



*Another Old Gray Dog Study*

by

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*Dedicated to Bruce Williams, who joined the Church Triumphant in 2004; and to all the saints who resist the temptation to teach the theology of accommodation from a loose-leaf Bible, but faithfully equip God's children with the sound doctrines of TULIP.*

*To go against the dominant thinking of your friends, of most of the people you see every day, is perhaps the most difficult act of heroism you can perform.*

Theodore White

**The 10 Commandments, 21st century style...**

"Excuse me, Sir."



**"Is that you again, Moses?"**

"I'm afraid it is, Sir."

**"What is it this time, Moses; more computer problems?"**

"How did you guess?"

**"I don't have to guess, Moses. Remember?"**

"Oh, yes; I forgot."



**"Tell me what you want, Moses."**

"But you already know, Sir. Remember?"

"Moses!"

"Sorry, Sir."

**"Well, go ahead, Moses; spit it out."**

"Well, I have a question, Sir. You know those ten 'things' you sent me via e-mail?"

**"You mean the Ten Commandments, Moses?"**

"That's it. I was wondering if they are important."

**"What do you mean 'if they are important,' Moses? Of course, they are important. Otherwise, I would not have sent them to you."**



"Well, sorry, Sir, but I lost them. I could say the dog ate them; but, of course, you would see right through that."

**"What do you mean you 'lost them'? Are you trying to tell me you didn't save them, Moses?"**

"No, Sir; I forgot."

**"You should always save, Moses."**



"Yes, I know. You told me that before. I was going to save them, but I forgot. I did forward them to some people before I lost them though."

**"And did you hear back from any of them?"**

"You already know I did. There was the one guy who said he never uses 'shalt not.' May he change the words a little bit?"

**"Yes, Moses, as long as he does not change the meaning."**

"And what about the guy who thought your stance was a little harsh, and recommended calling them the 'Ten Suggestions,' or letting people pick one or two to try for a while?"



**"Moses, I will act as if I did not hear that."**

"I think that means 'no.' Well, what about the guy who said I was scamming him?"

**"I think the term is 'spamming,' Moses."**

"Oh, yes. I E-mailed him back and told him I don't even eat that stuff, and I have no idea how you can send it to someone through a computer."

**"And what did he say?"**



"You know what he said. He used Your name in vain. You don't think he might have sent me one of those -- err -- plagues, and that's the reason I lost those ten 'things', do you?"

**"They are not plagues; they are called 'viruses,' Moses."**

"Whatever! This computer stuff is just too much for me. Can we go back to those stone tablets? It was hard on my back taking them out and reading them each day, but at least I never lost them."

**"We will do it the new way, Moses; using computers!!"**

"I was afraid you would say that, Sir."



**"Moses, what did I tell you to do if you messed up?"**

"You told me to hold up this rat and point it toward the computer."

**"It's a mouse, Moses, not a rat. Mouse! Mouse!  
And did you do that?"**

"No, I decided to try calling technical support first. After all, who knows more about this stuff than you? And I really like your hours. By the way, Sir, did Noah have two of these mice on the ark?"

**"No, Moses."**

"One other thing. Why did you not name them 'frog s' instead of 'mice,' because did you not tell me the thing they sit on is a pad?"



**"I did not name them, Moses. Man did, and you can call yours a frog if you want to."**

"Oh, that explains it. I bet some woman told Adam to call it a mouse. After all, was it not a woman who named one of the computers 'Apple?'"

**"Say good night, Moses."**

"Wait a minute, Sir. I am pointing the mouse, and it seems to be working. Yes, a couple of the ten 'things' have come back."

**"Which ones are they, Moses?"**



"Let me see.

*'Thou shalt not steal from any grave an image' and  
'Thou shalt not uncover Thy neighbor's wife.'"*

**"Turn the computer off, Moses.  
I'm sending you another set of stone tablets."**

They *are* God's Ten *Commandment s*;  
Not His Ten *Suggestions!*

## The Old Gray Dog Ponders . . . The Ten Commandments

*We have staked the whole of all our political institutions upon the capacity of mankind for self-government, upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to control ourselves, to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God.*

James Madison

The Ten Commandments are the essence of the eternal law of God which transcends all cultures and times. God's law is the expression of His holy character. In this sense, the law of God is eternal and immutable, just as God is eternal and immutable.

*For the right understanding of the Ten Commandments, these rules are to be observed: That the law is perfect, and binds everyone to full conformity in the whole man unto the righteousness thereof, and unto entire obedience forever; so as to require the utmost perfection of every duty, and to forbid the least degree of every sin. That it is spiritual, and so reaches the understanding, will, affections, and all other powers of the soul; as well as words, works, and gestures. That one and the same thing, in divers respects, is required or forbidden in several commandments. That as, where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden; and, where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded: so, where a promise is annexed, the contrary threatening is included; and, where a threatening is annexed, the contrary promise is included. That: What God forbids, is at no time to be done;: What he commands, is always our duty; and yet every particular duty is not to be done at all times. That under one sin or duty, all of the same kind are forbidden or commanded; together with all the causes, means, occasions, and appearances thereof, and provocations thereunto. That: What is forbidden or commanded to ourselves, we are bound, according to our places, to endeavor that it may be avoided or performed by others, according to the duty of their places.* Westminster Larger Catechism, Answer 99

The law is God's wonderful gift to humanity. God designed His creation to operate in accordance with His laws, both physical and moral. For this reason, when we obey God's commands, our lives are abundant and productive.

Because God gave Moses some 631 laws, (Orthodox Jews will point out that the sum of these numbers, 6+3+1=10.) believers today are often confused as to which laws still apply. These Mosaic laws can be divided into three categories:

1. Moral law;
2. Ceremonial (rituals pertaining to proper worship);
3. Civil law (criminal and social regulations for the nation of Israel).

The Ten Commandments are the basic moral principles of God's law. As such, they are binding on all people in all cultures for all time.

***“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*”**

Matt. 5: 17-19

The civil laws were to govern Israel as a theocratic state. The ceremonial laws were fulfilled by Christ, the *Lamb of God*. The moral law of God, as expressed in the Ten Commandments is as true and relevant today as it was when God gave them to Moses.

The numbering of the Ten Commandments varies between Orthodox Jews, and among Christian communities. For example, Orthodox Jews count Ex. 20:2,

***“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. . .”***

as the First Commandment, and then combine what Christians would call the Second and Third Commandments as number Two. The overall content is the same. This study will be using the traditional Christian numbering of the Commandments.

*Holy Father, from whom all good proceedeth, let Thy holy will be every day more firmly established within us. O God, we believe –That Thou rulest all things in wisdom and righteousness; That Thou has called us to be Thy obedient servants; That Thou dost rightfully demand of us complete subservience to Thy will; That in Jesus Christ, Thou hast shown us the way of salvation. Help Thou our unbelief! Give us greater patience in our Hope, make us more trusting of Thy grace and more constant in our love for Thee and for our neighbor. In Jesus' name  
we pray  
.Amen*

## The First Commandment

### ***Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.***

Exodus 20: 3

*What great cause would have been fought and won under the banner, "I stand for consensus?"*  
Margaret Thatcher

God is not interested in being *inclusive*. *Christian* faith is *not* a matter of *opinion*; it is a matter of *fact*. *God is God*. There are no other options. God's claim on His people was to be their highest priority. He tolerates no compromises or accommodations.

*Question 104: What are the duties required in the first commandment?*

*Answer: The duties required in the first commandment are, the knowing and acknowledging of God to be the only true God, and our God; and to worship and glorify him accordingly, by thinking, meditating, remembering, highly esteeming, honoring, adoring, choosing, loving, desiring, fearing of him; believing him; trusting, hoping, delighting, rejoicing in him; being zealous for him; calling upon him, giving all praise and thanks, and yielding all obedience and submission to him with the whole man; being careful in all things to please him, and sorrowful when in anything he is offended; and walking humbly with him.*

*Question 105: What are the sins forbidden in the first commandment?*

*Answer: The sins forbidden in the first commandment are, atheism, in denying or not having a God; idolatry, in having or worshiping more gods than one, or any with or instead of the true God; the not having and avouching him for God, and our God; the omission or neglect of anything due to him, required in this commandment; ignorance, forgetfulness, misapprehensions, false opinions, unworthy and wicked thoughts of him; bold and curious searching into his secrets; all profaneness, hatred of God; self-love, self-seeking, and all other inordinate and immoderate setting of our mind, will, or affections upon other things, and taking them off from him in whole or in part; vain credulity, unbelief, heresy, misbelief, distrust, despair, incorrigibleness, and insensibleness under judgments, hardness of heart, pride, presumption, carnal security, tempting of God; using unlawful means, and trusting in lawful means; carnal delights and joys; corrupt, blind, and indiscreet zeal; lukewarmness, and deadness in the things of God; estranging ourselves, and apostatizing from God; praying, or giving any religious worship, to saints, angels, or any other creatures; all compacts and consulting with the devil, and hearkening to his suggestions; making men the lords of our faith and conscience; slighting and despising God and his commands; resisting and grieving of his Spirit, discontent and impatience at his dispensations, charging him foolishly for the evils he inflicts on us; and ascribing the praise of any good we either are, have, or can do, to fortune, idols, ourselves, or any other creature.*

*Question 106: What are we specially taught by these words before me in the first commandment?*

*Answer: These words before me, or before my face, in the first commandment, teach us, that God, who sees all things, takes special notice of, and is much displeased with, the sin of having any other God; that so it may be an argument to dissuade from it, and to aggravate it as a most impudent provocation: as also to persuade us to do as in his sight,: Whatever we do in his service.*

Westminster Larger Catechism

Belief about deity has passed through three stages:

1. Polytheism: There are many gods.
2. Henotheism: A nation/tribe/ethnic group adopts one god as its own, but not to the exclusion of other deities. This is still a widely held view. You can hear many in the Church today say something like:

*"I'm a Christian; I believe in one God, but I can't say that Christianity is the ONLY way."*

3. Monotheism: There is only one God for all creation.

If our religious faith is to have any influence in our lives, we must get to this stage. Unless and until we have one God, one Supreme Authority, our lives will be torn by conflicting values and competing priorities. (This is the danger of a *theology of accommodation*.)

This is why the Ten Commandments begins with God insisting that there can be no other gods in our belief system.

The Ten Commandments provides a *moral ethic* for all humanity. It has two divisions:  
1-4 concern our relationship with God;  
5-10 concern our relationship with others.

***"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."***

Matt. 22: 36-40

#### *The Authority to command obedience*

***Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"***

***God said to Moses, "I am who I am . This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.' "***

***God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD , the God of your fathers-the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob-has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.***

Exodus 3: 13-15

God is a *person*; not a philosophical abstraction. He has a name: YHWH. Since the Hebrew language did not use vowels, this name came to be translated first as *Jehovah*, and later as *Yahweh*. There is no difference in meaning between these two. By His name, God is telling us about Himself:

*I am who I am.*

*I cause to be what I cause be.*

*I will be who I will be.*

This is God's *covenant* name with His people. It describes His relationship with us.

1. He is *sovereign*. He requires nothing from humanity in order to accomplish His purpose.

***I know that you can do all things;  
no plan of yours can be thwarted.***

Job 42:2

2. He reveals Himself.

**... since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.**

Romans 1: 19-20

*God's general revelation is greater than His special revelation in the following two ways: it is older, and it influences 100% of mankind instead of just a small percentage!*

Don Richardson, in his book *Eternity in Their Hearts*

3. He is trustworthy. What He plans, He can and will accomplish.

YHWH is the *redemption* name of God. As such, it directs us to certain attributes of God.

1. He is *holy*.
2. He hates and judges sin.
3. His love for His children is unmerited.

#### *The Obligations of the First Commandment*

God's first commandment to His people is to recognize Him as the one, true God. This recognition must be both *intelligent* and *sincere*. As such, it entails definite obligations:

1. *Knowledge*. We must take every opportunity to learn more about God.

