

# THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

*From Tablets of Stone into the Hearts of God's People*

THOU SHALT HAVE NO  
OTHER GODS BEFORE  
ME

THOU SHALT NOT MAKE  
UNTO THEE ANY  
GRAVEN IMAGE

THOU SHALT NOT TAKE  
THE NAME OF THE  
LORD THY GOD IN VAIN

REMEMBER THE  
SABBATH DAY TO  
KEEP IT HOLY

HONOR THY FATHER AND  
THY MOTHER

THOU SHALT NOT KILL

THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT  
ADULTERY

THOU SHALT NOT STEAL

THOU SHALT NOT BEAR  
FALSE WITNESS

THOU SHALT NOT COVET

Vonne L. Fugate



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of God's People*

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Lord of the Nations, LLC  
Omaha, NE  
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# **Dedication**

To my wonderful husband, Robert, who initially encouraged me to write this Bible study, and who was my main encourager, theological critic, editor, and typesetter. This book would have been impossible without your varied expertise, love, and prayers.



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# THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

## Introduction

To live the Christian life, it is necessary to know what God requires and to obey Him. However, it seems to me that many self-professing Christians know a lot about God but often do not know Him. This described me until I was seventeen years old. I had attended church all my life and knew a lot about God. I had memorized a lot of Scriptures, including Exodus 20:1–17, but I did not know God as my personal Savior and Lord. When God made me alive in Christ, He gave me a heart that longed to know Him, to know both what pleases Him and what He forbids and calls sin. As God revealed Himself to me, I grew in my love for Him and desired only to please Him. This brings me to the conclusion that for someone to obey God, he or she must have a spirit that is alive toward Christ, a personal relationship with God that causes him or her to respond in love and obedience to Him.

It was when I was mentoring incarcerated women that their ignorance of God's moral law and lack of Christian upbringing was apparent. There was a measure of morality that God had written on their hearts, but years of sin had dulled their consciences. It became clear to my godly husband that these women needed a Bible study on the Ten Commandments. He encouraged me to write such a study, but I hesitated, thinking that I was not a gifted writer. But eventually, with his persistence and God's clear confirmation, I began writing this book in my spare time. During the two years of writing and teaching it to my sisters in Christ, this booklet has undergone major revisions several times. But more importantly, I have been deeply changed as I studied these passages. At first, I realized that many new believers needed a basic understanding of the law for a moral foundation. But later, the deeper purposes of the Law of God<sup>1</sup> became clearer to me. We need the Ten Commandments, not merely to give us a standard by which to live (which they do), but to reveal to us God's character.

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<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive study on six purposes of the law of God see: Robert Fugate, *God's Law: The Foundation of Moral Order* (Omaha, NE: Thy Word is Truth Publishers, 2000).

We see God's: holiness, justice, truth, sovereignty, love, mercy and grace. "As the revelation of God's will, the law has for its true and proper purpose 'life' (Ro 7:10) for men."<sup>2</sup> This "life" comes in abundance as the law reveals man's sinful, rebellious nature (Ro 7:15–21; 5:20) and drives sinners to Christ. As a tutor (Gal 3:24), the law brings us to Christ, who is "the goal of the Law" (Ro 10:4). I love the metaphor in the first chapter of James, which pictures the law of God as a mirror: "But the man who looks intently into the [mirror] perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it— he will be blessed in what he does" (Ja 1:25 NIV). We will grow in holiness the more we look into the mirror and live in obedience to God's Law. However, my favorite analogy came to me through one of the women in our Bible study. A sweet young lady came up and asked me for my position on keeping the Sabbath. She was looking for my list of "do's and don'ts." Several weeks later, after we had studied the Fourth Commandment, she exclaimed as the light turned on in her heart, "It's not a matter of rules—the Sabbath Day is a **gift** from God! As we give Him that day, He gives us all that we need and much more, because we're spending quality one-to-one time with Him." I believe every commandment is a **gift** from God that brings tremendous blessings, when obeyed.

It is my prayer that as you open each "gift" and hide it in your heart, you will grow in your love for the Lord, and God's commands will affect everything you think about and do.

## Understanding the Decalogue

"Did you hear about the new liberal church? It has six commandments and four suggestions." Unfortunately, this joke is not so far from our modern reality. Both Roman Catholics and Protestants have found ways to alter and explain away the Ten Commandments. About a year ago, I was attending an anniversary party held in a Christian outreach center, and on the wall was a large poster of the Ten Commandments. However, the Second Commandment had been deleted and the Tenth Commandment had been split into two so it would appear at first glance to be all Ten Commandments. The evangelical pastors overseeing this inner-city

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<sup>2</sup> C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans*, ICC, 2:846.

center did not notice the omission on the poster. Upon checking into the source of the poster, it became apparent that the Roman Catholic Catechism combines the First and Second Commandments and then explains how the Commandment to not make any graven images does not mean we shouldn't make statues or pictures of Christ.

Protestant evangelical Christians also have their methods for rationalizing away the Ten Commandments. Their arguments are frequently expressed in questions as, "Doesn't the New Testament specifically say that we are not under law, but under grace?" Didn't Christ set us free from the law of sin and death by fulfilling the righteous requirement of the law? Is not an attempt to overwhelm men's conscience by the authority of the Ten Commandments rather legalistic and at odds with Christian liberty?"

Before we study the Ten Commandments, we need to dispel two frequent misunderstandings about God's law. The first misconception is that law is opposed to grace, and the second is that God's law is not part of the new covenant. Two passages that are commonly used to show that law is opposed to grace are Romans 6:14 and Galatians 3:12. In Galatians 3–5, Paul was rebuking the Galatian heretics who were attempting to be justified by their works (law-keeping) and who were teaching that the Gentiles must obey the Jewish ceremonial law. The confusion occurs because the Greek word that is translated law in the New Testament has 8 different definitions.<sup>3</sup> In Galatians 3:12, when Paul says "the law is not of faith," *law* is equivalent to our present-day word "legalism." "The Greek language of Paul's day possessed no word-group corresponding to our 'legalism,' 'legalist,' and 'legalistic.' ... Pauline statements which at first sight seem to disparage the law, were really directed not against the law itself but against that misunderstanding and misuse of it for which we now have a convenient terminology."<sup>4</sup> In today's English,

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<sup>3</sup> To study all 8 definitions of *law* see Robert E. Fugate, *God's Law: The Foundation of Moral Order*.

<sup>4</sup> C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), 2:853; cf. pp. 851f for Paul's rejection of legalism.

“legalistic” is wrongly used to describe anyone who is too “radical” or adheres to laws we disobey. We must understand the Biblical definition of legalism and the three ways it occurs. Biblically, legalism denotes: 1) attempting to be justified on the basis of works; 2) keeping the Jewish ceremonial law after Christ’s once-for-all atonement for sin (i.e., Judaism), thus maintaining the racial separation between Jews (as God’s covenant people) and Gentiles; or 3) adding rules to Scripture.<sup>5</sup>

Before we deem a fellow Christian to be legalistic by promoting a belief that is uncommon or strange to us, we must determine whether his belief is a ceremonial law that has been done away, or some rule devised by man that has no scriptural support, or a moral law that is still to be obeyed today.

Earlier I referred to two passages that pit law against grace. We have looked at Galatians 3:12, now we will look at Romans 6:14. According to the Greek lexicons, there are several New Testament occurrences of the word *law* in which *law* is defined as “the curse and condemnation due to transgressing the Mosaic legislation”<sup>6</sup> (e.g., Ro 4:15; 6:14f; 7:4; Gal 5:18). When Paul says “we are not under law but under grace” (Ro 6:14), he is saying that Christians are not under the curse of the broken law. Believers are set free from the consequences of sin and God’s wrath which comes as a result of disobedience to His law (Ro 6:22–23). Thus these verses, rightly understood, do not pit God’s law—in its entirety and as God intended it to function—against grace.

Now I want to briefly dispel the second misconception that law is not a part of the new covenant. To do this I want to look at Romans 10:4 (NKJ), “Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” It seems that many have taken the wrong definition for *end* when they interpret the phrase “Christ is the end of the law” to mean Christ has done away with the law. However, the correct meaning is that Christ is the goal or purpose of the law. This is accurately interpreted by the New Jerusalem Bible which says “the Law has found its fulfillment in Christ so that all who have faith will be justified.”

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<sup>5</sup> Robert E. Fugate, *God’s Law: The Foundation of Moral Order*.

<sup>6</sup> Robert E. Fugate *God’s Law: The Foundation of Moral Order*.

## ***Jesus taught the law***

If Jesus put an end to our need to obey the moral law, He would have surely taught that. Instead, He emphatically stated,

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:17–20).

Jesus continues in this passage to explain the Ten Commandments. He boldly not only enforces them, but also teaches their true intent by taking them from sins of outward behavior to sins of the heart. He correlates the act of adultery with lust in one’s thoughts, and anger toward a brother (resulting in calling him a fool) with the sin of murder (Mt 5:21–30). Not only did Jesus teach us what our attitude toward God’s law should be, but, by quoting it many times, he also clearly demonstrated to us by His example that the Law was, and still is, of utmost importance.

The gospel imparts faith to God’s elect people. It sweetens the law, so that the harsh and unattainable standard of perfection becomes a standard that we delight in and long to obey out of love and gratitude for all that Jesus has done, and is doing, for us. Jesus gave Himself for us (the church), that He might sanctify and cleanse us with the washing of the water by the Word (Eph 5:25–27).

I am greatly indebted to Thomas Watson’s book *Ten Commandments*. This Puritan also has eight rules for understanding the Decalogue, which I have shortened and revised using modern English.

## **General rules for understanding the Decalogue**

**Rule 1.** The commands and prohibitions of the moral law reach the heart.

- The commandments require not only outward actions but also inward affections; they require not only the outward act of obedience, but also the inward affection of love. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Dt 6:5 NKJ).
- The threats and prohibitions of the moral law reach the heart. The law of God forbids not only the act of sin, but the desire and inclination; not only does it forbid adultery, but lusting; not only stealing, but also coveting (Ro 7:7). Man’s law binds the hands only; God’s law binds the heart.

