurity in thought [sexual fantasies]; homosexuality, lesbianism and prostitution are all abominations to God. 'If a man lies with a male as if he were a woman, both men have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them' (Leviticus 20:13). The Lord says sexual sins are degrading, unnatural and filled with unrighteousness, and He gives these people up to suffer the consequences of their sin and abandons them to their own lusts (Romans 1:24 to 32). However, if these same people turn away from such behaviour and repent and turn to God, He will welcome them back. The Lord still loves the people, but He hates their sin. In the Old Testament, adultery was a crime punishable by death (Leviticus 20:10). 'Immorality and all impurity or greediness must not be named among you. Let there be no filthiness, obscenity, indecency, nor foolish and sinful talk nor coarse jesting. For be sure of this: that no person practicing sexual vice or impurity in thought or in life, or one who is covetous – for he is in effect an idolater – has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Jesus and of God. Let no one delude and deceive you with empty excuses and groundless arguments for these sins, for through these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience, so do not associate or be sharers with them. Look carefully then, how you walk!' (Ephesians 5:3 to 8). Lustful thoughts are sin. Sin is not only action; you can sin in your thoughts too (Mark 7:21 & 23). 'Everyone who so much as looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart' (Matthew 5:28).

Commandment number (8): 'Do not steal'. That is clear, but it means more than direct stealing. We are not to be dishonest with anything. If we are accidentally given too much change after making a purchase, we must be honest enough to return it because God sees even if the cashier doesn't. We are not to commit fraud. Stealing, theft and robbery are all sins. Paul told the early Christians to stop stealing and work for a living and give to those in need. 'Let the thief steal no more, but rather let him work, making an honest living with his own hands, so that he may be able to give to those in need' (Ephesians 4:28). Taking 'perks' such as pens from the workplace is theft. 'Tell servants (employees) to be submissive to their masters (employers), to be pleasing in every way, not to talk back to them; nor to steal by taking things of small value, but to prove themselves truly faithful throughout' (Titus 2:9 & 10). Refusing to pay income tax is theft. 'For this reason you pay taxes, for the civil authorities are official servants under God, devoting themselves to attending to service, so render to all men their dues. Pay taxes to whom taxes are due; revenue to whom revenue is due' (Romans 13:6 & 7). Not repaying a loan is a form of robbery and the Lord regards this as wickedness. The borrower could end up a victim of creditors or debt collectors. 'The wicked borrow and do not pay it back' (Psalm 37:21). 'Shall your debtors not rise up suddenly who shall bite you, exacting payment of you, and those will vex you? Then you will be booty (a victim) for them' (Habakkuk 2:7).

Commandment number (9): 'Do not give false witness or testimony against your neighbour'. In modern language that means we are not to commit perjury; do not lie in court against an innocent person. But it goes further than that. We are not to spread malicious untrue rumours either. 'You shall not repeat a false report; you shall not join with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness, and you shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you bear witness at a trial and side with a multitude to pervert justice, neither shall you be partial in a trial ... You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his cause. Keep far from a false matter and not condemn to death the innocent and the righteous, for I (the Lord) will not acquit the wicked. You shall take no bribe, for the bribe blinds and perverts the testimony and the cause of the righteous' (Exodus 23:1 to 8).

Commandment number (10): 'You shall not covet your neighbour's house, wife, servant, ox, donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbour'. To covet is to desire something that does not belong to us; something we cannot have because it belongs to another person. The sin of covetousness is the only one of the Ten Commandments that begins in infancy. Young babies can desire a toy that another child has, and may scream until they get it. Envy, unrighteous jealousy and covetousness are all sin. The Lord says it is a form of idolatry. 'The man who envies is one who is covetous for he is an idolater' (Ephesians 5:5), and envy rots the bones (Proverbs 14:30). We are to guard ourselves from all greed and covetousness and kill off all evil desires (Luke 12:15; Colossians 3:5).

The Ten Commandments are a guide for us to follow, but Paul summed them all up when he said, 'For the whole Law is fulfilled with the one precept; love your neighbour as you love yourself (Galatians 5:14), for no one ever hated his own body (Ephesians 5:29). So treat other people as you would like to be treated by other people. Jesus said, 'So then, whatever you desire that others would do for you, even so, do it for them, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets' (Matthew 7:12).

Amen and God bless you.

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