***But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find Him if you look for Him with all your heart and with all your soul.***

Deut. 4: 29

***When I fed them, they were satisfied;  
when they were satisfied, they became proud;  
then they forgot Me.***

Hosea 13: 6

When we love someone, the most natural desire is to learn all we can about that person. As we learn more about God, we grow in grace. When we neglect this, we deprive ourselves of the experience of His blessings.

2. *Faith*. This is not a *condition*; it is a *response*.

***Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. . . And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.***

Hebrews 11: 1,6

We grow spiritually as we believe that God is who He says He is and that we are who He has made us to be.

3. *Confession*. God was not ashamed to call us; we must not be ashamed to confess Him.

***That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.***

Romans 10: 9

**Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.**

Romans 12: 1

The First Commandment calls for verbal, public, acknowledgment that the God of the Bible is *our* God; and it calls for a *holy* lifestyle which demonstrates that we are His people.

4. Responsibilities. There are specific things we can do to enhance our experience of God’s blessings and build up our relationship with Him.

a. Worship God. Make each Sunday your personal, public, acknowledgment of your obedience to the First Commandment.

***... let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.***

Heb. 10: 22-25

b. Trust. God has a wonderful plan for your life.

***You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.***

John 15:16

Enjoy life as one of God’s Redeemed.

***Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus***

Romans 8: 1

Our trust is based on the promises of God; not on our good intentions.

c. Invocation. Seek God’s help in every aspect of life.

***For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.***

Hebrews 4: 15-16

There is no difficulty we will ever encounter that can’t be confronted more securely with the power of Christ.

d. Thanksgiving. This is the greatest confession of faith.

**. . . give thanks in all circumstances,  
for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.**  
I Thess. 5: 18

When the one, true God of the Bible is *our* only God, then we can have the confidence to say *thank you* in all circumstances.

**. . . And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.**  
Romans 8: 28

*Morality is rooted in Theology*

What we hold supreme in our lives will mold and color all our behavior. If our Christian faith is to have influence in our daily living, we must be sure that we understand the God of Scriptures correctly. The best way to do this is to *study the Bible*. Make sure you study it systematically:

Apart from Christ, everyone is dead in sin (Eph. 2: 1,5); that's  
***total depravity.***

God unconditionally chooses those who will serve Him (Eph 1: 4; 2: 8-10); that's  
***unconditional election.***

Christ died on the cross to pay the price for the sins of the chosen (Col.1: 21-22); that's  
***limited atonement.***

The Holy Spirit draws all the chosen to Christ (John 6: 37,44); that's  
***irresistible grace.***

All the chosen will go to Heaven (John 10: 28-29); that's  
***perseverance of the saints.***

Recently, I was watching a rerun of *Dharma and Greg*. Greg was "trying to find himself" in this episode, so he was reading all of Dharma's spiritual self-help books.

"Now I am going to read the Bible," Greg says.

"Let me save you some time," replies Dharma. "First half: Don't tick off God; second half: Be nice to everybody."

Many claim to be teaching the Bible; but if they are not teaching it *systematically* so that you see how each passage fits into God's Plan of Salvation, then you might as well go with Dharma's condensed version.

In order to obey the First Commandment, there are two things we can start to do right now:

1. *Give as much of yourself as you can to as much of God as you understand.*

If you do this each day, your knowledge of God will grow and your obedience to God will increase.

2. *Discipline yourself to avoid God-demeaning phrases.*

"I was lucky." (*Luck* implies that God was not involved.)

"Thank heavens (or goodness). This sounds nice, but denies God the glory. Thanking the *heavens* can also suggest that you believe in astrology.

*In obedience to the First Commandment, we want to avoid any suggestion that there are powers other than God which control our destiny.*

***In Him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will, we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of His glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of His glory.***

Eph. 1: 11-14

*Sovereign God, forbid that I should look upon the work of Thy hands and give no thought to Thee the Maker.*

*Give me grace this day to recognize the leading of Thy Spirit within me and to listen most attentively to all that Thou has to say to me.*

*Let not the noises of the gods of this world ever so confuse me that I cannot hear Thee speak.*

*May I never deceive myself as to the meaning of Thy Commands; and so let me in all things obey, so that my life gives glory to Thee.*

*In Jesus' name I pray.*

*Amen*

### For Discussion

1. Why can Christians really say that Christ is the *only* way to salvation?
2. Do you believe that God is *sovereign* or do you believe humans have *free will*? Why can't both these be true?
3. Is humanity *basically good* or *totally depraved*?
4. Does God place any conditions on His grace?
5. Which do you believe to be true: a. Christ died to make salvation possible for all people; or, b. Christ died to redeem the elect? Why?
6. Is God dependent on us to work His will?
7. Can a Christian lose his salvation?

## 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***

*To go against the dominant thinking of your friends, of most of the people you see every day, is perhaps the most difficult act of heroism you can perform.*

Theodore White

The point of this Commandment is to teach us that whenever we substitute a *thing* for the *Person* as the object of our work and worship we are committing idolatry.

*Question 108: What are the duties required in the second commandment?*

*Answer: The duties required in the second commandment are, the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God has instituted in his Word; particularly prayer and thanksgiving in the name of Christ; the reading, preaching, and hearing of the Word; the administration and receiving of the sacraments; church government and discipline; the ministry and maintenance thereof; religious fasting; swearing by the name of God, and vowing unto him: as also the disapproving, detesting, opposing, all false worship; and, according to each one's place and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry.*

*Question 109: What are the sins forbidden in the second commandment?*

*Answer: The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, all devising, counseling, commanding, using, and anywise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God himself; tolerating a false religion; the making any representation of God, of all or of any of the three persons, either inwardly in our mind, or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness of any creature: Whatsoever; all worshiping of it, or God in it or by it; the making of any representation of feigned deities, and all worship of them, or service belonging to them; all superstitious devices, corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, or taking from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves, or received by tradition from others, though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretense: Whatsoever; simony; sacrilege; all neglect, contempt, hindering, and opposing the worship and ordinances which God has appointed.*

*Question 110: What are the reasons annexed to the second commandment, the more to enforce it?*

*Answer: The reasons annexed to the second commandment, the more to enforce it, contained in these words, For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments; are, besides God's sovereignty over us, and propriety in us, his fervent zeal for his own worship, and his revengeful indignation against all false worship, as being a spiritual whoredom; accounting the breakers of this commandment such as hate him, and threatening to punish them unto divers generations; and esteeming the observers of it such as love him and keep his commandments, and promising mercy to them unto many generations.*

Westminster Larger Catechism

#### How Not to Worship

***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. . .***

The First Commandment taught us *Who* we are to worship.

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.  
"You shall have no other gods before me. . .

The Second Commandment teaches us *how not* to worship: no *idols*.

***You saw no form of any kind the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire. Therefore watch yourselves very carefully. . .***

Deut. 4: 15

***God is spirit and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."***

John 4: 24

Idols pose an interesting paradox. On the one hand, they are ridiculous. How could any rational person think that an item made with human hands could be divine?

***He cut down cedars,  
or perhaps took a cypress or oak.  
He let it grow among the trees of the forest,  
or planted a pine, and the rain made it grow.  
It is man's fuel for burning;  
some of it he takes and warms himself,  
he kindles a fire and bakes bread.  
But he also fashions a god and worships it;  
he makes an idol and bows down to it.  
Half of the wood he burns in the fire;  
over it he prepares his meal,  
he roasts his meat and eats his fill.  
He also warms himself and says,  
"Ah! I am warm; I see the fire."  
From the rest he makes a god, his idol;  
he bows down to it and worships.  
He prays to it and says,  
"Save me; you are my god."***

Isa. 44: 14-17

On the other hand, idols are as natural to human nature as sin. We carry a rabbit's foot for luck, wear our lucky sox when we compete, play our lucky numbers when we gamble. When it comes to religion, attention deficit worshipers need aids to help them focus.

There are dangers to idolatry in worship. They transform a means into an end. If a certain liturgy is not used, we aren't worshipping. If a certain form of polity is not used, we aren't really governing ourselves as a church. If we don't have a certain style of building, we aren't really a church.

We are practicing *idolatry* whenever we substitute a *thing* for *the Person*.

God Must Be No. 1

***You shall not bow down to them or worship them. . .***

*The greatest sin a man can commit is to refuse to render to God the administration and obedience which are His due, or to transfer to the creature the allegiance and service which belong to Him.*

Charles Hodge

***For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.***

***For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.***

***Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised.***

***Amen.***

Romans 1: 20-25

There are no other deities, but this world is filled with gods demanding, and getting, our worship. Sinful behavior finds its genesis in idolatry.

***"Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. . .***

Matt. 10: 37-39

We will soon see that we are to honor our parents; but putting family before God is to make an idol of them. One of the most efficient, productive people I have ever known was a mentor of mine in Philadelphia. I asked him his secret.

"I keep things in the order God created them. First, He made me a man. I must take care of my personal human needs first; then, He gave me a family; I must see to their needs second; finally, He called me to the ministry (we all have callings; the point is vocation comes third) When I keep my priorities in the order God created them, I can get everything done. When I let those priorities change, nothing gets done very well.

When we let family, or job become the thing to which we bow down, we are guilty of idolatry. When we place the demands of family or job -- or anything else -- before the demands of God, we are guilty of idolatry.

***For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.  
"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!  
"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.  
Matt. 6: 21-24a***

Any shift in allegiance which compromises God's position as No. 1 in our lives is idolatry.



All others come up short

### *Divine Jealousy*

***. . . for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God. . .***

When I first studied the Commandments in my preschool Missouri Synod Lutheran Church Sunday School class -- which was the last time I remember having them taught to me -- I was bothered by the idea that God could be jealous. (Are the children in your church's Sunday School taught the Ten Commandments? Can you recite the Ten Commandments -- any version? Before we get upset about the removal of the Ten Commandments from municipal buildings, we better make sure they are prominently etched on the hearts of the members of our homes.)

The concept of God being the husband of His people runs all the way through the Scriptures.

***For your Maker is your husband -- LORD Almighty is his name -- Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; He is called the God of all the earth.***

Isa. 54: 5

***But like a woman unfaithful to her husband, so you have been unfaithful to Me, O house of Israel," declares the LORD.***

Jer. 3: 20

The Church is said to be the *bride* of Christ.

***One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."***

Rev. 21: 9

***Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.***

***He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church -- for we are members of His body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh," This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church.***

Eph. 5: 25-32

The Second Commandment teaches us that God's love for us can only be likened to the most intimate relationship known to humanity. Jealous is the most appropriate emotion to describe infidelity in a relationship built on love. (Admittedly, this is probably a little above 5 year-olds.)

*Divine Justice: Punishment and Reward*

***. . . 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. . .***

We get very uncomfortable with passages like this one. Some would have us believe that the God of the Old Testament is different from the God of the New Testament. The former is a God of wrath and punishment, while the latter is a God of love and tolerance. This is about as true as this young man's assessment of Santa Claus.

A young man comes up to Charlie Brown and announces, *"I've got this whole Santa Claus bit licked, Charlie Brown! If there is a Santa Claus, he's going to be too nice not to bring me anything for Christmas no matter how I act . . . right? Right! And if there isn't any Santa Claus then I haven't really lost anything, right?"*

*"Wrong," says Charlie Brown, "but I don't know where!"*

***Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.***

Job 5: 17

***"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. . ."***

John 15: 1-2

God has established a moral order for creation. There are moral absolutes, just as there natural ones. (I have a friend who works in hard hat areas. He reminds his men: *"Gravity, it isn't just a suggestion; it is the LAW!"*)

If the moral order is violated, there will be consequences, and not just for the guilty. A man driving a car after abusing alcohol gets into an accident which injures him and others. A company disregards pollution laws and causes years of disease in a community. A flight attendant has unprotected sex and begins an AIDS epidemic. There are no *victimless* crimes.

Likewise, the faithful create blessings for generations to come. Were it not for the faithfulness and sacrifice of our forefathers, we would not have the blessings we enjoy today.

It should be noted that God's hand is not shortened that it cannot save the children of sinners. Jonathan was righteous, but his father Saul was evil.

Nor should we assume that the evil that befalls children is the product of evil parents.