**Rule 2.** In the commandments, there is synecdoche, (pronounced *si-~~nek~~-da-ke*); more is intended than is spoken.

- Where any duty is commanded, the opposite is forbidden. When we are commanded to keep the Sabbath day holy, we are forbidden to break the Sabbath. When we are commanded to live in a vocation, “Six days you shall labor,” we are forbidden to live idly, and out of a vocation.
- Where any sin is forbidden, the opposite is commanded. When we are forbidden to take God’s name in vain, the opposite, that we should reverence his name, is commanded. “Revere this glorious and awesome name—the Lord your God” (Dt 28:58). Where we are forbidden to wrong our neighbor, there the opposite—that we should do him all the good we can, by vindicating his name and supplying his needs—is included.

**Rule 3.** Where any sin is forbidden, the condition or occurrence that may bring it about is also forbidden. For instance, rash anger and envy usually precede murder; adultery is preceded by lust or spending time with an immoral person (Pr 5:8).

**Rule 4.** Where one relation is named in the commandment, there another relation is included. Where the child is commanded to honor parents, it is implied that the parent is also commanded to instruct, to love, and to provide for the child.

**Rule 5.** Where greater sins are forbidden, lesser sins are also forbidden. Though no sin in its own nature is little, yet one may be comparatively less than another. Where idolatry is forbidden, superstition is forbidden. Aaron's sons offered unauthorized fire before the Lord (Lv 10:1–3).

**Rule 6.** The law of God is entire. The first and second tables are knit together, requiring holiness to God and justice to our neighbor. If someone is only moral in his duties towards his neighbor (the second table) but fails in his duties in the first table, his heart is not right with God. Christ detected the hypocrisy of the Pharisees who kept the laws of the first table with zeal and holiness, but they were unjust in their dealings with men, showed no mercy towards the poor, and lacked faithfulness in their promises and contracts with men. “You have neglected the more important matters of the heart, justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out the gnat but swallow a camel!” (Mt 23:23–24).

**Rule 7.** God's law forbids not only the committing of sin, but being accessory to, or taking part in, the sins of others.

### **Five ways of being an accessory to sin**

1. By making unrighteous and un-Biblical laws, and imposing on others that which is unlawful. Examples: King Jeroboam set up the golden calves (1 Ki 12:25–33); King David ordered the commander of the army to put Uriah in the front lines of battle, and the prophet charged David with murder (2 Sm 12:9).
2. We become accessory by not hindering others when it is in our power. If a parent sees his child break the Sabbath, or hears him swear and does not stop it or punish for it, he becomes as accessory to his sin. Example: Eli failed to punish his sons for their evil behavior (1 Sa 3:14).
3. By giving unbiblical counsel, or by helping or provoking others to sin. Examples: Ahithophel made himself guilty by giving Absalom counsel to go in and defile his father's concubines (2 Sa 16:21); anyone who tempts or encourages another's drunkenness (Hab 2:15).

4. By consenting to another's sin. Example: Saul consenting to Stephen's death (Ac 8:1).
5. By setting a bad example, thereby causing another to sin. Example: If the father swears, and the child by his example learns to swear, the father is accessory to the child's sin. There are not only hereditary diseases, but also hereditary sins.

**Rule 8.** Though we cannot, by our own strength, fulfill all these commandments, yet doing what we are able, the Lord has provided encouragement for us.

### **Threefold Encouragement**

1. God had Ezekiel prophesy about the new covenant (which we now enjoy). God has promised in this covenant to work in us that which he requires. "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them" (Ezk 36:27 NKJ). God commands us to turn from sin, but here again we often find ourselves powerless. Knowing this, God promises to put his Spirit within us, and to turn the heart of stone into flesh (Ezk 36:26). God will give us strength.
2. God, in the law, requires exact obedience, yet will accept sincere obedience. He will accept a degree of obedience if there is truth in one's heart (Ps 51:6). He will see the faith and pass by the failing.
3. Where our personal obedience comes short, God will be pleased to accept us in Christ. "He has made us accepted in the Beloved" (Eph 1:6 NKJ). Though our obedience is imperfect, yet, through Christ, God looks upon it as perfect. So, we can echo the words of Isaiah, "All that we have accomplished you have done for us" (Is 26:12 NIV).

With this introduction, let us move on to our study of the Ten Commandments. I pray that we will all come with open minds and hearts that say as David said, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps 139:23–24 NKJ).

## The First Commandment

“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” (Ex 20:2–3 NIV).

The preface, (v.2) teaches us that because God is the Lord, our God, and Redeemer, we are bound to keep all his commandments. Exodus 19:3–6 explains what we are required to do as a result of what God did for us. Read also Dt 11:1 and Lk 1:74–75.

We are to know God as the only true God (1 Ch 28:9). He is to be our personal God (Dt 26:17–19), and we are to glorify, worship, and serve Him only (Mt 4:10).

We are forbidden to worship or bring glory to anything or anyone other than God. Romans 1:20–25 discusses people who serve something that is created (whether a person or a thing) instead of the Creator.

The words “before me” (v.3) teach us, that God sees all things, and no word, deed or even a thought escapes his notice. “If we had forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a foreign god, would not God search this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart” (Ps 44:20–21 NKJ). “For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him” (2 Ch 16:9 NIV).

The word “have” means, “own, possess, seek, desire, love or worship.” We are not to give anyone or anything our inward heart’s love, devotion or dependence that belongs only to the true God. Luke 14:25–26 contrasts our love for God with our love for our closest loved ones here on earth. Jesus also tells us, “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other” (Mt 6:24 NIV).

### ***Five things we must do***

1. Diligently seek to know God more fully, for we cannot worship an unknown God.

2. Love God with everything within us. This includes a deep joy in Him and a holy zeal for Him, which motivates our obedience.
3. Fear God, which consists of awe of His majesty, supreme reverence for His authority, and a desire for His glory. This is a great deterrent to disobedience.
4. Worship God in the way He desires and with His aids, e.g., study of, and meditation on, the Word, combined with thankful prayer, praise and obedience. Psalms 100:1–4 describes how we are to enter into worship.
5. Trust God “For my eyes are toward You, O GOD, the Lord; In You I take refuge; do not leave me defenseless”(Ps 41:8 NASB). “My God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my savior- from violent men you save me” (2 Sm 22:3 NIV).

### ***Five forbidden sins***

1. Willful ignorance of God and His will by despising or neglecting the ways we can come to know Him, e.g. reading the Bible, praying, being disciplined by a pastor/teacher.
2. Atheism or denying God.
3. Idolatry or setting up false gods. This would include deifying a person by ascribing divine attributes to them such as sinlessness, omniscience and omnipotence and omnipresence to simultaneously hear everyone’s prayers throughout the world, and omnipotence to rule the universe, e.g., to Mary, Allah, angels (Col.2:18; Rv 22:8–9) or saints.
4. Disobedience or open defiance of God.
5. Excessive affections of our heart and mind on someone or something that are due alone to the Lord.

### ***Other gods in today’s world***

1. Gods of other nations
  - Allah, (the moon god of Mecca) is the god of the Muslims
  - Kali, the goddess of death in India
  - Satan, through the use of black magic in Haiti (which causes oppression, poverty and murder)

2. New Age gods—the most prevalent form of Hinduism in the Western world
  - Gaia, the “great mother” (or her co-equal “sky father”)
  - White witchcraft (also known as Wicca), rapidly gaining popularity with the U.S. government as tax-exempt religious organizations and even allowed privileges of worship in our country’s prisons
  - Nature deities, include gods of Celtic myths, ancient energies of the earth and cosmos, astrology and mediums (who use tarot cards, Ouija boards and horoscopes)
3. Man—self-love above everyone else (2 Tim 3:1–5), or exalting man as supreme [Look up words beginning with “self” in a dictionary. Look up “selfish” in a Bible concordance.]
  - Celebrities: professional athletes, movie stars, fashion models and recording artists are idolized and emulated
  - Psychology gods: worship of man’s soul (supreme importance on man’s feelings, desires and thoughts, especially one’s self-esteem) and subconscious (voices from one’s inner self), exalting of the self-actualized individual who is free from “laws” that are “repressive” and “evil” and inhibiting, most commonly seen in self-help, pop psychology books devoted to nurturing and worshipping our moods, feelings and desires
  - Man’s intellect and the god of education, manifested by businessmen as a belief in capitalism above all else, by the medical community who esteem biotechnology and play god by creating and destroying life in laboratories and institutions (e.g., abortion, euthanasia, cloning, etc.), by scientists who esteem evolution and scoff at the idea of the Bible’s account of creation
  - Sex god: seen in everything from TV commercials (1 Jn 2:16) to rampant pornography to adultery, homosexuality, rape, and all forms of fornication
  - Materialism. The god of materialism is evidenced by discontentment and striving to buy or steal what we think will make us happy, working 80–100 hours a week, ignoring our spiritual lives, and running ourselves into depletion and depression (Mt 6:24). Ask yourself, “Do I

spend more time reading the sale advertisements and shopping than I spend reading my Bible?

- Stomach. The god of “stomach” is discussed in Philippians 3:19. Do you think this would include gluttony and drunkenness (1 Cor 5:11)? Another self-examining question would be, “Do I spend more time thinking about food than about the Lord?”
- Entertainment. “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (2 Tim 3:4 NIV). “The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure” (Ec 7:4 NIV). The Lord is not against us enjoying our lives for He tells us in Ecclesiastes 9: 7–9 to enjoy our food and drink with a “joyful heart” and to enjoy life with our loved ones and in Deuteronomy 16:13–15 God’s people were instructed to celebrate the harvest feast for seven days, and as they celebrated their “joy will be complete”. The idolatry occurs when we seek pleasure and entertainment more than we seek Him. Ask yourself, “Do I spend more time watching television or movies than I do reading my Bible or praying?”

These gods can be so subtle. Many things like sports, career, and family are not inherently wrong unless you love it more than you love the Lord Jesus. Let’s frame it another way—if any thing, any person, or even a pet has more importance and consumes more time and devotion than our Lord receives, it has become an idol.

