

Summary The 10 Commandments

The 10 Commandments Exodus 20:1-21; Mark 12:28-34

We continue today in our sermon series on Sin and Forgiveness and our focus is on the 10 commandments from Exodus 20:1-21. Note-the words, Law and 10 commandments will be used interchangeably.

As children, many of us probably learned the 10 commandments as basic morality lessons. Now looking at them through adult eyes, we see that they are much broader than a restrictive morality list for children.

Spoiler - these commandments are *not* rules designed to get us in trouble. Instead, they offer us a wonderful description of what it looks like to live as God's chosen people indicating God's path to a blessed life. 10 Commandments are God's gift to us, and we are blessed to have them! Just imagine what the world would look like if everyone lived faithfully by these commandments! What a wonderful world this would be!

God takes all of life and breaks it down into 10 segments that govern all of life that's important to Him. God expects 2 things from people- 1-supreme devotion to Him: 2-sincere affection for people. Think of them as 2 tablets: the first 4 are on a vertical table-indicating our relationship with God. The last 6 are on a horizontal table pointing to our relationship with humanity. These are a reflection of God's character calling people to holy living which reflect His nature and serves as a guide to lead us to faith in Jesus Christ by revealing the depths of our sinful nature.

Commandment 1: Exodus 20 God introduces the 1st commandment: *"I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery. You must not have any other god but me."* What a gift – that the Lord God chooses to commit Himself to be our God! The Creator of the Universe wants to personally involve himself in our world and lives.

Why does God refer to other gods? In Egypt, the Israelites had seen lots of other gods/idols. But what about us, do we too have other gods? "When we list what matters the most to us, that which we designate Number 1 is god. Whether or not it is God with a capital G is another matter."

This 1st commandment is the big and most important one, because all the others depend on whether or not we keep this one. As author Anne Robertson puts it in her book, **God's Top 10**, "I think this one heads the list because, like the top button on a shirt, if you don't get this one right, all the rest will be messed up as well."

What other gods are we tempted to put ahead of God? Noting that God is a trinity of persons, Bible scholar James Packer, suggests some other trinities that vie to take His place: sex, money, and stomach; pleasure, possessions, and position; football, the firm, and the family.

All of these are good gifts from God. But any of them can become an area of sin against the first commandment if that specific gift becomes more important to us than God the Giver. This is what the Bible refers to as "idolatry." So ask yourself, 'what dominates my thoughts, goals and conversations? What is the first love of your/my life? That is your god.'

Commandment 2: warns us against making images in any shape of form to represent God.

Naturally, our imaginations tend to create an image of something or someone we have not seen. And since God is invisible, we create images intended to represent Him. Problem - these images cannot capture the glory of the Creator; they only reflect part of the truth about God. People also tend to shift allegiance to from God to the object.

Context

God gave the 10 Commandments to the Israelites whom he had delivered from slavery in Egypt. See Exodus 1-14. The Israelites had been enslaved by the Egyptians for 400 years when God called Moses to lead them out of Egypt. *"And when the Israelites saw the great power the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in Him and Moses His servant".* Exodus 14:31.

Purpose – why did God give the Law?

Clarify some misconceptions about the law. 1stly, the law of God was never a ladder for unsaved people to climb up to heaven or into relationship with God. The commandments come out of the relationship that they had with God. 2ndly, the Law was not designed to be a type of entrance exam to get into heaven. When you try to share the gospel and point out the human sinful state, it is common to hear people say things like, 'I've been a good person, I keep the 10 commandments,' but Galatians 2:15-16 points out that, *no one can be saved by observing the Law, but by faith in Jesus Christ*. Therefore, any such excuse from people shows a superficial understanding of the 10 commandments.

On the other hand, the Law is 1) **designed to reveal God's character to us**. Like a mirror they reflect for us, the glory of God. So in the Law, God is expressing the concept that, (in my words), *I've delivered you, I've made you mine, you bear my name in the world. Therefore, as my people, and my representatives in this world, I'm calling you to live a life that reflects who I am. You who have experienced my grace and redemption, this is how I want you to live.*

2ndly, the law is designed to restrain human evil. In Romans 13, - governments who enforce the law strike fear into the hearts of offenders. In the human conscience, we general understand that there are consequences to be paid for our wrongdoings. The Law has exerted a great moral influence in society by restraining evil to some measure. Justice systems are based on the law to some extent.

3rdly, the law is designed to convict people of sin and our need for a Saviour. The Israelites broke almost every commandment soon after receiving them. We also break them in some shape or form. Knowing what is right does not confer the power to do what is right. That is why there are doctors who smoke, financial advisors who are in debt and marriage counsellors who are divorced. Read Romans 7:24-25, see Paul's struggle and declaration.

When Jesus was asked in Mark 12:28 by a teacher of the law, which is the most important commandment. In response, Jesus didn't pick one, instead he wrapped all 10 commandments together in vs 29-31. Jesus is absolutely laying out for us, what a life of love for God and humanity looks like. The Beatles had the hit song, *'All u need is love. All u need is love; Love is all you need.'* Very popular song, but it begs the question, what does a life of someone who loves God and neighbour really look like? The 10 commandments spell out the answer to that question for us. The first 4 commandments tell us what loving God looks like.

Vs2 (1) that we worship God first and foremost, over and above all other persons or stuff.

V3-7 (2) Not allow any image to represent God, therefore- worship Him as He is, not as you imagine Him to be.

V7(3) Honour His name and use it with reverence, value and meaningfully. Respect this gift -devote our lives to honour the name of Jesus Christ in our words and deeds.

Vs8 (4) Commit time to worship and serve God, and be discipled to grow in our walk with him. To thrive/flourish as God's children and ambassadors. Let it overflow to our interpersonal relationships bringing us to the last 6 commandments.

The last 6 commandments, point to what it's like to love your neighbour as yourself.

v12-5) Begins begin at home with honour for parents, the first people God put in your life.

V13- 6) Revere life as a sacred gift from God to be treasured, God places an immense value on life because we're made in His image. He is the only Giver and should be the only Taker of life.

V14- 7) Faithfulness in spouses - God built a fence around marriage. He created the sexual impulse and because it is God-given, it must be God-governed & directed. So many lives are impacted as this commandment is flouted.

V15 - 8) Covers stealing of property, use work time, take advantage of the vulnerability of others.

v16 -9) Be true to your word and speak out for the truth, No lies.

v17 -10) Rejoice in what God has given to others rather than covet what they have. This is the only one dealing with a hidden inward action—happens in your heart. Adverts are designed to make us feel incomplete or miserable – millions are spent to make us covet. Watch out for that temptation.

As believers in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit gives us power and capacity to please God, something we could never do in our own strength. (Rom 8:3-4) He is enabling and transforming us daily, to walk and live the life in Christ to which he calls us. We are work in progress, therefore when we trip up, we can turn to God in repentance, get up and keep living as Jesus' disciples. We are work in progress as long as we are on this earth. We who are in Christ are being transformed day by day to be more like Christ until we see Him face to face. The Spirit of God works in us to will and do what pleases Him.

Some questions suggested on Exodus 20

1. What can we classify as idols in our lives today?
2. In what ways can we misuse God's name?
3. How is Jesus teaching on verse 13 relevant to us today, Ref Matthew 5:21-22??
4. Is lying okay if it doesn't injure others? (verse 16)
5. What is coveting?
6. What are the standards of worship and behaviour that God expects of His people?