***As He went along, He saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.***

John 9: 1-3

What cannot be denied is that children learn from role models. We cannot prevent our children from being exposed to bad role models, so we had better make sure they are also exposed to good ones -- us.

*The first great gift we can bestow on others is a good example.*

Thomas Morell

### *Modern Idolatry: A Case Study*

Whenever we make a *means* into an *end* we are violating the Second Commandment. Let's look at a modern example. God gave us the Church so that we would have the *means* to serve and worship Him. But many today have turned the preservation of the institution into an *end* in itself.

Nathan Leaman, founding director of *Youth For Truth*, defined this modern idolatry in a series of misconceptions. While he uses his denomination, his points are valid of most mainline Protestant denominations.

#### Misconception #1

There is a concerted effort being made to root traditional renewal efforts in the context of Scriptural examples. I firmly agree the Bible does teach us to "fight the good fight of faith" in the tradition of the "great cloud of witnesses." Scripture is clear that we are in a battle and that we must arm ourselves with the correct weapons.

But unfortunately, some appeals to Scripture have not been wholly accurate to the meaning or spirit of the text or have failed to see the entire scope of Biblical revelation as it pertains to our situation in the 21st Century.

One of the classic appeals to Scripture in support of staying within the denomination uses the prophets as an example of patience and perseverance. The prophets did not leave Israel in search of greener pastures. They remained steadfast in their faithfulness to God and His people Israel. Likewise, it is reasoned, we should not be looking to get out of or separate from the denomination. Rather, we should derive energy and perseverance from a serious look at how the prophets remained even when things were radically out of control in Ancient Israel.

While there are some accurate comparisons between the wayward nature of Ancient Israel and most mainline protestant denominations, I believe the whole of this argument is

fundamentally flawed. Simply put, it makes a one to one comparison between Israel and a denomination. This comparison is both unfounded and completely inaccurate. Ancient Israel was the only vehicle for God's self revelation. It was through Israel that the world was beginning to understand the nature and character of the only God of the universe. It was through Israel that Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, was to come. Only Israel knew the True God and if you wanted to relate to Him, you had to be grafted into this nation. Clearly, Israel was in a unique position.

But times have changed and the nation of Israel has been replaced by the Church as the primary focus of God's work in the world. And, for various reasons, this Church is made up of many smaller, organized groups of people that emphasize different aspects of the Christian faith. Unlike Ancient Israel, no one organization (or denomination) is the only one through which God is working.

To equate the situation of Ancient Israel and its exclusive connection to God, with any particular denomination is totally unfounded. It would have been an act of complete disobedience for the prophets to leave Israel since they would be leaving God's chosen vehicle for self-revelation. The same cannot be said of those speaking of leaving a denomination. The difference lies in the nature of Israel as God's only chosen people in Old Testament times and a now defunct part of God's Church.

#### Misconception #2

Another appeal to Scripture that misses the mark ties the nature of the conflict we are facing today with the early Church. The Galatians, Corinthians and other early churches, it is reasoned, dealt with the same issues we deal with today. The battle is not new or unique to our time. We must be willing, therefore, to persevere in the fight for any given denomination in the same way the early churches stuck together through theological heresy and moral ineptitude.

Perhaps a brief look at what these churches were instructed to do and how they were to act will help to bring focus to what the New Testament has to say about the situation in most mainline denominations:

Consider II Corinthians 6:14-18...

***"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.' Therefore come out from them and be separate," says the Lord. "Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."***

And I Corinthians 5:9-13...

***"I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people -- not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. 'Expel the wicked man from among you.'"***

And Matthew 18:15-17...

***"If your brother sins against you go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If***

**he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."**

And II Thessalonians 3:14-15...

**"If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother."**

And James 4:4 & 8-10

**"You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."**

While this is not an exhaustive list of instructions to people of the Church concerning their position in the world and what they are to do with rampant sin, we must be willing to practice the type of vigilant discipline instructed by our Lord and the Apostles in the New Testament. It is not enough to gain comfort from the fact the early church was dealing with the same issues as we are today. We must also be realistic about the prospect of Biblical discipline. And if discipline is not possible in a given denomination, we must be willing to admit it does not reflect God's purposes for His Church.

### Misconception #3

Historically, there have always been struggles within the church. As was pointed out above, theological heresy and moral corruption are nothing new to God's Church. Over the past two thousand years, there has been a never ending crusade of distortion and corruption banging on the doors of the Church. Basic doctrinal issues were at the forefront during the first few centuries and were addressed by Councils and Creeds. And moral corruption and theological heresy took over in the Middle Ages and were answered by a the clarion call of a few men willing to stand against the abuses of the Roman Catholic Church.

Perhaps more than anyone else, Martin Luther stood for the Truth of God's Word against overwhelming political and ecclesiastical pressure. The price for his stand was excommunication and more than a few powerful people wishing he were dead. Certainly, there is a need to be willing to emulate the stand that Luther took. But I believe it is a stretch to see ourselves and our present fight in the life of Martin Luther.

Someone once said Martin Luther's witness was like a bull running through a China store. There was no guessing where Luther stood. He was willing to make his stand when he full well knew it could cost him his life. When is the last time anyone in a wayward denomination has felt that kind of pressure? No, Luther was not seeking to leave the Catholic Church, but he left those in power no choice but to kick him out.

It is that kind of unequivocal witness and willingness to suffer that is lacking from those in the "Reform from Within" movement. Instead of being willing to give up everything like Luther, we have full-time jobs devoted to fixing a denomination. We seek to dialogue and understand one another better in seminars put on by denominational leaders. We sit in comfortable chairs with those whom we oppose across the table from us sipping tea together and trying our hardest to maintain decorum and the peace and unity of the Church.

If we are going to compare ourselves to Luther and find consolation in his battle, we must be willing to fight like he did. We must be willing to stand face to face with those who have the power to break our association and take our ordination and declare that we are experiencing the "Babylonian Captivity" of nearly every mainline denomination. We must be willing to risk our livelihood in order to stand for God's Truth. We must not compromise.

[All mainline denominations are having similar experiences. When any organization develops an institution mentality, the primary focus of all activities is the perpetuation of the institution. This is the primary responsibility of those employed by the institution.]

Whenever we substitute a thing for the Person, we are committing idolatry. Serving Christ is not synonymous with preserving an institution.

***. . . you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent.***

Rev. 3: 1b-3a

No institution calling itself a church has the authority to modify, reimagine, or amend the Gospel it has received through God's infallible Word in order to accommodate its members or its culture. To do so is a violation of the Second Commandment. The only acceptable response is to repent and obey. No Christian is obligated to perpetuate an apostate institution just because it once was a faithful part of the true Church.

Whenever we substitute a thing for the Person, we are committing idolatry. Serving Christ is not synonymous with preserving an institution.

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Rev. 3: 1b-3a

### Conclusion

God gave us this Commandment for our peace and well-being. Violation of it is a disruption of the moral order, and there will be far-reaching consequences.

Idolatry is not the product of primitive minds; it is the seducer of lazy minds.

*Lord of all good life,  
we pray Thee to purify our lives.  
Help us each day to know more of Thee,  
and by the power of Thy Holy Spirit,  
use us to show forth Thyself to others.  
Make us humble, loyal, and loving;  
fortify us against the claims of all the gods of this world.  
We do not ask that Thou wilt keep us safe,  
but that Thou would keep us faithful to Thee,  
our one true God.  
In Jesus' name we pray.  
Amen*

### For Discussion

1. Is making a movie like *The Passion of the Christ* a violation of this Commandment? Is making a statue of Jesus holding a child? Is a picture of Jesus in a Sunday School book a violation of this Commandment? If not, why not? What kind of image would be a violation of this Commandment?
  
2. What is *apostasy* and is it a violation of this Commandment?

### The Third Commandment

***Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.***

*Ex. 20: 7*

*It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to lose it.*

Warren Buffett

God's name is a gift of grace to His people. As such, God's name is to be revered. This Commandment forbids the use of God's name in false worship, for incantations or divination, for attesting falsehood or for speaking blasphemy.

*Question 112: What is required in the third commandment?*

*Answer: The third commandment requires, That the name of God, his titles, attributes, ordinances, the Word, sacraments, prayer, oaths, vows, lots, his works, and: Whatsoever else there is whereby he makes himself known, be holily and reverently used in thought, meditation, word, and writing; by an holy profession, and*

*Answerable conversation, to the glory of God, and the good of ourselves, and others.*

*Question 113: What are the sins forbidden in the third commandment?*

*Answer: The sins forbidden in the third commandment are, the not using of God's name as is required; and the abuse of it in an ignorant, vain, irreverent, profane, superstitious, or wicked mentioning, or otherwise using his titles, attributes, ordinances, or works, by blasphemy, perjury; all sinful cursings, oaths, vows, and lots; violating of our oaths and vows, if lawful; and fulfilling them, if of things unlawful; murmuring and quarreling at, curious prying into, and misapplying of God's decrees and providences; misinterpreting, misapplying, or any way perverting the Word, or any part of it, to profane jests, curious or unprofitable*

*Questions, vain janglings, or the maintaining of false doctrines; abusing it, the creatures, or anything contained under the name of God, to charms, or sinful lusts and practices; the maligning, scorning, reviling, or anywise opposing of God's truth, grace, and ways; making profession of religion in hypocrisy, or for sinister ends; being ashamed of it, or a shame to it, by unbecomable, unwise, unfruitful, and offensive walking, or backsliding from it.*

*Question 114: What reasons are annexed to the third commandment?*

*Answer: The reasons annexed to the third commandment, in these words, The Lord thy God, and, For the Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes his name in vain, are, because he is the Lord and our God, therefore his name is not to be profaned, or any way abused by us; especially because he will be so far from acquitting and sparing the transgressors of this commandment, as that he will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgment, albeit many such escape the censures and punishments of men.*

Westminster Larger Catechism

**. . . the name . . .**

The purpose of a name is to identify and make known. This is true of the names by which God has made Himself known.

*YHWH* (LORD): This is God's redemptive name. It is primarily used with His elect. All the divine attributes which bear on our redemption are suggested by this name.

1. God never changes.

***"I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob,  
are not destroyed. . ."***

*Mal. 3:6*

2. God is the eternal King.

***The LORD is King for ever and ever;  
the nations will perish from his land.***

*Ps. 10: 16*

3. God is the Creator of all that exists.

***. . . (He who made the Pleiades and Orion,  
who turns blackness into dawn  
and darkens day into night,  
who calls for the waters of the sea  
and pours them out over the face of the land-the LORD is His name . . .***

*Amos 5: 8*

*YHWH* identifies God as *sovereign*. He relies on no one for anything. He is absolutely uninfluenced by any external force.

***God said to Moses, "I am who I am . . ."***

*Ex. 3: 14*

*Elohim* (God): This is the name most frequently used in the Old Testament. This is the name that identifies God as the almighty One, who is faithful and who is to be revered.

***But You, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God,  
slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.***

*Ps. 86: 15*

This name indicates the Trinity. *Elohim* is plural, as in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in One divine Person.

***Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.***

*Deut. 6: 4*

*YHWH* our *Elohim* is *one*. The word translated one is used of a compound; one thing made up of several parts.

*Adonai* (Master): This name identifies God as having dominion over all of Creation. This name implies two principles inherent in the relationship between God and His elect:

1. God is entitled to obedience.

**"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"**

Luke 6: 45

2. The elect will be given direction in their service.

**Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,  
"Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"  
And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"  
He said, "Go and tell this people:**

**" 'Be ever hearing, but never understanding;  
be ever seeing, but never perceiving.'  
Make the heart of this people calloused;  
make their ears dull  
and close their eyes.  
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,  
hear with their ears,  
understand with their hearts,  
and turn and be healed."**

**Then I said, "For how long, O Lord?"  
And he answered:**

**"Until the cities lie ruined  
and without inhabitant,  
until the houses are left deserted  
and the fields ruined and ravaged,**

Isa. 6: 8-11

**. . . in vain . . .**

The Hebrew word used here literally means for *unreality*. The NIV translates this word *misuse*.