If you believe God is showing you some thing or area in your life that preoccupies your desires and thoughts more than your love for God, as evidenced by the amount of time you devote to this thing compared to the time you spend on knowing God, then confess this sin to Him (repent) and ask God to give you grace to turn away from this idol. God is a jealous God and if we sincerely ask Him to show us anything we love too much, He will do it. The question He will put before us will be, “Are you prepared to sacrifice the things dearest to you to know Me intimately and to glorify Me?”

## The Second Commandment

“You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand *generations* of those who love me and keep my commandments” (Ex 20:4–6 NIV).

The Second Commandment is similar to the First Commandment, yet there are clear distinctions between them. The First Commandment deals with choosing the true God, Yahweh, over any false gods or idols. Whereas “the Second Commandment requires us to receive, respectfully perform, and preserve completely and purely all the regulations for religion and worship that God has established in His Word.”<sup>7</sup> It also “forbids our worshipping God with images or in any other way not established in His Word.”<sup>8</sup>

### ***God hates man-made worship***

#### **Man-made worship is worthless**

It is understandable for the human heart to try to imagine what God is like and create some objects to help us in our worship of God. Imagining God is not realistic because man cannot dare trust any image that a finite mind can conjure up, for the built-in habit of fallen minds is to bring God down to the level of man. This is unrealistic and irreverent. Man’s temptation that led to the first sin was “You will be like God” (Gn 3:5 NIV). We must not reduce God to a finite being of our own liking.

“And He said to them, Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you **hypocrites**, as it is written: ‘This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me, but **in vain do they worship Me**, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’ Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men. He was

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<sup>7</sup> The Westminster Shorter Catechism in Modern English.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

also saying to them, You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition...thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that” (Mk 7:6–9, 13 NASB // Mt 15:3, 6–9; Jesus quoting Is. 29:13).

“Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their **self-imposed worship**, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence” (Col 2:23 NIV).

## **God judges people who worship their own way**

Look up the following Scriptures and see how God judged man-made worship:

Gn 4:4–5

Lv 10:1–3

1 Sa 13:7–14

2 Ch 26:16–23

Jer 7:31

1 Cor 11:29f

## **Obey all of Scripture; don't add to or subtract from it**

In Deuteronomy 12:32 NIV, God says “See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it.” Let's examine ways man has added to Scripture.

- Inventing man-made rituals for worship, e.g., crossing ourselves, saying the rosary, etc.
- Using images or relics in worship or prayer, e.g., statues, crucifixes, pictures of God, worshipping the bread of the Roman Catholic mass, etc.

“ Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that is in the

water beneath the earth. And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the LORD your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage” (Dt. 4:15–19 NKJ).

The Scriptures forbid the Christians who lived during Christ’s earthly life to remember Him in the flesh. “Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer” (2 Cor 5:16 NKJ). We must see God, not through our distorted, limited perception but through the looking glass of the Word of God.

- Prayers and adoration addressed to humans that man has deified by giving them divine attributes.<sup>9</sup>

All of these are examples of adding to Scripture, and, therefore, are abominations to God.

It is also very serious to neglect or to weaken any directives from Scriptures.

- A common, yet subtle, neglect is when we enter into worship with a lack of passion, a wandering mind, apathy or in unbelief.
- Some Christian groups are so concerned with maintaining order in worship that they reject all of the commands of Scripture to praise God joyfully, loudly, lifting holy hands, dancing before God, etc.

## ***Worship in spirit and truth***

This Second Commandment, when reframed in the positive sense, says, “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in **spirit** and **truth**” (Jn 4:24 NASB). Yes, it is important for us to learn how God has instructed us in His Word to worship Him.

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<sup>9</sup> See our discussion of the First Commandment, section “Five Things That Are Forbidden,” #3.

Then, we must receive and observe these instructions in their entirety. For an in-depth Bible study on worship, I would recommend a book by John M. Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth*. However, for our purposes let us briefly look at six requirements for worship:

- Worship must be God-centered (not man-centered). (God is Trinitarian).
- Worship must be based on truth (Jn 4:23–24) and faith (Heb 11:6, 21; cf. Ro 14:23).
- It must be done with the right motive, i.e. God’s glory (1 Cor 10:31).
- It must be whole-hearted and without hypocrisy (Mk 7:6).
- It must edify the whole assembly of believers (1 Cor 14).
- It must be orderly (1 Cor 14:40).

If someone asked you, “What is God like to you?” Would you initially think of Christ as meek, gentle, kind and forgiving? These are only a half-truth, and a half-truth when treated as the whole truth becomes a whole falsehood. We must not forget how he drove the businessmen out of the temple with whips (Mk 11:15–17; Jn 2:14–16), gave the religious leaders a verbal lashing (Mt 23; Lk 11:39–54), and cursed the fig tree as a sign of judgment to come on the unfaithful Israel (Mk 11:12–14, 20ff). Jesus said to his disciples that if they had seen Him they had also seen the Father (Jn 14:9). Nehemiah in the Old Testament describes God as “great and awesome” (Ne 1:5 KJV). Yes, God is great and awesome and to the unrepentant; He deals out severe judgment. Thus we see in both the Father and His Son a combination of pity and purity, passion and power, and slowness to anger with severity of judgment, which should produce a deep humility and a daily plea for mercy and forgiveness. For those who have been regenerated (i.e., made alive spiritually) by the Holy Spirit, we know God as a living reality. We do not need any images to aid us in our devotions. We enjoy a daily communion with Christ, which does not require any pictures of Him to help us pray and adore Him, for we relate to Him by faith and not by sight (2 Cor 5:7). As we

worship and imagine God, let us see not only His love and mercy (1 Jn 4:8), but His light and judgment (1 Jn 1:5).

## ***Curses and blessings***

Okay, so we can probably all relate to this neglect of not always honoring and worshipping God with passionate fervor and zeal. So, how does God treat disobedience to this commandment? As we continue on we read that God is a “jealous God,” and will not tolerate those who mock Him or replace Him with their own versions of false gods or a false perception of God. God will bring judgment and punishment on our children and grandchildren through four generations. This severe punishment should motivate us to make sure we do not pass on to our children a false perception of God, either by our teaching or by our example. The penalty inflicted corresponds to the crime: it is not only that God punishes the child for the offense committed by the parents, but that He allows the children to commit the same sins and then deals with them accordingly.

On a more positive note, this commandment comes with an encouraging and gracious promise for its obedience: “Showing mercy unto thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.” “The righteous man leads a blameless life, blessed are his children after him” (Pr 20:7 NIV). God brings great blessings to parents and grandparents who keep His covenant. If we choose to worship God the way He instructs us, we will receive God’s gracious blessings.

## **The Third Commandment**

“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name” (Ex 20:7–17 NIV).

At first glance this appears to be a simple forbidding of profanity and irreverent use of God’s name. However, the phrase “the Name of the Lord our God,” signifies God Himself and every thing and every way through which He is made known to us. We will study the ways God is made known to us a little later.

Sometimes the name of God is used to mean the entire system of divine truth: “We will walk in the Name of the Lord our God” (Mi 4:5) means we will walk in the way of truth and worship which God has instructed. Jesus said, “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world” (Jn 17:6 NKJ), that is, Christ instructed them in the Heavenly doctrine.

### ***What the Third Commandment forbids***

1. Cursing and profanity. In describing the wicked man Paul quotes Psalm 10:7, “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness” (Ro 3:14 NIV). Jesus said, “But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned” (Mt 12:36–37 NIV).
2. Violating oaths taken in God’s name (e.g., perjury). Any time one swears to speak the truth, he is calling on God to witness his words. Thus, perjury is a serious sin, since it is asking God to witness what the “father of lies” has prompted the person to speak (Zc 8:17; Is 48:1).
3. Irreverent use of God’s Name. The following are four areas where God’s Name is commonly used irreverently:
  - irreverent exclamations that are shortened forms or euphemisms of God, e.g., “gosh,” “golly” (see *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary*)
  - praying or reading the Scriptures in an insincere or mechanical way when our hearts are far from Him (Lk 6:46; Is 29:13; Pr 23:26).
  - dishonoring thoughts of God, all needless, flippant, blasphemous mention of Him, any irreverent use of His Word, any grumbling against His providence, any abuse of anything by which He has made Himself known. We come to know God through the following ways:
    - His Word (Ps 138:2);
    - His titles (e.g. Father, Creator, Redeemer, King, Judge, Ancient of Days, Christ or Messiah, Paraclete, which means Advocate);;

His attributes (e.g., holy, just, all-sufficient, eternal, unchangeable, incomprehensible, everywhere present, almighty, all-knowing, wise, good, true);

His laws (e.g., the Ten Commandments);

His works (e.g., creation, providential control of all things);

His names (Ps 29:2; e.g. Elohim, Jehovah-jireh, Jehovah-nissi, Jehovah-raah, Jehovah-rapha, Jehovah-shalom, Yahweh, El Shaddai, Adonai, etc.).

- using God’s name hypocritically, saying we belong to Him, without having really given ourselves over to Him. In Romans 2:23–24<sup>NIV</sup>, Paul criticizes some believers who are bragging about the law yet not obeying the law and he quotes Isaiah 52:5, which says, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.” Jesus tell us, in Matthew 7:22–23 (NKJ), the outcome for hypocrites who even do miracles in His name but who do not really know the Lord, “Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

The last half of this Commandment, “for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name”—emphasizes that it is useless for a man to plead that he meant no harm, or give the excuse that all his friends do it, or that he was merely venting his emotions. Regardless of whether his companions censure him, or the police arrest, or the courts punish him, God will punish him. “As he loved cursing, so let it come to him... As he clothed himself with cursing as with his garment, so let it enter his body like water, And like oil into his bones” (Ps 109:17–18 NKJ).

“If you do not carefully observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, THE LORD YOUR GOD, then the LORD will bring upon you **and your descendants** extraordinary plagues—great and

prolonged plagues—and serious and prolonged sicknesses” (Dt 28:58–59 NKJ).