**He who has clean hands and a pure heart,  
who does not lift up his soul to an idol  
or swear by what is false.**

Ps. 24: 4

In this context, we see that God's name is not to be associated with anything false.

**"Do not spread false reports. Do not help a wicked man by being  
a malicious witness. . ."**

Ex. 23: 1

In this context, we see that God's name is not to be associated with anything misleading, duplicitous.

This Command forbids the use of God's name in any false, or misleading way. There are two common ways this Command is broken:

1. In oaths and promises.

The story of Jephthah shows the gravity the Bible attaches to this Command.

***Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah. He crossed Gilead and Manasseh, passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from there he advanced against the Ammonites. And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD : "If you give the Ammonites into my hands, 31 whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the LORD 's, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering." Then Jephthah went over to fight the Ammonites, and the LORD gave them into his hands. He devastated twenty towns from Aroer to the vicinity of Minnith, as far as Abel Keramim. Thus Israel subdued Ammon. When Jephthah returned to his home in Mizpah, who should come out to meet him but his daughter, dancing to the sound of tambourines! She was an only child. Except for her he had neither son nor daughter. When he saw her, he tore his clothes and cried, "Oh! My daughter! You have made me miserable and wretched, because I have made a vow to the LORD that I cannot break."***

Judges 11: 29-35

The Bible repeatedly teaches that making an insincere promise is as wicked a sin as one can commit. (cf. Lev. 19:12; Jer. 5:2; 7:9; Zech. 5: 4; Mal. 3: 5)

***But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one."***

Matt. 5: 34-37

Jesus is speaking about this Commandment. When He says, Do not swear at all, He is not forbidding all oaths and promises as some have come to believe. People in Jesus' day thought that if they swore by heaven or earth or Jerusalem, regardless of how frivolously their oath was given, they were not profaning the name of God. Jesus is making it clear that these are vain attempts to avoid breaking this Commandment.

***Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.***

Romans 12: 1

A proper attitude toward God is demonstrated by who we are, not by what we do. As God's elect, we are His wherever we are, whatever we are doing. Anything we say or promise is in God's name because He is in us and we are His. Consequently, everything we say is subject to this Commandment.

As God's elect, the promises we make must be kept. So be very careful!

2. The second common way this Commandment is violated is through careless and/or profane language. (Remember, a foul mouth is a sign of bird brain.)

***But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.***

Matt. 12: 36

We are *Christ's ambassadors* (II Cor. 5: 20); we may be the only Jesus some people ever see.

When I was in seminary, I used to have to ride the commuter train in Philadelphia. One evening as I was waiting for my train in the Reading Station, I observed a fascinating drama. A man, loaded down with scrolls of papers, blueprints maybe, carrying two briefcases, was making a mad dash for the platform in order to catch his train. At the same time, a little girl was emerging from the news stand with a puzzle her mother had bought her to keep her amused on their trip. Neither the man nor the little girl was looking where they were walking.

They collided. The little girl was knocked to the floor and the pieces of her puzzle were spread all over; the man looked down at her with annoyance. Then, seeing the tears in her eyes, put his papers and briefcases down, and picked up the pieces of the little girl's puzzle, as his train pulled away from the station.

The little girl watched the man, and when he handed back her puzzle, she asked, "Sir, are YOU Jesus?"

At that moment, at that moment when he reflected the light of Christ by his selfless act, he was, indeed, the lampstand for Jesus.

At any given moment, each of us may be the only reflection of Christ's love and compassion anyone ever sees. This is an awesome responsibility; one which required a daily recommitment to the Christian discipline.

This Commandment will never go out of date because it asserts the sacredness of every word we utter, and condemns the blasphemy of everything irreverent, false, or misleading.

*Almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly will and affections of our sinful nature:  
Grant unto Thy people that they may love the thing which Thou commandest,  
and desire that which Thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of this  
world, our hearts may surely be fixed, where true joys are to be found.  
In Jesus' name we pray.  
Amen*

## For Discussion

[The following is an exchange I had with a seminary student. Use this as a starting point for what you think this Commandment means.]

*Jim,*

*I don't know if you've ever read Scott Peck on blasphemy, but he has some interesting things to say:*

*"While the violation of the first and second (commandments) is perhaps at the root of all sin, the villain of the third is the sin of sins...Most people think of it as swearing or the use of bawdy language.. But that is not what the Third Commandment is all about...Any deep relationship will involve-and indeed require-turmoil, and I suspect God is big enough not to be terribly bothered if we damn Him now and then...What really infuriates Him, however, is to be used. And that is what is meant by blasphemy: the using of the Name of God when you are not in relationship with Him for the purpose of pretending that you are...."*

*"Blasphemy is the lie of lies. It is the use of the sacred to hide the profane, of apparent purity to cloak guilt, of the noble to disguise the ignoble, of beauty to cover up ugliness, of the willful use of piety as a pretense. While all lying is a manifestation of a lack of integrity, blasphemy represents the most vicious failure of integrity. Its most basic mechanism is that psychological trick we have called compartmentalization...(it) allows some routinely to profess the truth while routinely acting the lie..."*

*"The degree of compartmentalization in American life is such that blasphemous behavior is the norm rather than the exception. When something is normal, we are usually so close to it that we cannot see it in perspective...we don't recognize that the "normal" behavior...is in fact insane. We must not allow such closeness to blind us to the habitual blasphemy of our churches and society."*

*Thus we have people like "Bishop" Robinson, of the Episcopal Church, who regularly identifies his own prejudices with those of God. Thus we have a Mt. Auburn church and particularly its pastors who claim they can ignore the Bible and church tradition, because they "have" Jesus (but the Jesus they have is little more than a ventriloquist's dummy for their own sentiments).*

*I think Peck's assessment is dead on for our church today. Blasphemy, I suspect has been rightly discredited if associated with no more than a literal interpretation of the Bible, a set of rigid rules rather than guidelines for relationships. Some would claim that all these commandments have been superseded by Jesus' law of love. But as Peck would point out, blasphemy is still alive and well in our church. It is a sin of pride and personal arrogance. Far from bringing us closer to God, as Bishop Robinson and others would claim, it cannot help but separate us further from God's salvation.*

*I am not convinced that our God is as accommodating as Peck would like to believe.*

*I'm not sure whether you got the point Scott was trying to make. I can't imagine a transcendent, perfect, omniscient and loving God being very disturbed by a person letting out a "damn" once in a while in anger - it's beats taking anger out physically on someone else, for instance. As our relationship to God is like child to parent, a loving parent can take a child's momentary anger in stride, knowing the child's frailties and limitations.*

*But I can't imagine God not being angry when people used God's name for their own benefit. That is setting themselves up in place of God. That's exactly what the progressive wing has done in claiming exclusive rights to "love" and "justice", for instance. It involves willful and persistent disobedience to God. Mostly though, it often ends up denying to others the real relationship of love and trust that God yearns to extend to us. And I, with Peck, cannot imagine anything that would infuriate a God of judgement and grace more than this.*

*I got his point. I can imagine God getting upset when His name is misused. Surely disciplined Christians are not limited to profanity or abuse when things don't go their way.*

*Even so, Jim, I am much less concerned with someone who occasionally issues a profanity, say after hitting their thumb with a hammer, versus someone like Bishop Robinson, who regularly claims to have a direct pipeline to God, or a Hal Porter who claims that he doesn't need to pay attention to scripture or tradition because he "has" Jesus and you recognize that the Jesus he has is little more than a ventriloquist's dummy for his own self-righteousness. For one thing, no one is making a truth claim that they expect others to follow in uttering an occasional obscenity. For another, I think it's important to distinguish between occasional, and spontaneous accidents of sin and deliberate, and chronic and deliberate practice of sin. I think consciousness of sin and repentance of it has some room to grow in the former case, while the latter positively excludes personal transformation.*

How would you respond to this man?

## 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.***

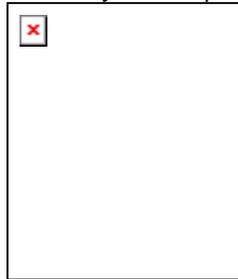
Exodus 20: 8-11

*The purpose of this commandment is, that being dead to our own affections and works, we meditate on the Kingdom of God, and in such meditation, have recourse to the means which He has appointed.*

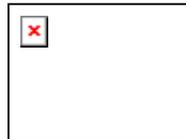
John Calvin

## How to stay safe in the world today

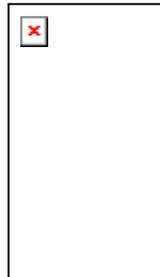
1. Avoid riding in automobiles because they are responsible for 20% of all fatal accidents.



2. Do not stay home because 17% of all accidents occur in the home.



3. Avoid walking on streets or sidewalks because 14% of all accidents occur to pedestrians.



4. Avoid traveling by air, rail, or water because 16% of all accidents involve these forms of

transportation.



5. Of the remaining 33%, 32% of all deaths occur in Hospitals. Above all else, avoid hospitals.



You will be pleased to learn that only .001% of all deaths occur in worship services in church, and these are usually related to previous physical disorders. Therefore, logic tells us that the safest place for you to be at any given point in time is at church!



Bible study is safe too. The percentage of deaths during Bible study is even less.



FOR SAFETY'S SAKE - Attend church and read your Bible ... IT COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE

The word *sabbath* describes that which *completes a sequence*. The *sabbath* day completed the sequence of God's creation. As such, the Sabbath observance is meant to be a time when God's people remember their place within God's purpose for creation.

*Question 116: What is required in the fourth commandment?*

*Answer: The fourth commandment requires of all men the sanctifying or keeping holy to God*

*such set times as he has appointed in his Word, expressly one whole day in seven; which was the seventh from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, and the first day of the week ever since, and so to continue to the end of the world; which is the Christian sabbath, and in the New Testament called the Lord's day.*

*Question 117: How is the sabbath or the Lord's day to be sanctified?*

*Answer: The sabbath or Lord's day is to be sanctified by an holy resting all the day, not only from such works as are at all times sinful, but even from such worldly employments and recreations as are on other days lawful; and making it our delight to spend the whole time (except so much of it as is to betaken up in works of necessity and mercy) in the public and private exercises of God's worship: and, to that end, we are to prepare our hearts, and with such foresight, diligence, and moderation, to dispose and seasonably dispatch our worldly business, that we may be the more free and fit for the duties of that day.*

*Question 118: Why is the charge of keeping the sabbath more specially directed to governors of families, and other superiors?*

*Answer: The charge of keeping the sabbath is more specially directed to governors of families, and other superiors, because they are bound not only to keep it themselves, but to see that it be observed by all those that are under their charge; and because they are prone oftentimes to hinder them by employments of their own.*

*Question 119: What are the sins forbidden in the fourth commandment?*

*Answer: The sins forbidden in the fourth commandment are, all omissions of the duties required, all careless, negligent, and unprofitable performing of them, and being weary of them; all profaning the day by idleness, and doing that which is in itself sinful; and by all needless works, words, and thoughts, about our worldly employments and recreations.*

*Question 120: What are the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment, the more to enforce it?*

*Answer: The reasons annexed to the fourth commandment, the more to enforce it, are taken from the equity of it, God allowing us six days of seven for our own affairs, and reserving but one for himself, in these words, Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: from God's challenging a special propriety in that day, The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: from the example of God, who in six days made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: and from that blessing which God put upon that day, not only in sanctifying it to be a day for his service, but in ordaining it to be a means of blessing to us in our sanctifying it; Wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*

*Question 121: Why is the word Remember set in the beginning of the fourth commandment?*

*Answer: The word Remember is set in the beginning of the fourth commandment, partly, because of the great benefit of remembering it, we being thereby helped in our preparation to keep it, and, in keeping it, better to keep all the rest of the commandments, and to continue a thankful remembrance of the two great benefits of creation and redemption, which contain a short abridgment of religion; and partly, because we are very ready to forget it, for that there is less light of nature for it, and yet it restrains our natural liberty in things at other times lawful; that it comes but once in seven days, and many worldly businesses come between, and too often take off our minds from thinking of it, either to prepare for it, or to sanctify it; and that Satan with his instruments much labor to blot out the glory, and even the memory of it, to bring in all irreligion and impiety.*

Westminster Larger Catechism

Its Purpose and Design

***If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath,  
From doing your pleasure on My holy day,  
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,  
Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD;***

***And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth,  
And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father.  
The mouth of the LORD has spoken.***

Isaiah. 58: 13-14

The design of this Commandment is:

1. To commemorate the work of Creation;
2. To preserve the knowledge of the only true and living God;
3. To establish a time of frequent recurrence when secular pursuits would be set aside, and our whole attention would be focused on the eternal, spiritual, reality;
4. To afford time for the instruction of God's people and for the public worship of Him;
5. To provide a recuperative rest for the people of God and their households;
6. To be a "type" -- a model -- of our eternal rest with God in His Kingdom;
7. To be a sign of the covenant between God and His elect.

***"Therefore I made them go out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them My statutes and showed them My judgments, "which, if a man does, he shall live by them. 'Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them . . . hallow My Sabbaths, and they will be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the LORD your God.'***

***"Notwithstanding, the children rebelled against Me; they did not walk in My statutes, and were not careful to observe My judgments, "which, if a man does, he shall live by them"; but they profaned My Sabbaths. Then I said I would pour out My fury on them and fulfill My anger against them in the wilderness.***

Ezekiel 20: 10-12,20-21

*Why did God speak so clearly to the saints of old and not to us today?*

Perhaps it is because He is waiting for us to obey the instructions He has *already* given us. If we cannot honor a day of rest, why should God speak to us about anything else?

*Industrialization, urbanization, and immigration combined to encourage the secularization of American society as the nineteenth century drew to a close. Despite growing church rolls, Christianity was having a smaller and smaller impact on the lives of average citizens. Sundays were becoming days for picnics, ball games, and golf at the new country clubs. There was increasing apathy towards worship.*

On my way home from worship recently, I passed a park. Dozens and dozens of children, along with their parents, were there playing league soccer. *Why do Christian parents tolerate this abuse of the Fourth Commandment?* Would they be equally tolerant of their children lying; stealing; or killing? In the last presidential election, "soccer Moms" nearly made Al Gore President. Christian Parents, you *do* have the power to effect change. *Why are you tolerating this sacrilege?*

***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.***

The *Sabbath* is *the Lord's day*, not ours. It is to be kept *holy* (separated, different from other days). This means that activities should be centered on God; this is not a "catch-up" to do things on our agenda that we have neglected. The *Sabbath* isn't "free time" to do as we please; but a consecrated time to focus on God.

The *Sabbath* is meant to help us fulfill our *Chief End: To love God and enjoy Him forever.* But

instead, we have undermined its effectiveness with silly legalism. Remember the *Blue Laws*? When I was growing up in Oklahoma, a person could buy *Playboy* on Sunday, but not a light bulb. The Jews had 39 different classifications of what constituted *work*. We are more concerned with what we *shouldn't* do on the *Sabbath* than what we should be doing.

### A Perpetual Obligation

Some people have suggested that the Ten Commandments are no longer binding on Christians because we are saved by grace. Indeed, we *are* saved by grace. But dare we be any less responsive to God's will? *Moral* laws, like physical laws, are a perpetual obligation on all Creation.

Regarding this Command:

\*It is important that all people know that the Lord our God created all that exists; that He is infinite and perfect.

\*It is important that all people pause in their secular pursuits and remember their Creator.

\*It is important that all people be instructed in the absolute truths reveal to us by our Creator.

\*It is important that all Creation, human and animals, have a time of recuperative rest.

The idea of *worship* is very threatening to our old sinful natures. That is why some go to great lengths to get around this Commandment. This has always been true.

***Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.***

Col. 2: 16-17

***You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.***

Gal. 4

*Don't these passages indicate that the Sabbath is no longer binding?*

Absolutely not. Paul is condemning attaching superstition to particular days. This is made clear by the fact that all of the churches Paul established retained *Sabbath* observances.

*The Sabbath of the Old Testament was observed on the 7th day; the Church worships on the 1st day. How can we claim to be keeping the Sabbath?*

The Command obligates us to set aside a time to learn of God and humble ourselves before Him in worship. Because of the problems caused by the *Judaizers* and their legalistic demands, fulfilling this obligation on the day Christ made all things new seemed appropriate.

*It was not, however, without reason that the early Christians substituted what we call the Lord's Day for the Sabbath. The resurrection of our Lord being the end and accomplishment of that true rest which the ancient Sabbath typified.*

### The Sabbath Predates Moses

***Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.***

Gen. 2: 3



The *Sabbath* was set apart as *holy* from Creation. Its importance is twofold:

1. Every seventh day is to be a memorial of the Creation and an opportunity to worship the Creator;
2. It is a memorial to the Covenant relationship between God and His people.

Isn't interesting that virtually all known cultures have had a 7-day week? There is historical evidence that this 7-day grouping predates the Flood.

***And he waited yet another seven days, and again he sent the dove out from the ark. . . So he waited yet another seven days and sent out the dove, which did not return again to him anymore.***

Gen. 8: 10,12

The language of the Command suggests that *Sabbath* observance was not something new.

*If the divine command was actually delivered at the Creation, it was addressed, no doubt, to the whole human species alike, and continues . . . binding upon all who come to the knowledge of it.*

Dr. Paley

We are under just as much obligation to set aside one day a week for the Lord as the Old Testament saints were. The *mode* of worship is different because Jesus Christ has already offered the one, perfect, once-for-all-time sacrifice. The essentials are the same:

- \*Set aside one day from secular pursuits;
- \*Devote ourselves to nurturing our relationship with God.

Why this is important

*Unto this catholic and visible Church, Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world; and doth by*

*his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto.*  
Westminster Confession of Faith

It is undeniable that all of us are indebted to the services of the Church for our knowledge of the faith. Parental neglect of this debt may explain why so many children are playing soccer, why so many teens are hanging out at the mall, why so many fathers are playing golf, on Sunday morning.

*Any community or class of men who ignore the Sabbath, and absent themselves from the sanctuary, as a general thing, become heathen.*  
Charles Hodge

***And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.***

Heb. 10: 24-25

Without a proper understanding of God, morality is impossible.

***Hear the word of the LORD,  
You children of Israel,  
For the LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land:  
"There is no truth or mercy  
Or knowledge of God in the land.  
By swearing and lying,  
Killing and stealing and committing adultery,  
They break all restraint,  
With bloodshed upon bloodshed.  
Therefore the land will mourn;  
And everyone who dwells there will waste away  
With the beasts of the field  
And the birds of the air;  
Even the fish of the sea will be taken away.  
My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.  
Because you have rejected knowledge,  
I also will reject you from being priest for Me;  
Because you have forgotten the law of your God,  
I also will forget your children.***

Hosea 4: 1-3,6

If we refuse to give God His proper place in our lives, His Word assures us that we *will be* consumed by dehumanizing lusts.

***And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting. . .who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.***

Romans. 1: 28, 32

God will not hold us guiltless who either by teaching or example encourage the neglect of the *Sabbath*.

***Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.***

Luke 17: 1-2

*The first great gift we can bestow on others is a good example.*

Thomas Morell

How the *Sabbath* is to be kept *holy*

In general, both the cessation of secular pursuits and devotion to that which nurtures a Christian's relationship with God are obligations of the Fourth Commandment. This would include:

1. Setting the day apart from a common to a sacred use;
2. Observing this day weekly (not *weakly*);
3. Celebrating both God's work of Creation and *re-creation* in Christ;
4. Public worship;
5. Instruction in the Word of God.

There are two rules by which we are to be guided in determining how the *Sabbath* is to be observed:

1. Is it consistent with the design and purpose of the Commandment?
  - a. Have we put aside secular pursuits and amusements?
  - b. Are we focusing our attention on God, worshipping Him and being instructed by His Word?

*Any man who makes the design of the Sabbath as thus revealed in Scripture his rule of conduct on that day, can hardly fail in its due observance.*

Charles Hodge

The unique thing about the *Christian Sabbath* is the commemoration of Christ's resurrection. All activities of the day should have special reference to Him and His redeeming work. The *Christian Sabbath* should be a day of praise, thanksgiving, and above all, joy.

2. The second rule for *Sabbath* observance is found in the teaching and example of Jesus Christ.

***The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.***

Mark 2: 27

The life, health, and well-being of another living soul is a higher priority than a religious ritual.

***Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?***

Mark 3: 4

The general principle for properly observing the *Sabbath* is this: *Does it glorify Christ?*

***"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set***

***the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'***  
***"Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?" And the King will answer and say to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'***

Matt. 25: 31-40

### Conclusion

The Fourth Commandment demands the suspension of secular pursuits in order that we may focus our attention on God, to the end that our relationship with Him might be nurtured. Morality apart from God is impossible.

*"Those people who will not be governed by God will be ruled by tyrants."*  
William Penn

True knowledge of God is not a matter of *private discernment*. People must be taught sound doctrine.

***How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:  
"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace,  
Who bring glad tidings of good things!"  
But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "LORD, who has believed our report?" So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.***  
Romans 10: 14-17

*It is not an exaggeration to say that the moral framework of human society depends on the faithful obedience to the Fourth Commandment.*

*O Lord, our Heavenly Father,  
at the beginning of each week may we come to Thee for help and light.  
Grant that we may hallow the Sabbath so that we might find in Thee  
peace and strength.  
Quicken our devotion, that we may serve Thee in spirit and in truth,  
and lay a good foundation for ourselves and our families.  
Be with us in public worship that we may join wholeheartedly  
and receive the blessing which Thou hast promised to all  
who sincerely humble themselves and faithfully hear Thy Word.  
In Jesus' name we pray.  
Amen*

### For Discussion

1. Is it important to keep the Sabbath today?
2. Is it a violation of this Commandment *not* to attend public worship on the Sabbath?
3. If you weren't a Christian, how would you spend Sundays differently?
4. Do you think it offends God when we go to the lake instead of to worship; play golf instead of worshipping God in the company of the saints; let our children play in a soccer league that plays games on Sunday mornings? Is there any way to justify this behavior without violation the First Commandment?
5. What kinds of activities nurture your relationship with your Creator?
6. What kinds of activities detract from the holiness of the Sabbath?

## 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

*To rise above your mood, circumstance, desires, or whims, and do an objective good deed describes a person of honor, a person of holiness.*

Laura Schlessinger



The first four Commandments define our obligations to our God. The Fifth Commandment defines our obligation to the next most important relationship in the human experience: our parents.

*Q. 64. What is required in the fifth commandment?*

*A. The fifth commandment requireth the preserving the honor, and performing the duties, belonging to everyone in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals [a].*

*Q. 65. What is forbidden in the fifth commandment?*

*A. The fifth commandment forbiddeth the neglecting of, or doing anything against, the honor and duty which belongeth to everyone in their several places and relations [a].*

*Q. 66. What is the reason annexed to the fifth commandment?*

*A. The reason annexed to the fifth commandment is, a promise of long life and prosperity (as far as it shall serve for God's glory and their own good) to all such as keep this commandment [a].*

It is interesting that the Command does not say "Love your mother and father. . ." The dynamics between parents and children are filled with conflicts. Children don't always welcome instruction; they often resent correction; they frequently rebel against discipline.

***Discipline your son, for in that there is hope;  
do not be a willing party to his death.***

Proverbs 19: 18

The person whose primary goal is to be loved will avoid doing the very things a parent needs to do. (Remember the Drill Instructor in *An Officer and a Gentleman*? His job was to equip people

for the worst that could happen. It was not his job to be liked.) This is illustrated by a commercial I saw recently.

*Mom, Dad, up to now we have gotten along pretty good. But now that I am a teen, all that is about to change.  
I'm about to kick you out of my life.  
I am going to be exposed to a lot of things you aren't going to like;  
You'll ask me, and I'll lie to you.  
You don't like the sound of this? Tough.  
You are going to have to watch me like a hawk.  
I'll hate you for it, too.  
But its what I need.  
Someday, I'll be grateful.*

The Hebrew word for honor is *kavod*. It comes from the word *kavad* which means heavy. The Commandment to honor our parents is, in God's sight, as heavy an obligation as it is a responsibility.