### ***How should we use God’s name?***

A holy and reverent attitude is required when we use any of God’s names, titles, qualities, regulations, Word, and works. We need to understand what an awesome privilege it is to speak of such a great and holy Name, which is so full of glory and majesty. We must also realize what a privilege it is to have so many ways to learn and discover the Lord. To treat this privilege with apathy and absence of desire to be instructed in those things that relate to the Divine glory is to be guilty of slighting the Most High and showing contempt for His willingness to reveal Himself to us.

### ***Two reasons for using God’s name***

1. To glorify God in our worship and prayer, Jesus taught us to pray to our Father by saying, “hallowed be your name” (Mt 6:9). The following scriptures are more examples where God is glorified when we use His name in prayer and worship: Jn 14:13–14; 15:16; 16:23–24.
2. To edify others and ourselves by teaching and witnessing in his name. Psalms 83:18 NIV is an exhortation to “let them know that you—whose name is the Lord—that you alone are Most High over all the earth” (cf. Lk 24:19, Cleopas witnessing).

May God help us to only use His Name to further His kingdom and to bring Him the glory that is due Him!

## **The Fourth Commandment**

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (Ex 20:8–11 NIV).

## ***The Sabbath is an abiding principle for today***

1. The Sabbath is a creation ordinance (Gn 2:3).<sup>10</sup> Thus the Sabbath was observed over 2500 years before the nation Israel even came into existence (ca. 1491 B.C.). God rested the seventh day, and He expects us to follow his example. After the exodus from Egypt, God commanded Israel to observe the already-existing Sabbath before he gave them the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai (Ex 16:23, 25–26, 29).
2. Old Testament scriptures commanded Gentiles (i.e., aliens or foreigners) to keep the Sabbath (Ex 20:10; Dt 5:14; Nu 15:30–36; Ne 13:16; Is 56:1–8; 66:23).
3. “The Old Testament prophesied that in the New Testament times Gentiles would honor the Sabbath (Is 56:1–8) and that eventually ‘from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before me,’ says the Lord (Is 66:23). There is no time period prior to the resurrection of Jesus Christ that this statement could have been fulfilled. It applies to Gentiles in our era.”<sup>11</sup>
4. Christ recognized the Sabbath when he said that man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath was made **for mankind** (i.e., not just for Jews; Mk 2:27).
5. “The Ten Commandments were written by the finger of God to show their importance, and they were written on stone to show their abiding validity.”<sup>12</sup> It would be arbitrary to delete one of the commands, thus making nine commandments. The Sabbath is also “explicitly called an everlasting or perpetual statute (Ex 31:16–17) since it is a sign of the everlasting covenant of grace (Ezk 20:12, 20; Is 55:3 with 56:1–8; Ex 31:16–17).”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Three other creation ordinances are work (Gn 2:15), marriage (Gn 2:24f), and fruitfulness (Gn 1:28). God has made all four creation ordinances binding upon all mankind.

<sup>11</sup> Phillip Kayser, *The First Day Sabbath*, pp. 6–7.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* Kayser adds that the other two Old Testament signs of the covenant of grace (which are also said to last “forever”) also change into New Covenant forms: circumcision changes into baptism; Passover changes into the Lord’s Supper. Thus it is no surprise that the Jewish seventh day Sabbath changes into the Christian first day Sabbath (p. 16).

## **Changes from Jewish Sabbath to Christian Sabbath**

The New Testament reinforces the keeping of the Sabbath. Christ did not overturn the Old Testament; instead, he overturned the false interpretations of the Old Testament and the additions imposed by the Pharisees (Mt 12:1–14; Mk 2:23–3:6; Lk 13:10–17; 14:1–6; Jn 7:22–24). Christ kept the Sabbath. The apostles also taught Sabbath observance (Heb 4:9), and called the Sabbath, “the Lord’s day” (Rv 1:10).

After Christ’s resurrection the Christian Sabbath is called “the first day Sabbath” (literal translation of *week* in 1 Cor 16:2; Ac 20:7; etc.). In the two passages just cited Christians observed the Sabbath on the first day of the week to celebrate Christ’s resurrection.

“The point of difference between Israel’s Sabbath and the Christian Sabbath is not only in the day, but is the end of the old restrictions.”<sup>14</sup> The first church in Acts met on the evening of the first day, because, for the members still living in the Roman Empire this was a work day. “Obviously, if work on the Lord’s Day was still illegal, the New Testament would have had much to say concerning it. The old law was clearly altered here. The duty now, as stated by St. Paul, was ‘not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is’”<sup>15</sup> (Heb 10:25). The essence of the Sabbath is our rest in Christ, and our growth in the knowledge of God and His Word and the ways we can apply this knowledge to our lives. This rest is not just inactivity, but a rest in His authority and rule over our lives. The Sabbath is a time to celebrate our redemption from a life of sin and eternity in hell and to express gratitude for our new life in Christ.

### **Work six days**

Most of us probably focus almost entirely on the negative of this command—don’t work on Sunday. The fact that we ignore the first half of this command, “six days you shall labor and do all your

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<sup>14</sup> R.J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, p. 153.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

work,” is a product of our society’s emphasis on leisure and avoidance of work whenever possible. God gave us this law as a regulation of man’s time. This began at creation when God, as our example, worked six days and rested the seventh day (Ex 20:11). He also appointed man to work and exercise dominion over the earth (Gn 2:15). The more diligent we are to faithfully work six days, the more we value the rest provided for us on the seventh.

## ***How to keep God’s Sabbath***

### **Proper preparation**

Preparations for this day of worship and rest must be carefully planned and completed on Saturday. God wants to have an intimate conversation with you. Like Christ said to Zacchaeus, “Come down immediately. I must stay at your house today” (Lk 19:5 NIV). Now, how should you prepare to entertain the King of Glory? How will you tune your heart to be ready for him? Preparation is done in two ways:

- Physical preparation: Doing all food preparation ahead of time (Ex 16:23–26); not working or staying up late Saturday night, so that we don’t encroach on the Lord’s Day by sleeping late or making ourselves too sleepy to do what God wants us to do.
- Spiritual preparation: We prepare our souls: by reading the Word (Jn 17:17; Lk 24:32); by meditating on God’s works of creation (Ps 104:24; 124:8), on God’s holiness (Ps 111:9; Ex 15:11), on Christ’s love in redeeming us, and on the glory of heaven (Rv 21); and by praying “that God’s special presence may be with us, that our hearts may burn within us while God speaks, that we may receive the word into meek and humble hearts, and that we may submit to it, and bring forth fruits” (Mt 6:6).<sup>16</sup>

### **Sabbath activity**

The Sabbath is to be **celebrated** (Ex 31:16) and **delighted** in (Is 58:13).

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<sup>16</sup>Thomas Watson, *The Ten Commandments*, p. 79.

Let's take a closer look at four activities we are encouraged to do on the Sabbath.

1. Joining our brothers and sisters in Christ in public worship of God (Heb 10:25) and eating together (Ac 2:46).
2. Spending time alone in private worship, enjoying quality time with our First Love. With the grace He provides, we are able to experience delightful intimacy with Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
3. Works of necessity, like feeding our family and livestock, and anything that cannot be done a day ahead or put off till a day later.
4. Acts of compassion or mercy, like ministering to the sick.

### ***God's blessings for keeping the Sabbath***

The Lord says "Blessed is the man...who keeps the Sabbath without desecrating it" (Is 56:2 NIV). God promises blessings to those who honor and worship him throughout his day. When we set aside this entire day for his honor and worship, he will bless our souls, our possessions, and our posterity.

Is 58:13–14 NKJ, "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, From doing your pleasure on My holy day,<sup>17</sup> And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy day of the LORD honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking your own words,<sup>18</sup> Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth,<sup>19</sup> And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken."

In this scripture God promises a two-fold blessing: confidence in the face of life ("ride on the heights of the land") and enjoyment of covenant blessings ("feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob").

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<sup>17</sup> Is 58:13 BBE, "If you keep the Sabbath with care, not doing your business on my holy day."

<sup>18</sup> Is 58:13 NIV, "If you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words."

<sup>19</sup> Dt 32:13; 33:29; Hab 3:19.

In Isaiah 56:6–7, the Lord promises to give joy to foreigners (Gentiles) who covenant to obey and serve the Lord, to love His name, to worship him, and keep the Sabbath.

### ***Satan’s two favorite temptations***

1. In our modern culture where everyone does what is right in his own eyes, there are extremes ranging from the workaholic who thinks he must work on the Lord’s Day to the person who delights in many different forms of pleasure and entertainment to fill up his Sabbath. Both the workaholic and the person who lives for pleasure face a constant temptation to be too busy for time with God. We must not neglect having time to bask in the presence of the Lord, listening for Him to speak and contemplating the many awesome attributes of our wonderful Father, our loving Savior, and the ever-present Holy Spirit. We must be alert and watch out for any thoughts or activities that Satan would use to distract us and keep us from entering this time of refreshment and renewal of our bodies, souls and spirits.
2. For those who take the Christian Sabbath seriously and set aside the day to honor the Lord, there is the temptation to quibble about regulations or make their no-work emphasis into a proud boast of their ability to fulfill a law. Those who have such pride in their “obedience” also have a tendency to judge others who are not so “obedient”—a sin that Paul speaks out against in Romans 14:5–10. In this passage of scripture, Paul is not implying that there is no distinction of days, which would contradict all the other scriptures that support the Christian Sabbath as an abiding principle (see above sections). “Romans 14:5 can properly be regarded as referring to the ceremonial holy days of the Levitical institution.”<sup>20</sup> Let us be on guard that we do not judge others in the way they spend their Sabbath or become prideful in our good works of Sabbath keeping.

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<sup>20</sup> John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), p. 259.

God designed the day of rest to be a foretaste of heaven, free from all work and focused on worshipping and adoring the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Jesus said of himself, “The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath” (Mk 2:28 NIV). Is Jesus Lord of your Sabbath? If we make Christ the Lord of each Sabbath by spending the day the way God has instructed, we will be equipped with renewed diligence and energy for the work of the next week.

## The Fifth Commandment

“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you” (Ex 20:12 NIV). Paul quotes this commandment in his letter to the church in Ephesus, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—that **it may go well with you** and that you may enjoy long life on the earth” (Eph 6:1–3 NIV; cf. Dt 5:16).