Some of the harshest penalties are reserved for those who break this Commandment.

***'If anyone curses his father or mother, he must be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother, and his blood will be on his own head.***

Lev. 20: 9

Notice two things:

1. The Commandment to honor father and mother comes directly after the Commandments concerning our obligations to God;
2. The penalty for breaking this Commandment is the same as the penalty for blasphemy against God.

This Commandment is not qualified. It does not mean: Honor only if. . .

- \*the person deserves it;
- \*the person reciprocates;
- \*it makes you feel good;
- \*you get recognition;

#### Why should we honor our parents?

*Leadership rests not only on outstanding ability. It also rests on commitment, loyalty and pride. It rests on followers who are ready to accept guidance. Leadership is the ability to direct people and -- more important -- to have those people accept that direction.*

Vince Lombardi

The parent/child relationship is the primary relationship which will influence all other human relationships.

Ladies, if you want to know what kind of husband your man will be, look at what kind of son he has been to his mother. Men, if you want to know what kind of wife your lady will be, look at what kind of daughter she has been to her father. Employers, if you want to know what kind of worker that applicant will be, look to how he took instruction from his parents. Our attitudes towards members of the opposite sex and our response to authority are formed in the parent/child relationship.

The reason we should honor our parents comes from two facts:

1. We owe our very existence to our parents;
2. Without parental care, we would perish in infancy.

Parents are the primary definers of what it means to be *human*. How we cope with stress, how we treat others, how we enjoy life, are all learned first from our parents. It is no coincidence that children of abusive parents are more likely to be abusive in their families; also, children of chemically dependent parents -- drugs, alcohol, etc. -- are more likely to turn to these when they become adults. The examples we set as parents have far more influence than we would like to think.

Parents are also our first God-models. Our values, our sense of responsibility, our sense of who we are and why we are alive, are instilled in us by our parents. The care we receive from our parents while we are dependent upon them, whether nurturing and loving, or cruel and judgmental, molds our attitude toward God. In the eyes of a child, parents stand in the place of God. This is the most awesome of human responsibilities.

#### How should we honor our parents?

The honor we pay our parents should be at their points of need.

*In this society, we don't much believe or feel that our lives should be "shortened" by having to sacrifice for the ill or dying. Having to give up our precious time to visit or minister to our elderly, ill, or dying parents is seen as an imposition rather than as a potential, albeit difficult, blessing. The proliferation of homes for the aged and dying is a sad commentary on the selfishness of our young people, who see life only as a tree to pluck, not a tree to groom.*

Rabbi Stewart Vogel and Laura Schlessinger

Obedience is an essential part of honor for parents.

***Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.***

Luke 2: 51

Jesus sets an example for us. Parents know the dangers of life and the child doesn't. There is a good reason why parents forbid things. (I will have more to say about parents deserving obedience later.)

Gratitude is an essential part of honor for parents. We owe our very existence to our parents. We should be grateful to our parents, if for no other reason, because we are alive. Without parental care, we would perish in infancy. As adults, we honor our parents by showing our appreciation for all they have given us.

We dishonor them when we expect too much. Too often adult children (Interestingly, there is no English word for adult offspring) continue to feel their parents owe them financial assistance -- to buy a car, take a vacation, make a down payment -- or have nothing better to do than serve as on-demand baby-sitters or home helpers. (One of my favorite bumper-stickers is one I saw on the back of a big RV: We're spending our kids inheritance! Good for them. Our parents have a right to enjoy their lives; they don't owe us an inheritance.)

Parents are honored when we make them a welcome part of our lives; they are dishonored when we take advantage of them.

Support is another essential part of honor for parents.

***For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,' he is not to 'honor his father' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.***

Matt. 15: 4-6

It is every child's responsibility to see to the care of his parents when they can no longer care for themselves. This is no easy task. We have always looked (expected?) our parents to care for us. Assuming responsibility for a parent's care, without taking away his or her dignity, is one of life's great challenges.

Respect is another way we honor our parents. This means accepting them as they are, not as we would like them to be. Fraser hated his father's ugly old chair, but he respected him enough to let him keep it for no other reason than that it was important to his father.

All of these things honor our parents. But this obligation is not satisfied with any check list of duties. As the years go by, there will need to be a constant, delicate, adjustment in the parent/child relationship. It is hard to take responsibility for one who for so long was responsible for you. It is also difficult to accept assistance from one who we have assisted for so many years. Nowhere is the grace of God more needed.

Christian Parenthood: The New Testament Amplification

***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." Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.***

Eph. 6: 1-4

No other group of people owe more to Christianity than children. This is because Christianity trains parents to be worthy of honor.

Responsible Christian Parenting

***Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.***

As an act of grace, Christian parents should strive to be worthy of honor. Put negatively, parents are not to provoke harmful attitudes in their children by anger, severity, injustice, partiality, or any inappropriate form of authority.

Put positively, parents should bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord. It is the primary task of every Christian parent to instill in the children the ability to think like Christians. There is no aspect of a child's education which is more important.

One of the saddest commentaries on the state of the church is to hear parents say that they want their child exposed to all kinds of religions. "Then, when the child is old enough, he can make up his own mind." We know that the church has failed when parents are not sure enough of the truth of the Gospel that they let their children make this crucial decision on their own. No responsible parent would make such a comment about any other aspect of a child's education. Parents bring their children to the church for spiritual help in raising them. As members of Christ's Church, we promise to give them that help. But thanks to our "loose-leaf" Bibles, our situational ethics, and the theology of accommodation, we don't know what truths to teach. So otherwise responsible parents let children make their own spiritual choice.

A human being is a physical, intellectual, and spiritual creature. To neglect the spiritual component is as harmful as neglecting the physical or intellectual aspects of human nature.

*Consequently, when a state resolves that religious instruction shall be banished from the schools . . . it virtually resolves on self-destruction.*

Charles Hodge

Since modern society has determined that spiritual education cannot be taught in our public schools, it becomes just that much more important that parents fulfill this obligation.

*An old druggie...*

*My generation just might have been lucky. I had a drug problem when I was young, but I turned out all right.*

*I was drug to church on Sunday morning.  
I was drug to church for weddings and funerals.  
I was drug to family reunions no matter the weather.  
I was drug to the bus stop to go to school every weekday.  
I was drug by my ears when I was disrespectful to adults and teachers.  
I was also drug to the woodshed when I disobeyed my parents.*

*Those drugs are still in my veins; and they affect my behavior in everything I do, say, and think. They are stronger than cocaine, crack, or heroin, and if today's children had this kind of drug problem, America might be a better place.*

*Signed,*

*An Old Druggie*

#### The Promise

***. . . so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.***

*VI. Although true believers be not under the law as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned; yet is it of great use to them, as well as to others; in that, as a rule of life, informing them of the will of God and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; discovering also the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives; so as, examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin; together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of his obedience. It is likewise of use to the regenerate, to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin, and the threatenings of it serve to show what even their sins deserve, and what afflictions in this life they may expect for them, although freed from the curse thereof threatened in the law. The promises of it, in like manner, show them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof; although not as due to them by the law as a covenant of works: so as a man's doing good, and refraining from evil, because the law encourageth to the one, and deterreth from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law, and not under grace.*

*VII. Neither are the forementioned uses of the law contrary to the grace of the gospel, but do sweetly comply with it: the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do that freely and cheerfully, which the will of God, revealed in the law, requireth to be done.*

Westminster Confession of Faith, XIX

Obedience to this Commandment can save our families and help establish responsible communities. Obedience to this Commandment will enhance all aspects of life. To live long refers to a quality of life, not just the number of days we live. Those who will not honor their parents by submitting to parental authority will find it difficult to submit to any other form of authority.

Disobedience of this Commandment:

- \*undermines the value we place on life itself;
- \*undermines social order;
- \*undermines the authority of God in our lives.

*Antisocial behavior begins when children fail to honor their parents.*

Moral corruption and dehumanization begin when Christians fail to train and instruct their children in the Lord's plan for their lives.

When a community honors its parents, little else is needed. If that isn't there, nothing else can replace it.

*Gracious Heavenly Father,  
we confess that too often we become impatient with our parents and their "outdated" ways and  
"old fashioned" ideas.  
But Lord,  
grant us the grace to always show honor to those who have given us the gift of life'  
grant us humility to be obedient;  
grant us sensitivity to be respectful at all times;  
and grant us the ability to be supportive at all time.  
For we pray in Jesus' name.  
Amen*

For Discussion

1. Does our society *honor* the elderly?
2. What is the greatest obstacle to raising children who respect and honor their parents?
3. What tools do parents need in order to raise their children in the care and nurture of the Lord?
4. What is the single most important thing we can do for our youth to enable them to resist the temptations of the Evil One?

## The Sixth Commandment

***You shall not murder.***

Ex. 20: 13

*When will our consciences grow so tender that we will act  
to prevent human misery rather than avenge it?*

Eleanor Roosevelt

The intent of this Commandment is to *protect human life from malicious, premeditated killing*. The law distinguishes between *manslaughter* (unintentional, spontaneous killing) and *premeditated murder*. Violation of this Commandment is evidence of a depraved society.

*Anger is never without a reason,  
but seldom with a good one.*

Benjamin Franklin

*Question 135: What are the duties required in the sixth commandment?*

*Answer: The duties required in the sixth commandment are, all careful studies, and lawful endeavors, to preserve the life of ourselves and others by resisting all thoughts and purposes, subduing all passions, and avoiding all occasions, temptations, and practices, which tend to the unjust taking away the life of any; by just defense thereof against violence, patient bearing of the hand of God, quietness of mind, cheerfulness of spirit; a sober use of meat, drink, physic, sleep, labor, and recreations; by charitable thoughts, love, compassion, meekness, gentleness, kindness; peaceable, mild and courteous speeches and behavior; forbearance, readiness to be reconciled, patient bearing and forgiving of injuries, and requiting good for evil; comforting and succoring the distressed, and protecting and defending the innocent.*

*Question 136: What are the sins forbidden in the sixth commandment?*

*Answer: The sins forbidden in the sixth commandment are, all taking away the life of ourselves, or of others, except in case of public justice, lawful war, or necessary defense; the neglecting or withdrawing the lawful and necessary means of preservation of life; sinful anger, hatred, envy, desire of revenge; all excessive passions, distracting cares; immoderate use of meat, drink, labor, and recreations; provoking words, oppression, quarreling, striking, wounding, and: Whatsoever else tends to the destruction of the life of any.*

The reason for this Commandment is given by God Himself:

***"Whoever sheds the blood of man,  
by man shall his blood be shed;  
for in the image of God  
has God made man. . .***

Gen. 9: 6

Human life is sacred because it bears God's image. Murder is the ultimate disrespect for the sanctity of life. All creation is under divine obligation to promote the well-being of all creation. This Commandment makes it very clear: We *are* our brother's keeper.

While this Commandment is self-evident, it does raise some very difficult questions.

#### Self-Defense

Protecting human life, our own or others, with lethal force is not restricted. Some have tried to apply Jesus' words to this Commandment:

***"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."***

Matt. 5: 38-39

This is an inappropriate application. It is God's will that we protect the gift of life. It is not only reasonable, but just, that of two persons one must die, it should be the aggressor and not the aggrieved.

#### War

The verb used in this Commandment is never applied to war.

It is conceded that the vast majority of wars have *not* been justifiable in God's sight.

***What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.***

James 4: 1-2

Nevertheless, it cannot be concluded that war in all circumstances is prohibited by this Commandment. The right to self-defense belongs to nations as well as individuals. There are just wars to correct life-threatening abuses. That all war is not against God's will is made clear by the fact that He answered His people when they consulted Him on military strategy.