The institution of the family is extremely important to our Heavenly Father. We see from the first four Commandments that we are to honor God with our undivided loyalty (First Commandment), our thought life (Second Commandment), our words (Third Commandment), and our time (Fourth Commandment). We must also honor God in our personal relationships. God begins with our closest, and the first, relationships that we come to recognize, that of our parents. As we study this commandment, we will look at scriptures that stress the responsibility of parents to train their children through education and discipline, children’s responsibility to honor and obey their parents. We will also see what God says about dishonoring father or mother and how we should honor our parents and those who are over us in the Lord.

### ***Dishonoring father or mother is forbidden***

We see in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, disrespect (Dt 27:16), disobedience (Pr 30:17) and neglect of parents were serious sins. Anyone who cursed a parent could be executed (Ex 21:17; Lv 20:9; Dt 21:18). Noah’s son, Ham, was punished for mocking his father (Gn 9:20–27).

Read Romans 1:30 and 2 Timothy 3:2 to see how disobedience to one's parents is grouped with many despicable sins.

## ***Parent's responsibilities toward their children***

The family is the basic social and spiritual unit. When the family life is weak a nation becomes unstable. In the spiritual context, the children learn to respond to God as they learn to respond in obedience, reverence, fear and love to their parents. Parents have a God-ordained responsibility to be their children's pastors and teachers. This responsibility includes:

- Education and training (Eph 6:4; Dt 4:9; 11:19; Ps 78:5; Pr 1:8; 22:6; Lk 6:40)
  - Teach them how God is relevant in every aspect of life
  - Teach them the law of God as the blueprint for morality, inter-personal relationships (i.e., honor their parents, etc.), civil government<sup>21</sup> and economics
- Discipline — Because our children are born with a sin nature, we obviously do not have to teach them to be selfish or naughty or disobedient, but we do have to discipline them when their sinful nature is manifested (Ps 94:12; Pr 3:11–12; 5:23; 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13; 29:15, 17). When we become adults, our parents no longer discipline us, but our Heavenly Father still does (Heb 12:5–11; Dt 8:5).

## ***Children's responsibilities toward parents***

- Honor parents throughout earthly life (Eph 6:2). Joseph, prince of Egypt, bowed with his face to the ground to show honor to his father (Gn 48:12). “Rise in the presence of the

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<sup>21</sup> For a brief yet comprehensive study on Biblical civil government see Robert E. Fugate, “Key Principles of Biblical Civil Government,” (Omaha, NE: Thy Word is Truth Publishers, 2005).

aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD” (Lv 19:32).

- “‘Obey parents in the Lord,’ that is, so far as the commands of parents agree with God’s commands (Eph 6:1). If they command against God, then they lose their right of being obeyed, and in this case we must unchild ourselves.”<sup>22</sup> Thomas Watson also advocates that children “marry in the Lord” (1 Cor 7:39) and disobedience is necessary if parents counsel their child to marry an unbeliever.<sup>23</sup> For more scriptures on obeying parents see: Lk 2:51; Col 3:20; Pr 1:8; 6:20.
- Caring for elderly parents (1 Tim 5:4, 16); cf. Mt 15:3–9// Mk 7:10 (Jesus rebuking the Pharisees for not financially caring for their parents).

If children do not learn to honor and obey their parents, they will have more difficulty submitting and honoring their heavenly Father. When parents fulfill their God-given mandate by training their children to honor and obey their parents and other God-given authorities, they will reap the reward, not only in their children’s early years, but later when their children, as adults, love and care for them when they are now elderly.

## The Sixth Commandment

“You shall not murder” (Ex 20:13 NIV).

Some translations say, “You shall not kill.” It is important to make the distinction between “murder” and “kill.” There are four situations in which killing a human being is not murder:

1. Execution of justice when a civil magistrate sentences a murderer to capital punishment (Gn 9:6; Dt 19:21).
2. Just war (Ezk 14:13, 17; Jdg 11:21; Lk 3:14; 7:8–9). Jesus also said that if his kingdom were of this world his servants would fight to prevent his arrest (Jn 18:36).
3. Accidental slaying, i.e., manslaughter (Dt 19:5).
4. Self-defense (Ex 22:2; Lk 22:36, 38).

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas Watson, *Ten Commandments*, p. 96.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

## **Various forms of murder**

1. Suicide—murder of self
2. Homicide—Murder of another
3. Being an accessory to murder.
4. Abortion and infanticide (Ex 21:22–24). Abortion is murder because the pre-born baby is a human being from the moment of conception. In those rare cases in which an unborn baby physically threatens the life of the mother (e.g., ectopic pregnancy), doctors should attempt to save the life of both patients, mother and baby. Doctors in primitive cultures may not be able to save the life of the baby; in this case the doctor saves the life of the only patient that he is able to save, i.e., the mother.
5. Euthanasia (2 Sm 11:15; 12:9; Jn 19:16). Assisted suicide includes “terminal sedation.”<sup>24</sup>

## **Sins that can lead to murder**

Read Matthew 5: 21–24 and write it in your own words.

Jesus says that cursing another human being in unbridled rage by calling him or her a fool can be the precursor to the sin of murder (Mt 5:22). Jesus is not referring to the actions that are foolish, but to “the fool” who “says in his heart ‘There is no God’” (Ps 53:1 NIV). Such a fool is condemned to hell. Thus, he is not just the victim of attempted murder in this life, but in the world to come. Along with this comes the frequent sin of asking God to “damn” a person. Such an angry outburst is not only the sin of the Third Commandment, but condemns the person to eternity in hell. Now,

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<sup>24</sup> Terminal sedation generally refers to the deliberate termination of a person’s awareness through the use of drugs that induce deep sleep and the withholding or withdrawal of life support technologies such as food and fluids. Terminal sedation places a person in virtually the same state as that of a person under anesthesia prior to and during surgery. However, with terminal sedation, all supportive care is stopped and drugs are administered in an amount sufficient to make the patient unconscious and unaware. When instituted in this manner, terminal sedation results in the death of the patient within a short period of time. This is why the procedure is called terminal—it is intended to produce death. Mark Blocher, *Samaritan Ministries*.

I'm sure most people reading this would object to such a strong position, saying, "It's just an expression, and people using this expletive have no intention of condemning someone to hell. Jesus, however, understood the importance of our words when he said we would give an account for every careless word, and we will be condemned by such words (Mt 12:36–37).

Note that anger and envy often lead to murder (Gn 4:5–6; Eph 4:26; Jon 4:1).

### ***Rules for restraining anger***

1. Pray for, and strive to have, a meek and humble spirit. All arguing, strife and contention begins with pride (Pr 13:10).
2. Ponder the infinite patience and forbearance of God. How often do we give God reason to be angry with us? Yet, "He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities" (Ps 103:10 NKJ).
3. Examine yourself for any prejudice against anyone, for this will cause you to misinterpret their actions and judge their motives. When offended or hurt, assume the offense was due to ignorance and unintentional. Forgive others (Mt 6:12, 14–15; 18:21–35; Col 3:13) and be forbearing (Col 3:12–15; Eph 4:22), letting love cover a multitude of sins (1 Pt 4:8; 1 Cor 13:4–8). However, if the incident continues to cause bitterness in your heart, you need to follow God's plan for reconciliation (Mt 18:15–17). Jesus taught his followers to forgive "seventy times seven" (Mt 18:22). This command is immediately followed by the parable of the unforgiving servant who received the same punishment we will receive if we do not forgive our brother (vv. 23–26).
4. Avoid angry people (Pr 22: 24–25).

### ***Preserving life***

As we have done in the other Commandments where the negative was forbidden, we reframed the command in the positive. The duty implied here is that we should preserve the lives of others by giving them comfort (2 Cor 1:4), compassion (Col 3:12; Ja 2:13), and material necessities (1 Tim 6:17; Pr 11:25).

## The Seventh Commandment

“You shall not commit adultery” (Ex 20:14 NIV).

Immediately after God protects the existence of life by prohibiting murder, He protects the highest relationship of mankind, marriage and the holy function of the procreation of life. The purity of the marriage bed is foundational to living a life of holiness and building a godly family.

### ***God will judge the adulterer and sexually immoral***

“A great wickedness and sin against God” is what Joseph, inspired by the Holy Spirit, called the sin of adultery (Gn 39:9 NKJ). God’s law required the punishment of death for both the adulterer and the adulteress (Lv 20:10). This severe penalty was intended to be a major deterrent to the entire society. God knows if the family is weak, the society will be in danger of collapsing. If the foundation of sexual purity is not strong due to immorality before and in the marriage relationship, the marriage is likely to crumble. In case you are hoping this judgment was only declared in the Old Testament, let’s look at God’s Word in the New Testament. 1 Corinthians 6:9–10 NKJ says, “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.” Not only will they not inherit the kingdom of God, but the wrath of God is coming because of these sins (Col 3:5–6; Eph 5:3–7). Even if this wickedness remains a secret, God will not let this sin go unpunished, for it is written, “God shall judge the adulterers and all the sexually immoral” (Heb 13:4 NIV). If Christ let loose His holy anger when merchants turned the temple into a den of thieves, how much more horrible in His sight must be that wickedness which turns the temple of the Holy Spirit, our bodies, into a filthy cesspool! Jesus describes adultery as not only a sin when it is outwardly committed, but it is also a sin when it remains in one’s thoughts as lust. “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; but I say to you that everyone who

looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Mt 5:27–28 NASB). Impure and lustful thoughts, whether prompted by what one views with his or her eyes or heard with his or her ears, can cause one to commit adultery of the heart. We must continually pray as David did, “Search me, O God, and know my heart... see if there be any hurtful way in me” (Ps 139:23–24 NASB).

## ***Our bodies belong to God***

God commands a surrender of our body as well as our soul for His service. In Romans 12:1 NKJ it says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” Paul explains why this is our “reasonable service.” “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own you were bought at a price” (1 Cor 6:19–20a NIV). “The body is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body” (1 Cor 6:13 NIV). Paul goes on to say, “Your bodies are members of Christ Himself” (1 Cor 6:15 NIV). We must “flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body” (Cor 6:18 NIV). See also Ro 6:12 and Ro 8:13.

## ***Flee sins of immorality***

We are commanded in several of Paul’s epistles to “flee the evil desires of youth” (2 Tim 2:22) and “avoid sexual immorality” (1 Th 4:3–8 NIV; Eph 5:3). There is also great wisdom to be gleaned from the Proverbs to avoid the sins of immorality. Spend some time meditating on these passages in the book of Proverbs. (Pr 2:10–19; 5:1–23; 6:20–35; 7:1–27; 9:13–18; 22:14; 23:26–28; 30:18–20).

## ***Comprehensive battle plan***

With sexual immorality being so common these days and temptations to lust are everywhere, we need a comprehensive battle plan. The following is a strategy to reduce and avoid such sins.

1. Develop a habitual sense of the Lord's presence, knowing that "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the wicked and the good" (Pr 15:3 NKJ). Look up and meditate on the following verses: Pr 5:21; Ps 33:13–15; Jb 31:4; 2 Ch 16:9; Heb 4:13.
2. If you do not have the gift of celibacy, get married (1 Cor 7:2–5, 9; 1 Tim 5:14–15).
3. Monitor input and do not let mud and filth into your eyes and ears or that of your children. "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl" (Jb 31:1 NIV). "Turn my eyes away from worthless things" (Ps 119:37 NIV). Encourage all the men in your life to post the verse on their TV's, computer monitors, or wherever there is visual temptation. Encourage the women in your life to wear only modest apparel, nothing revealing (whether due to lack of clothing or tight-fitting/see-through clothing). Also, eliminate exposure, as much as possible, to foul language, whether it's in songs, movies or even ungodly companions.
4. Set your mind on what the Holy Spirit desires (Ro 8:5 NIV). Be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Ro 12:2 NIV). Look up the following verses, and write them in your own words: 1 Pt 4:7; Col 3:1–10; Heb 8:10; Heb 10:16.
5. Practice sobriety. Those who indulge in drugs and/or alcohol frequently succumb to all kinds of sexual sins.
6. Maintain honest and lawful employment; people with too much free time are more susceptible to sins of lust and drunkenness, which leads to fornication and adultery.
7. Avoid ungodly companions. Peer influence is so important. Unchristian friends can be the biggest cause of drunkenness, drug abuse and immorality (1 Cor 15:33).
8. "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation" (Mt 26:41 NIV). "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith" (1 Pt 5:8–9a NIV). How does Ephesians 6:12 describe our struggle?

## ***Protect your marriage***

As in the other commandments where we reframe the negative prohibition of a sin into a positive command, I will reframe this commandment into a charge and duty to protect and honor the institution of marriage.

To my married sisters in Christ:

1. Respect your husband (Eph 5:33). Let your words and your behavior show respect and honor to your husband and about your husband when speaking to others.
2. Be submissive to your husband (1 Pt 3: 1–2; Ti 2:5,11; Eph 5:22–24; Col 3:18).
3. Love your husband (Ti 2:14). Meet your husband’s sexual needs (1 Cor 7: 2–5).
4. Keep yourself beautiful. Acquiring the inward beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit (1 Pt 3:4–5). Do not neglect outward beauty. In 1 Peter 3:3 (NKJ) it says our beauty should not be merely outward adornment, which infers that outward beautification is acceptable.

To my married brothers in Christ:

1. Love your wife as Christ loves the church (Eph 5:25–33). This includes making her needs as more important than your needs.
2. Provide for her **financially**, i.e. food, clothing, and shelter, etc, **emotionally**, i.e. affection in the bedroom (1 Cor 7: 2–5) and tenderness outside the bedroom, and **spiritually**, i.e. wise Godly leadership that helps her become more like Christ by your teaching and by your example (Eph 5: 26–27).
3. Treat your wife with respect and consideration (1 Pt 3: 7).

## **The Eighth Commandment**

“You shall not steal” (Ex 20:15 NIV).

Love for our neighbor was demonstrated in the Sixth Commandment as we hold sacred our neighbor’s life; in the Seventh Commandment as we protect our neighbor’s marriage; and now in the Eighth Commandment, his property and all that is

due him. As we apply the law of love with respect to our neighbor's belongings, we must be honest and upright in our dealings with one another, and treat others as we want to be treated (Mt 7:12).

## ***God requires faithful stewardship***

Behind the commandment lies the Biblical view of property and ownership, which is stewardship. As Christians, all that we own belongs to God. We are all entrusted with possessions to use and take care of in a way that will please God. Jesus talked about stewardship in the parable of the talents (Mt 25:14–30). The good and faithful servants were the ones who wisely used the abilities and possessions God had entrusted to them in a way that caused an increase. The positive side to this commandment is to protect and cause growth in all that belongs to us and to your neighbor's possessions. It requires proper diligence and hard work to gain adequate provisions and a safe environment for ourselves and our families, so that we won't expose them to lack and neglect due to our wrong choices and idleness. The Lord told us that one day we will all give Him an account of how we managed His resources that were under our stewardship.

## ***Theft—will a man rob God?***

We will study theft that occurred in the Bible and how it can occur in our lives in a very subtle way that we might not even realize. The first sin committed by a human entailed theft: Eve took (stole) the forbidden fruit. The first recorded sin after Israel entered the land of Canaan was that of theft: Anchan stole from among the spoils (Jos 7:21). Stealing is frequently one of the first outward sins committed by children, making this truth a necessary part of their training from earliest childhood. The most severe form of theft occurs when we rob God! “Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me” (Mal 3:8 NIV). Read Malachi 3:8–12 and see how we rob God by not giving back to Him the first tenth (Dt 26:2, 12; Ex 22:29; 23:19; Pr 3:9) of our income (tithe) that He has made it possible for us to earn.

Along with our tithe, God desires one day out of seven to be devoted to Him. Working on the Lord's Day is robbing God of the

time, which ought to be devoted to His worship.<sup>25</sup> Doing the work of ministry and works of mercy does not fall into this category, as Jesus, Himself, healed the sick and did acts of mercy on the Sabbath.

God is also robbed when we withhold from Him the glory that is due Him; and we are spiritual thieves when we receive for ourselves the honor and praise that belong to Him alone. If we give credit to man's free will for what can only be produced by God's free grace, then man gets the credit for choosing Christ. Christ said, "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you" (Jn 15:16 NIV; cf. Jn 6:44). "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us" (1 Jn 4:10 NKJ).

### ***Subtle ways man can rob his neighbor***

1. Unfaithful stewardship—God had severe punishment for the servant who hid the money that the Lord gave him instead of using it to produce more (Mt 25:24–30/Lk 19:20–27). We need to take care of all our belongings, and utilize our abilities with such diligence, so as to provide for our families and ourselves.
2. Idleness is thievery in that the idle person usually expects society to support them. This liberal idea, based on entitlement, is growing in popularity. The following are a few Bible verses that deal with idleness. "And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not" (1 Tim 5:13 NKJ). "For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies" (2 Th 3:11 NAS). "She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness" (Pro 31:27 NKJ).
3. Prodigality is wild living which includes extravagance and wasteful spending of that which God has given us (Lk 15:13–15).

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<sup>25</sup> See the Fourth Commandment

4. Anyone who claims to be a minister of the gospel in order to obtain an easy and comfortable living, but does not have the call of God on his life, is a “thief and a robber” (Jn 10:1 NKJ).
5. It is theft of time when an employee fails to work the number of hours agreed upon by starting late, leaving early, extending the coffee or lunch break, wasting time while “on the clock.” Employee theft also includes: inflated claims for reimbursement of expenses; fraudulent overtime claims; using business property for personal use (without authorization); and taking trivial items or supplies.
6. It is also theft when a tradesman fails to give the agreed upon goods or services for the agreed price. The Old Testament condemns false weights and measures. Write out the following verses in your own words: Dt. 25:13–15; Am 8:5; Pr. 11:1, 18; 16:11; 20:10, 23.
7. Leaving debts unpaid is a common way of robbing the person owed of the use of money to which he is entitled. Scripture condemns this in Romans 13:8 NKJ, where Paul says, “Owe no one anything, except to love one another.” While on the topic of debt, it is thievery when a man transfers property to his wife (or some other relative or friend) just before he becomes bankrupt. It is also wrong if, after declaring bankruptcy, he later prospers and fails to pay his creditors what he owes them.
8. Neglecting to return what you borrowed, or returning it in damaged condition
9. Violating copyright laws, whether by plagiarism, illegally copying music CD’s, pirating software, etc
10. Renters who refuse, or neglect, to replace the owner’s property that they damaged or lost
11. Evasion in paying legitimate taxes (Mt 17:24–27)
12. Electing political candidates because they promise to dole out welfare handouts is supporting theft by means of the ballot box. It is based on coveting.
13. Taxation as the forced redistribution of wealth is unjust; it is “legalized” theft by civil government.
14. Gambling is theft, as people seek to obtain money at others’ expense and without doing honest work for it. (Gambling involves no mutually beneficial exchange of goods and services.)

15. Stealing power—This can occur when politicians “sell” their legislative votes to powerful corporations, unions, wealthy contributors, or foreign nations, rather than legislating justice as defined by God. A recent news reporter was found to be creating “facts” to support his investigative news stories to gain more power at the office.
16. Stealing one’s reputation through malicious gossip. It might seem more fitting as a breach of the ninth commandment, but the effects of a ruined reputation will destroy one’s self-respect, respectability, and eventually his income and perhaps even ministry opportunities.
17. Identity theft, a fairly new form of theft where credit card numbers, Social Security numbers and other personal information are stolen. The damage is not only stolen material possessions but a once-good name can take years to re-establish.

Read these Proverbs and discuss their meanings:

Robbing the poor: Pr 22:16, 22–23;

Getting money through lying and deception: Pr 11:9; 20: 14; 21:5–6;

Unjust or illicit gain: Pr 10:2; 13:11; 15: 27; 16:8; 28:16.