***he inquired of the LORD , saying, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?"  
The LORD answered him, "Go, attack the Philistines and save Keilah."  
Once again David inquired of the LORD , and the LORD answered him, "Go down to Keilah, for I am going to give the Philistines into your hand."***

I Sam. 23: 2,4

***When he arrived, the king asked him, "Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?"***

***"Attack and be victorious," he answered, "for the LORD will give it into the king's hand."  
The king said to him, "How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?"***

**Then Micaiah answered, "I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the LORD said, 'These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace.' "**

**The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Didn't I tell you that he never prophesies anything good about me, but only bad?"**

**Micaiah continued, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD : I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?'**

**"One suggested this, and another that. Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.'**

**" 'By what means?' the LORD asked.**

**" 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,' he said.**

**" 'You will succeed in enticing him,' said the LORD . 'Go and do it.'**

**"So now the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you."**

I Kings 22: 15-23

There have been times when God actually intervened in a war on behalf of His people.

**On the day the LORD gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the LORD in the presence of Israel:**

**"O sun, stand still over Gibeon,  
O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon."**

**So the sun stood still,  
and the moon stopped,  
till the nation avenged itself on its enemies,  
as it is written in the Book of Jashar.**

**The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the LORD listened to a man.**

**Surely the LORD was fighting for Israel!**

Josh. 10: 12-14

Nothing in the New Testament modifies or changes this teaching. The roots of Christian pacifism go back to the time when believers were forced into military service by a power that persecuted the Faith. Neither the Old or New Testaments prohibit military service; but an individual's conscience might.

For war to be just, it must meet three criteria:

1. It must be *remedial*. It must correct a wrong.
2. It must be *focused*. It must be directed at the individual/institution/government which is doing the wrong. It must not be indiscriminate.
3. It must be *executed compassionately*. Just war is not based on hate, or a desire for revenge. The ultimate goal must be healing.

#### Suicide

*It is unaccountable, except on the assumption of temporary or permanent insanity, that any man should rush uncalled for into the retributions of eternity.*

Charles Hodge

**Do you not know that your body is a 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. Therefore honor God with your body.**

I Cor. 6: 19-20

Our lives are not our own. Life is a sacred trust. All laws of reason, faith and nature demand that we be good stewards of the gift of life. Suicide is not only a rejection of God's gift of life, it is a refusal to accept responsibility for the work we were created to do.

***For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.***

Eph. 2: 10

As long as we are alive, God has work for us to do.

*Life is not easy for any of us. But what of that? We must have perseverance and, above all, confidence in ourselves. We must believe that we are gifted for something, and that this thing, at whatever cost, must be attained.*

Marie Curie

Suicide is a desertion of the post to which God has assigned us; it is a deliberate refusal to submit to His will for our lives; and it is a crime which allows for no repentance.

Euthanasia  
*mercy killing*

While the intent of euthanasia may be a kindness, it is still a violation of the Commandment.

Denying heroic measures to maintain life is not a violation of the Commandment. Today, we can artificially continue life long after death would have occurred naturally. Patients facing terminal illness are encouraged to make their desires about this known to their medical team. Two ways to do this are Living Wills, and Durable Medical Powers of Attorney.

## LIVING WILL

*A Living Will is the oldest type of health care advance directive.*

*It is a signed, witnessed (or notarized) document called a "declaration" or "directive." Most declarations instruct an attending physician to withhold or withdraw medical interventions from its signer if he/she is in a terminal condition and is unable to make decisions about medical treatment.*

*Since an attending physician who may be unfamiliar with the signer's wishes and values has the power and authority to carry out the signer's directive, certain terms contained in the document may be interpreted by the physician in a manner that was not intended by the signer.*

*Family members and others who are familiar with the signer's values and wishes have no legal standing to interpret the meaning of the directive.*

## DURABLE POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR HEALTH CARE

*A Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care is a signed, witnessed (or notarized) document in which the signer designates an agent to make health care decisions if the signer is temporarily or permanently unable to make such decisions.*

*Unlike most Living Wills, the Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care does not require that the signer have a terminal condition.*

*An agent must be chosen with great care since the agent will have great power and authority to make decisions about whether health care will be provided, withheld or withdrawn from the signer.*

*It is extremely important that the signer carefully discuss his/her values, wishes and instructions with the agent before and at the time the document is signed. Such discussions may also continue after the document is signed.*

*It is also important that the agent be willing to exercise his/her power and authority to make certain that the signer's values, wishes and instructions are respected.*

Communicating to family and medical professionals your desires for end-care through a Living Will and/or Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care is both a moral and a responsible thing for Christians to do.

Even with the patient's consent, euthanasia is morally wrong because it becomes, in effect, suicide.

The Bible does allow drugs to be used to relieve suffering, but not to end life.

***Give beer to those who are perishing,  
wine to those who are in anguish. . .***

Prov. 31: 6

Legalizing euthanasia is a violation of the Commandment for at least three reasons:

1. It opens the way to people with ulterior motives to put pressure, subtle or otherwise, on patients and medical personnel to bring about a mercy killing. (Grandma, you don't want to waste all your money on medical treatment when you are going to die anyway. *"But I only have a cold!"* One European country which has legalized euthanasia reported over 1100 involuntary mercy killings.)

2. Job refused to curse God and die. In retrospect, we know that his suffering had meaning in God's providence. Our sufferings, too, may have purpose. In the expediency to relieve pain, we might transgress the will of God.

3. Euthanasia permanently ends the possibility of recovery.

#### Abortion

***For you created my inmost being;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.***

Psalm 139: 13

Abortion *is not* a form of birth control. When used as one, it is a violation of the Commandment.

It has been said that the only thing worse than *legal* abortion is *illegal* abortion. In legal abortion, a child's life is terminated; in illegal abortion, a child's life is terminated and too often the mother is killed or maimed, also.

This is an extremely difficult subject for Christians.

\*If a woman is raped, must she have the baby?

\*If having the baby threatens the health of the mother, is terminating the pregnancy wrong?

Abortion today has become more of a political topic than a spiritual one. As Christians, we must consider what the Bible teaches. It is the *infallible rule of faith and life*.

Life is a gift from God. Creating a new life is sharing in the creative powers of God Himself. As such, it is a sacred act and responsibility. The life created from sexual intercourse is human life from the moment of conception. Terminating the pregnancy is killing a human life.

***"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,  
before you were born I set you apart;  
I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."***

Jer. 1: 5

***When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.***

Luke 1: 41

Human beings are created for a purpose. Not wanting to be a parent, not wanting an additional financial burden, not wanting to be inconvenienced, are *not* grounds to end a human life.

***For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.***

Eph. 2: 10

Abortion may undermine the will of God. Here is where the question of abortion must be considered most prayerfully. The mother was created by God for a purpose, too. If this new life threatens the life of the mother, a choice must be made. The mother is already involved in the responsibilities of life. Others are already depending on her. Under these circumstances, abortion becomes the indirect and unfortunate action undertaken to preserve life.

Human life is created for fulfillment. Instances of rape and incest create very special problems. Individuals who find themselves in such situations deserve all the love and support we can give them.

Life and death belong to the province of God.

***For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.***

Phil 1: 21-24

No individual has the right to end a human life by a decision of his own, made apart from the express will of God revealed in Scripture.

*Remember the Golden Rule.*

***The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself."***

Rom. 13: 9

Life comes into being as a special creative act of God, and no gift of His can be rejected or destroyed with impunity.

Because of the deeply personal nature of this subject, Christians must live in the full assurance of God's love and forgiveness. We must extend God's love to those wrestling with this decision.

No other aspect of this Commandment lends itself so readily to the lusts of our old sinful natures. As Christians, we need to be as ready to support, encourage, love and forgive others as we would want others to do for a daughter of ours who found herself with an unwanted pregnancy.

#### Capital Punishment

Christians have long held two views on this subject.

***"Whoever sheds the blood of man,  
by man shall his blood be shed;  
for in the image of God  
has God made man.***

Gen. 9: 6

\*Capital punishment is *Biblical*. It is not a violation of the Commandment because there is no malice and no premeditation on the part of the state towards the individual. It can be argued from history that where capital punishment is not administered, malicious revenge occurs.

\*It is *just*. There should be a proportionate penalty to the crime.

\*It *deters murder*. Where murder is not adequately, appropriately punished, homicides increase.

***"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'" But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.***

Matt. 5: 38-39

\*Punishment is not only to protect society; it is to correct the offender. For this reason, it must be remedial. Killing a person does not correct him. Capital punishment denies the hope of redemption and restoration.

\*Christian punishment must be determined by compassion. All punishment must have as its ultimate goal the redemption and restoration of the offender. Capital punishment eliminates any possibility of correction.

To which view do *you* subscribe?

For me, I reject the notion that all punishment must have as its ultimate goal the redemption and restoration of the offender. However, the American penal system is built on this concept. We note this in the terms we use for our correctional facilities. Instead of prisons, we have *penitentiaries*. These are based on a monastic model. The purpose of detention is to give offenders time for penitence. They are kept in *cells* until they repent. Consequently, we assign ever longer sentences for crimes thinking that more time will lead to repentance.

*It's even hotter than usual in Phoenix, 116 degrees sets a new record, the Associated Press reports: About 2,000 inmates living in a barbed-wire-surrounded tent encampment at the Maricopa County Jail have been given permission to strip down to their government-issued pink boxer shorts.*

*On Wednesday, hundreds of men wearing boxers were either curled up on their bunk beds or chatted in the tents, which reached 138 degrees inside the week before. Many were also*

*swathed in wet, pink towels as sweat collected on their chests and dripped down to their pink socks.*

*"It feels like we are in a furnace," said James Zanzo, an inmate who has lived in the tents for 1 1/2 years. "It's inhumane."*

*Joe Arpaio, the tough-guy sheriff who created the tent city and long ago started making his prisoners wear pink, and eat bologna sandwiches, is not one bit sympathetic. He said Wednesday that he told all of the inmates: "It's 120 degrees in Iraq and our soldiers are living in tents too, and they didn't commit any crimes, so shut your d\_\_\_\_d mouths. "*

History clearly shows that our penal system fails at rehabilitation. For *me*, I reject the notion that all punishment must have as its ultimate goal the redemption and restoration of the offender. Society must be protected from those who resort to violence. I believe that when one maliciously, with premeditation, takes the life of another, he forfeits his own right to live.

*Grant, O Lord, that this day which Thou  
hast given us in mercy may be returned to Thee in service.  
May we do nothing to displease Thee or injure one another.  
But if in anything we fail or come short, through ignorance or weakness,  
O God, let Thy Fatherly wisdom correct us and  
Thine infinite mercy forgive us, and  
Thy divine love amend our fault.  
In Jesus' name we pray.  
Amen*

### For Discussion

An Elder wrote and ask:

*I have a question about your position on abortion. You say:*

*"No individual has the right to end a human life by a decision of his own, made apart from the express will of God revealed in Scripture."*

*I agree totally. But you also say that abortion in light of rape or endangerment of the mother's life is a difficult situation. While the situation may be difficult, the moral decision is clear. I refer once again to the statement above. Life and death is God's domain. In the case of rape, the mother is a victim, but this does not de-value the life of the child that God has made. Secondly, a mother's calling is to protect her children and lay down her life for them if need be. The doctor's calling is to do no harm. There is no decision allowed to kill a baby to save the mother.*

*I further question how anyone could ever absolutely say "If we don't kill this baby the mother will die." Man cannot possibly know this.*

How would you answer him?

## The Seventh Commandment

### ***You shall not commit adultery***

Exodus 20: 14

The intent of this commandment is to protect godly marriage and the family. Nothing destroys a home quicker than infidelity, be it real or imagined. Christ verifies the importance of fidelity in marriage by noting that even lustful thoughts can undermine the sanctity and security of the home.

### Adultery

The Commandment forbids sexual relations with someone other than one's lawful spouse. God considers adultery to be an attack upon the very foundation of human society.

God's ordinance of *exclusive* love within marriage is the model which helps us understand the exclusive love of God's covenant with His people

The vulnerability of human nature to sexual sin is indicated by the fact that an entire chapter of the Bible, Leviticus 18, is devoted to sexual offenses.