## ***Restitution***

“Produce fruit in keeping with repentance” (Mt 3:8 NIV). If you have stolen from someone, you must make restitution.

God has different amounts of restitution, depending on the severity of what was stolen.<sup>26</sup>

1. Pay back the amount stolen plus a fifth of the value or 120% (Lv 6: 1–5; Nu 5:7). This applies in the case in which the thief voluntarily confesses and returns the unharmed stolen goods.
2. Pay back double what was stolen or 200%. This applies in the case in which the thief was caught and the goods recovered (Ex 22:2–4, 7). It also applies in the case in which there was lost of

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<sup>26</sup> There is a sevenfold compensation mentioned in Proverbs 6:30. Such a payment was not part of God’s law, so it should be understood figuratively, i.e., “the full restitution that he is compelled to make...full and satisfactory, an indefinite number” (Bridges, p. 66; also Fox, p. 234; cf. Kidner, p. 74).

stolen goods due to the borrower's negligence and broken trust (Ex 22:9).

3. Restore four times the value of stolen goods or 400% (Ex 22:1; cf. 2 Sm 12:6; Lk 19:8). This applies in the case in which the stolen goods could reproduce themselves, and they were used for food and clothing (e.g., sheep).
4. Restore five times or 500% (Ex 22:1). This applies in the case in which the stolen goods reproduced themselves and were property that was used to produce income (e.g., oxen).

The New Testament never abrogates these commands.

### ***Goals to prevent theft***

The following are four goals to strive for that will protect us from the sin of stealing:

1. Have an honest job or seeking to engage in an honorable service.
2. When tempted to be selfish, seek ways to bless others.
3. Deal with the lust of envy by giving generously to those in need.
4. Seek the Lord's grace for contentment, considering the vanity of all temporal things, practicing submission to divine providence, meditating on God's promises, practicing moderation in all things, setting your affections on heavenly qualities and reminding yourself of Christ's earthly lot. "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say: 'The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'" (Heb 13:5 NKJ).

## **The Ninth Commandment**

"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor" (Ex 20:16 NIV).

This Commandment, when taken at face value, prohibits perjury or lying under oath. But, like the other Commandments, it states a general principle and all related sins, as well as causes of, and

tendencies toward, the sin are also prohibited. The Eighth Commandment provides for the security of our neighbor's property; now in the Ninth Commandment our neighbor's reputation is to be respected.

### ***Tell the truth***

We are required to obey this Commandment when it is reframed in the positive virtue, to tell the truth. "These are the things you are to do: Speak the truth to each other, and render true and sound judgment in your courts" (Zc 8:16 NIV).

The requirements concerning our speech can be summed up in a short phrase found in Ephesians 4:15 NIV, "Speaking the truth in love." We preserve our neighbor's good name when we restrain from all lies and injurious speech about others. We also reflect the character of God as the Holy Spirit is called the "Spirit of Truth" (1 Jn 4:6 NIV).

### ***The power of the tongue***

This Commandment, like the Third Commandment, deals with our speech. God places great importance on our tongue. "The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit" (Pr 15:4 NIV). Not only can our tongue bring healing, but it has the power to produce life or death. Proverbs 18:21 (NIV) says, "The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit."

Can we gain full control of our speech? Shall we set up a "Tame-the-Tongue Club"? James the brother of Jesus says, "No man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison" (Ja 3:8 NIV). Since we can't tame the tongue, maybe you're thinking God will go easy on us at the final judgment and excuse our idle talk, foul language, or, in this Commandment, our lies.

Mt 12:36–37 NIV, "But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

So, what should our prayer to God be? I frequently implore God to “set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips” (Ps 141:3 NKJ).

## **God forbids lying**

“God detests lying lips” (Pr 12:22 NIV) and lists lying along with other serious sins that describe those who may not enter heaven (Rv 22:15). Let’s look more closely at some different forms of lying:

1. The most obvious, straightforward form in this command is lying under oath in a court of law. This can occur either to bring conviction to an innocent person (Ex 23:1, 7; Pr 19:5; 25:18; 1 Ki 21:15; Dt 19:16–21; Zech 8:17; 5:3–4) or to acquit a guilty person (Is 5:23). “Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent, the Lord detests them both” (Pr 17:15 NIV). God’s law demands that a perjurer receive the penalty due for the crime that he falsely accused the innocent man of committing (Dt 19:16–21).
2. The sin of slander is a serious form of lying. This can be a lie that we made up, or passed on from another source, or the truth that is spoken with the intent to hurt or destroy the reputation of someone. In 1 Timothy 3:11, the Greek word for slander *diabolos* is the same word for “devil.” The slanderer is acting the part of the devil, who is known as “the accuser of our brothers” (Rv 12:10 NIV). In the law of Moses, if someone could show proof that a virgin was slandered (thereby proving her virginity), the slanderer was fined two and a half pounds of silver (Dt 22:19). If we have been slandered, we are in good company for Jesus was also slandered (Mt 11:18–19), as well as the Apostle Paul (Ac 24:5–7). For verses on slander see: Lv 19:16; Ps 56:2; 140:11; Jer 9:4; 18:18; Ro 1:30; 3:8; 1 Cor 5:11; 6:10; 2 Cor 12:20; Eph 4:31; 1Tim 5:14; Tit 2:3; 3:2; 1Pt 3:16.
3. Gossip is similar to slander in that it can be either true or a lie, but unlike slander, it is not always spoken with malicious intent. Gossip is sinful if the person who hears did not need to know it. If he or she is not a part of the solution or a part of the problem, they have no reason for being told. There are many

Bible verses that talk about gossip. Here are a few: Pr 11:13; 16:28; 18:8; 20:19; 26:20, 22.

4. It is lying when one speaks what another person meant in a figurative sense and pretends they meant it in a literal sense, as happened in the case of those who were false witnesses against Christ (Mt 26:60).
5. It is wrong to pass on information that we believe to be true, but due to our ignorance or our own deception, it is actually a lie. Example: the myth of evolution or other theological errors.
6. Lying can even be committed when the person says nothing at all, but his silence can be concealing what would restore his neighbor's reputation that is being destroyed by someone else's lie or accusation or gossip. It is our duty to speak on behalf of our neighbor and restore his damaged reputation if we know information that would clear him or her (Ac 2:15; 1 Sm 19:4–5).
7. Flattery is a form of lying, since the compliment is given for the sake of pleasing him or gratifying his vanity and usually is given with a selfish motive. For more verses on flattery see: Jb 32:21; Ps 78:36; Jude 16; Ps 12:2–3; Pr 26:28; 28:23; 29:5; Ro 16:18; 1 Th 2:5.
8. It is also bearing “false witness” to recommend a friend, or give a positive character reference, when we know him/her to be unworthy of the remarks.

## ***Two situations when God permits lying***

By now you may have asked yourself does God ever permit lying? In Joshua 2, You may recall that Rahab lied to protect the spies in Jericho (Jos 2), and the Egyptian midwives lied to protect the Israelite babies from murder (Ex 1:19f). Thus, during times of war (Jos 8:3–8ff) and in cases of attempted murder, God permitted lying to protect life. For more examples see: 1 Sm 16:1–3; 21:2; 2 Sm 16:16–19; 2 Ki 6:14–20; 2 Ch 18:12–22.

## ***Ways to reduce the sins of the tongue***

How can we keep ourselves from situations where we will be tempted to lie or hurt someone with our speech? Here are a few suggestions:

1. Get the fear of God (Ac 5:11; Dt 19:20).
2. Get love for your neighbor (1Cor 13:5).
3. Don't let peer pressure or crowd mentality influence you. Cliquishness causes prejudice, and a biased opinion make us unwilling to see and receive good from those not in our clique, and make us ready to believe malicious slander.
4. Don't be a busybody; mind your own business and leave others for God to deal with.
5. Be "slow to speak" so that you will have time to examine your thoughts before you speak rashly (Ja 1:19).
6. Ponder your own sinfulness and weakness. Remember to focus on the "plank in your eye" and not the "speck in your neighbor's eye" (Mt 7:3–5 NIV).
7. Avoid spending time with people who have a loose tongue and talk alot about others (Pr 10:19; Ec 5:3). Idle gossip hurts your soul.
8. If others slander you, make sure **you** have not done wrong and **your** conscience is clear toward God and man; then it doesn't matter what others think (Ps 37:6).

In Psalms 15:1–3 NIV, David asks, "Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill?" God answers, "He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who **speaks the truth from his heart** and has **no slander on his tongue**, who does his neighbor no wrong and casts no slur on his fellowman..." Let us, by God's grace be one who dwells in God's presence.

## The Tenth Commandment

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor" (Ex 20:17 NIV).

In the previous Commandments that forbid sinful actions, we discussed the sinfulness of the heart attitude that preceded the action, e.g., anger leading to murder, lust leading to adultery, and envy leading to stealing. Yet, the Lord sees it necessary to clearly move us from actions to attitudes, from forbidden deeds to

forbidden desires. Coveting not only leads to stealing but to many other sins.

Let's look at a couple of examples from Scripture that all began by coveting. David coveted his neighbor's wife (violating the Tenth Commandment), and that led to stealing Bathsheba (breaking the Eighth), then getting her pregnant (breaking the Seventh), then covering his tracks by arranging to get her husband killed (breaking the Sixth) (2 Sm 11). Another example, Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard (1 Ki 21). The next step he framed Naboth by bribing two scoundrels to lie about Naboth (breaking the Ninth), which led to Naboth's judicial murder (breaking the Sixth) and his vineyard being forfeited to the crown—actually legally stolen (breaking the Eighth). There are many more examples where coveting and lusting after material wealth and possessions led to stealing. Christ Himself teaches and warns us against serving the god of money (Mt 6:24; Lk 16:13). We are also told “the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim 6:10 NIV). We will focus now on the envy and coveting that can so easily lead to many other sins.

### ***Coveting from God's perspective***

God has clearly shown us in the Old Testament what a serious sin coveting is. Now let us look at what Jesus and the apostles say about coveting. No person who is given to coveting will inherit the kingdom of heaven (1 Cor 6:10; Eph 5:5). Christians are furthermore commanded to have no association with any so-called brother or sister who is given to coveting (1 Cor 5:10–11). For other New Testament passages that deal with coveting see: Ac 20:33; 2 Cor 9:5; Ro 7:7–8; 13:9.

### ***Signs and symptoms of covetousness***

When a doctor tells someone that he has a serious disease, he wants to know the signs and symptoms of this condition. What are the manifestations of this condition? We need to know what covetousness looks like so we can detect it in its early stages and deal with it. Let's examine some of the ways this serious sin affects our thoughts, time, energy, conversation, and our heart.

1. Let's examine your thought life. Do you find yourself thinking more about something you want to buy than about God and His love, provision, and faithfulness? A covetous person is always planning and scheming about how he may acquire something he desires.
2. A person may be covetous when he or she takes more time and energy for acquiring things on earth than treasures in heaven. He will exhaust every possibility, deprive himself of necessary food and sleep, push himself to the limit of his strength, but spend little time in prayer or in the Word and have no energy for church functions, or for serving Christ. Jesus said in Matthew 25:35–40 that when we feed the hungry, show hospitality to the stranger, take care of the sick, or visit those in prison, we are doing it for Him. Are you neglecting the things of eternity? Do you find a rational excuse why you can't serve? Are you unwilling to volunteer in most situations, or do you help out only if it is convenient and won't expend too much time or energy? We must determine where our heart is. Are we motivated to give back to God because we have received so much from Him? Is our number one desire to bring God glory by our works of service, motivated by a heart of love for our Master?
3. Another symptom of covetousness is found in one's conversation. Is your speech mostly about the world? Jesus said that our mouth speaks out of the overflow of our heart (Mt 12:34 NIV).
4. Coveting begins in one's heart. Jesus lists coveting with other sins that come from within a man and defile him (Mk 7:20–23). This may start by what we see or be accompanied by pride, "lust of the eyes," the "cravings of sinful man," and the "boasting of what he has and does" (1 Jn 2:16 NIV), but if we allow ourselves to ponder these cravings it corrupts our heart. We begin to love the things of this world. "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 Jn 2:15 NIV). Jesus said, "You cannot serve both God and money." "Either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other" (Mt 6:24 NIV). Are we focused on acquiring a lot of things? Jesus said that the "pagans run after all these things, [what we will eat, drink and wear] and

your heavenly Father knows that you need them” (Mt 6:32 NIV).

We must reflect on our thoughts and speech, analyze how we spend your time and energy, and determine the degree of heart involvement. Ask God to help you see where your heart is (Mt 6:21). Do you spend more time reading the newspaper or watching television than you spend reading your Bible? Do you enjoy going to movies or shopping for clothes more than praying or worshipping? If so then your love for the world is hindering your love relationship with Jesus. God wants your repentance and surrender of all you are and all you have to His Lordship.

### ***Degrees of covetousness***

The first degree is a brief hint of envy that is without clear thoughts. Scripture calls this “intent of the heart.” “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gn 6:5 NKJ).

The next degree is when one entertains these thoughts with a measure of complacency and delight in the object, often times more drawn to this person or thing more than anything else like it. Then we begin to silence or ignore our conscience, while our desires begin bribing our minds with promises of pleasures and profits. Our mind rationalizes why we “need” this object or person. Our judgment becomes corrupted to the point of approving of this sin. After we give approval, we then decide to obtain what we desire and look for an opportunity or means to get it.

The Tenth Commandment forbids each of these degrees, and if it moves to the act, it falls under another sin. Our great and sovereign God proclaims His rights over the hidden realm of our thoughts and desires. We may think they are not so bad, since they escape the notice and punishment of men, yet they do not escape the scrutiny and sentence of God. He sees the tiniest breath of sinful desire as bright as the midday sun is to us. We must not be content with outward conformity to God’s Law. We must continually strive to keep our hearts in purity and holiness before God.

## ***Contentment—the antidote for covetousness***

As in the other Commandments, we reframed them in the positive. To do this to the Tenth Commandment is to recognize that we are called to contentment. Let us look at four antidotes for covetousness.

1. We have the realization of, and faith in, our loving Lord's promise to always be with us. He gives us strength to endure times of need and faith to believe that He will provide as we "seek first His kingdom" (Mt 6:33). When Paul was in prison, he wrote this testimony to the Philippian Christians:

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength (Phil 4:11–13 NIV).

Paul exhorts his Hebrew brothers, "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you'" (Heb 13:5). Paul also talks about contentment in his letter to Timothy: "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that" (1 Tim 6:6–8).

2. We have confidence that God has sovereignly ordered our circumstances; He knows what conditions are best for us. "Give me neither poverty nor riches, give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, Who is the Lord?" Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God" (Pr 30:8–9 NIV).
3. We will all give an account to God for what we have done with our possessions. God will ask us, "Have you honored me with your substances? Where are the poor you have fed and clothed" (Mt 25:35–36)? Contentment should come easier when we consider that the less we have, the less accountability will be required of us.

4. The fourth remedy for covetousness is to covet eternal things more. We are commanded in 1 Cor 12:31(KJV) and 1 Cor 14:1 to “covet earnestly spiritual gifts.” In 1 Cor 14:39 (KJV), we are told to “covet to prophesy.” It is my conviction that if we desire to know God intimately, seek him with all of our heart and soul (Ps 42:1–2), desire to move in the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:7–10; Ro 12:6–8) and long for our lives to bring God glory, we will become more heavenly minded and find that the things of earth have less attraction because we desire only more of Jesus.

When we struggle with envy and covetousness, we can take encouragement from Asaph,<sup>27</sup> the author of Psalm 73. He shares his struggle with envy and coveting the outward prosperity of his neighbors. As we progress through the Psalm we discover his antidote for covetousness. He begins by describing his confusion and how he nearly “lost his foothold” (v. 2). “For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.” He seemed to think that the unbelievers had no problems. He wrongly associated the bad things happening to him with a lack of God’s goodness and faithfulness. He observed the people worshipping the success of those who were prosperous (v. 10). He thinks that he has kept his heart pure for nothing. He is pathetically self-centered when he wonders if his pledge to remain innocent was a big waste of time (v. 13). These sinful feelings plague him all day long (v. 14). He knows if he speaks his feelings aloud it would betray his brothers in God’s family (v. 15). Confused and feeling oppressed he enters the sanctuary of God. While worshipping in the presence of God he understands and is enlightened (v. 17). He begins to realize that these people who are successful in the world’s eyes will be destroyed and cast down by the Lord (vv. 18–20). (See also Mt 7:23; Dn 12:2). He confesses his bitterness, senselessness and ignorance that he had been offering to the Lord (vv. 21–22). He realizes how God has been holding his hand, guiding him, and

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<sup>27</sup> Besides writing twelve of the Psalms, Asaph was a Levitical singer, an “assigned recorder” (2 Ki 18:37), assigned to give thanks to the Lord. He played many instruments, including the “loud-sounding cymbals” (1Ch 16:5) and also had the duty of prophesying and worshipping before the ark continually (1 Ch 16:37).

preparing to take him into His glory (vv. 23–24). “Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (vv. 25–26 NIV). We must see what great wealth we have in Christ, and we will rest in perfect contentment when we remain near to God.

## **The Blessings of Obedience**

Throughout our study of the Ten Commandments, we have looked at the blessings of obedience and promises that accompany the Commandments. I’m sure that, for those of you who love the Lord and desire to please Him, it would be a great honor to be called “great in the kingdom of heaven.” In Matthew 5:18–20, Jesus says, “Whoever does and teaches them [the law or commandments], he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

God also promises that if we take pleasure and delight in His law, meditating on it day and night, we will prosper in whatever we do (Ps 1:2–3). If we are careful to obey the law, we will be successful wherever we go (Josh 1:7f). In Deuteronomy 28:1–14 God promises covenant blessings on every aspect of our life, e.g., our family, business, and possessions. This is not only a blessing for individuals, but to Christians corporately as God’s covenant-keeping people. “He will set you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor, and that you may be a holy people to the LORD your God, just as He has spoken” (Dt 26:19 NKJ). By reading verses 17–18 of this chapter, it is plain to see that such an awesome blessing is the reward for the obedience of God’s people corporately. May all who read this book, pray the following prayer with me:

Lord, give us a heart that longs for more of You; a heart that finds great pleasure in Your Word, meditating on it day and night and hiding it in our hearts. Help us by your unending mercy and grace to keep all Your commands. Guide us as we teach these commandments to others in obedience to your great commission to disciple the nations. God, we want to see your Kingdom, Your governmental rule, come on earth as it is in heaven. For to You belong all power and all the glory, now and through all eternity. Amen



# **Biblical Worldview Resources**

by Robert E. Fugate, Ph.D.

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“Having served on Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore’s Ten Commandments Legal Defense Team, I read with great appreciation Vonne Fugate’s *The Ten Commandments: From Tablets of Stone into the Hearts of God’s People*. Her book is filled with insights about the meaning of the Decalogue and its application to our lives. I particularly appreciated her reminder that we ignore the other side of the Sabbath commandment — not only are we to rest on the Sabbath; we are to work the other six days. With refreshing insight she suggests that the Sabbath is actually a foretaste of our sabbath-rest in heaven. Her explanation of the true meaning and implications of the command against bearing false witness is particularly helpful. I strongly recommend this book. Those who are not well-versed on the Ten Commandments will find this book an excellent introduction. Those who believe they thoroughly understand the Ten Commandments will be amazed at how much they will learn from reading Vonne’s book.” Lt. Col. John Eidsmoe, J.D.

### About the Author



Vonne Fugate is a native of Nebraska. She was saved and began a radical relationship with Jesus Christ during high school, when she experienced the presence and power of God.

Vonne currently lives in Omaha with Robert, her husband of over forty years, who is a pastor and a free-lance writer specializing in Biblical worldview.

Robert and Vonne have three sons and one daughter, all of whom they home-schooled. All four have graduated from college and are serving the Lord in their respective careers. All are married and currently have ten children.

Besides working as a medical researcher and investigator, Vonne enjoys writing, teaching women’s Bible studies, and mentoring women.