*Q. 70. Which is the seventh commandment?*

*A. The seventh commandment is, Thou shalt not commit adultery.*

*Q. 71. What is required in the seventh commandment?*

*A. The seventh commandment requireth the preservation of our own and our neighbor's chastity, in heart, speech, and behavior*

*Q. 72. What is forbidden in the seventh commandment?*

*A. The seventh commandment forbiddeth all unchaste thoughts, words, and*

Westminster Shorter Catechism

***You have heard it said, "Do not commit adultery." But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.***

Matt. 5: 27-28

Because marriage is the foundation of human society, violation of this Commandment carries the ultimate penalty: *death* (Lev. 20: 10; Deut. 22: 22). By this Commandment, God declares that for the well-being of creation, it is of the utmost importance that the sanctity of marriage be preserved.

*Anything* that undermines fidelity in marriage is a violation of this Commandment.

## The Nature of Godly Marriage

***For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and they will become one flesh.***

Gen. 2: 24 (repeated by Jesus Christ in Matt. 19: 5)

There are two aspects of marriage:

1. Separation. Marriage creates a new loyalty. We must forsake any and all relationships that would interfere/compete with this one.

2. A New Union. Two become *one*.

There are many unhealthy, ungodly, ways of becoming *one*: domination by one partner; abdication by a partner, etc. Biblical marriage never means the surrender of either partner's unique gifts and personality; rather, marriage is meant to be the vehicle for godly fulfillment. In marriage, we have the opportunity to use all our special talents for the good of the family. To withhold them or deny them would be a disservice to the family. The *new union* would be diminished.

## What the Bible Teaches about Marriage

***Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.***

Eph. 5: 21

*Submission:*

**1 a** : a legal agreement to submit to the decision of arbitrators **b** : an act of submitting something (as for consideration or inspection); also: something submitted (as a manuscript)

**2** : the condition of being submissive, humble, or compliant

**3** : an act of submitting to the authority or control of another

Today, without a doubt, the idea of *submission* is offensive to many Christians, especially wives. If we were to use only the second and third definitions of the word, that offense would probably be justified. But notice the *first, the primary*, definition: an agreement of parties to a decision. When a decision is made that is in the same spirit as Christ has for His Church, all should abide by it.

No marriage partner *always* deserves love, and respect; but Christ does. When everyday life puts a strain on the marriage relationship, and one of the partners begins to feel like s/he is carrying too much of the load, then it is good to remember that even if our spouse does not deserve the extra effort, Christ does. ***Out of reverence for Christ***, go the extra mile.

***Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.***

***Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.***

***He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church -- for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.***

Eph. 5: 22-33

Perhaps no verse in the Bible has been more abused than Eph. 5: 22. When I served on our local *Battered Persons* board, this verse was the most frequent justification for spousal abuse.

Marriage is never to be thought of as a *50/50 proposition*. Because each partner loves Christ, they have a common basis which enables them to seek the other's good even when they aren't *feeling* particularly loving towards that person. (Suppose you and your spouse had a major disagreement and were not speaking to each other. If you came home and found her unconscious at the foot of the stairs, would you put aside the disagreement and help her? What the Bible is teaching us is that *for Christ's sake* we should do this in every instance.)

The wife is asked to do nothing more in vs. 22 than what *both* are admonished to do in vs. 21.

*"But the husband's the boss of the house!"*

The husband is the *head* of the family as Christ is the head of the church.

***"You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done."***

John 13:13-15

***"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another."***

John 13:34

Make no mistake about it, the man *is* the *spiritual head* of the family. The fact that the average Protestant congregation is 70% female bears witness to the *effectiveness* of this leadership. Teenage boys see their fathers playing golf on Sundays and can't wait until they are "old enough" to skip church, too. Churches are making a big mistake by not promoting the *Promise Keepers*. If they want their congregations to grow, they should be encouraging their men to go and to heed the message of familial responsibility this group tries to instill in men. The more Christ-committed men a congregation has, the more dynamic its ministry will be. Like it or not, a man *is* the spiritual head of his household, *just like the Bible teaches*.

Before any husband quotes Eph. 5: 22, he better make sure he has read, *and understands*, Eph. 5: 21, 25-33! The *head* takes responsibility; the *head* leads in doing that which builds up; the *head* is willing to make any sacrifice. Even Betty Friedan would respect a man like that!

In the godly marriage, the partners are *equal*, but they have *different functions*. The family is strengthened when both partners fulfill their responsibilities.

It may not be *politically correct* to say that the husband is the *spiritual head* of the home; but he is. God's Word says so. But this responsibility places him under a special obligation to treat his family as Christ has treated us.

***Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes.***

***Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.***

***Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.***

I Peter 3: 1-7

*The first great gift we can bestow on others is a good example.*

Thomas Morell

The example of a godly wife sets the *mood* for her family. The respect a godly husband shows his wife teaches a lesson his children will never forget.

Throughout the Bible there runs a common principle: *Reciprocity*. There is never a duty, responsibility, or privilege assigned to one partner without a reciprocal one assigned to the other. Too often tension arise from one partner wanting to do the other's "job" rather than his own.

### Monogamy

***. . . the two will become one flesh. . .***

Matt. 19: 5b

*"I am a strong ally of those in healthy, polyamorous relationships," declared Debra Kolodny. She argued that having multiple sexual partners can be "holy." Kolodny was leading a workshop at the WOW (Witness Our Welcome) 2003 convention, an ecumenical gathering for "sexually and gender inclusive Christians."*

*"There can be fidelity in threesomes," Kolodny said. "It can be just as sanctified as anything else if all parties are agreed."*

Jesus Christ disagrees with this *tolerant, inclusive* application of the *theology of accommodation* being advocated by some in the Church today. When Jesus reiterates the divine standard for marriage, He clarifies the principle by emphasizing the *monogamous, exclusive*, nature of godly marriage. *Two become one*. Marriage as instituted by God is a *life-long commitment between one man and one woman*.

*"But, what about . . ."*

Homosexuality

*"I confess that to love Jesus means to live in faithful, monogamous covenants of love. . ."*

Susan Andrews, former Moderator, PCUSA

***Have you not read that He who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"?***

Matt. 19: 4-5

Homosexuality is a violation of the Commandment because it is contrary to God's plan for marriage and family. Regardless of how *faithful*, and *monogamous*, homosexual love is, it is forbidden by Scripture.

***'Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.***

Lev. 18:22

***Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised.***

***Amen.***

***Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.***

Romans 1: 24-27

***Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.***

I Cor. 6: 9-10

***We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers--and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.***

I Tim. 1: 9-10

[I challenge anyone to show me a passage of Scripture that *condones* homosexual behavior.]

Those who subscribe to the *theology of accommodation* will try to convince us that homosexuality is merely an *alternate lifestyle*. Susan Andrews and Debra Kolodny obviously feels this way. But the Bible is clear: Homosexuality is an abomination to the Lord and not an alternate lifestyle. As such, it is a violation of the Seventh Commandment.

Divorce

***So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.***

Matt. 19: 6

Divorce is not a violation of the Commandment. It is the *consequence* of behavior that violates the Commandment. The Commandment was given to prevent the necessity of divorce.

**Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard."**

Matt. 19: 8

Divorce is permitted because sin has *already* destroyed the marriage.

To prevent frivolous divorce, the Bible says there are two types of sin that are particularly lethal to marriage: *adultery* and *abandonment*. Both of these are sins against fidelity.

**"It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.**

Matt. 5: 31-32

**But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.**

I Cor. 7: 15

Jesus does not condone divorce. Divorce is contrary to God's intent. Divorce not only kills the marriage identity, it also does great harm to all the members of the family. Christ would never condone that which is harmful to His people.

Godly marriage is intended to be a *creative union* for the personal fulfillment of humanity. But even Christians succumb to their old, sinful natures. There are no *innocent parties* in a divorce.

\*If one spouse feels so neglected or taken for granted, that he seeks companionship elsewhere, both spouses share the blame.

\*If a spouse feels so abused or mistreated that she would rather be alone than stay in the marriage ("*Is there another man?*" *the husband asked. "If there is any justice in this world, there must be!" answered the wife.*), both spouses share the blame.

When sin takes control, the marriage union can become *destructive*. Sometimes the only way to heal the individuals is to separate them.

\*To stay married for the children's sake does them irreparable harm ("*the greatest love a parent can give a child is love for the other parent*").

\*To stay married to someone you wish were dead is *spiritual murder*.

\*To live with one person while loving another is *spiritual adultery*.

God gave us marriage because it is the ideal institution for fulfilling our divine calling. But too often our sinful natures -- ***your hearts were hard*** -- get in the way.

(*Sin* is anything that hurts a relationship. It is *missing the mark* which God has set. This applies to marriage, too.)

Because we are sinners, we often get ourselves into a position where we must choose between the *lesser of two evils*. For some, this means divorce. But let us never expect God to condone (permit, *yes*; condone, *no*) this choice. This was not *His* choice. Divorce comes when sin takes control, *human* sin. Those who choose this path must accept responsibility for their sin which led to the divorce.

*Violating God's moral laws is inevitably as painful as violating His physical laws, and just as much our responsibility.* But those whose weakness led them to divorce need the compassion

and support of the Church; they do not need to be judged and ostracized.

The Lord does not condone divorce; but He does acknowledge that it is sometimes the necessary result of human sin.

### Premarital Sex

Premarital sex is a violation of the Commandment. It robs the godly marriage of a very special dimension. It also opens the marriage up to a deadly disease: *comparison*. A spouse should not have to be concerned with how he "stacks up" with somebody else. And when one partner slips into thinking of a previous lover, *mental adultery* has occurred.

In our culture, sex, especially sex outside marriage, is glorified. Four bad and illogical reasons are often used to justify premarital sex.

1. *We love each other and are planning to get married someday.*
2. *We wanted to be sure we were sexually suited to each other.*
3. *We don't need a piece of paper to confirm our love.*
4. *I want a baby; I don't want a husband.*

There is one bad, but logical reason for premarital sex: *It feels good.*

(But this moment's pleasure can, and often does, quickly turn. Consider the story of Tamar and Amnon in II Sam. 13.

***"Come to bed with me, my sister."***

***"Don't, my brother!" she said to him. "Don't force me. Such a thing should not be done in Israel! Don't do this wicked thing. What about me? Where could I get rid of my disgrace? And what about you? You would be like one of the wicked fools in Israel. Please speak to the king; he will not keep me from being married to you." But he refused to listen to her, and since he was stronger than she, he raped her.***

***Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her. Amnon said to her, "Get up and get out!"***

II Sam. 13: 11b-15

Ungodly sex changes a relationship.)

There are three good and logical reasons to abstain.

1. Premarital sex alters the marriage relationship.

\*Marriage is meant to be *exclusive*. Premarital sex robs the marriage of the exclusivity it deserve.

\*Marriage is the foundation of human society because it provides us with the kind of security we need to function productively. Insecurity tends to make people anxious, fearful and unproductive. Premarital sex undermines the security of the marriage relationship.

\*Sexual comparisons can be particularly destructive to a marriage.

Intimacy without responsibility demeans all the parties involved. That is not what God intended for His people. That is why He gave us the Seventh Commandment.

*O God, our Heavenly Father, who hast set the solitary in families:*

*Look in favor, we beseech Thee, upon the homes of Thy people.  
Defend us against all evil, and supply all our needs  
according to the riches of Thy grace.  
Make us sanctuaries of purity and peace, love and joy.  
Bless us that we may abide within the safe shelter of Thy love,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen*

For Discussion

1. Some religious groups say that homosexuality is an *alternate lifestyle*. Do you agree or disagree? What is the authority for your answer?
2. A couple loves each other, but do not feel they are ready for marriage. Is premarital sex permissible?
3. A couple in your church decides to get a divorce. They ask you for a *Christian* perspective on this decision. How would you counsel them?
4. What is the most helpful way for your church to minister to homosexuals, singles and divorced members?

## The Eighth Commandment

***You shall not steal.***

Ex. 20: 15

*The foes from whom we pray to be delivered are our own passions, appetites and follies; and against those there is always a need that we should war.*

Theodore Roosevelt

*The intent of this Commandment is to respect personal property.*

Stealing threatens the welfare of society. The intent of this Commandment is to protect the right of private property.

*This communion which the saints have with Christ, doth not make them in any wise partakers of the substance of the Godhead, or to be equal with Christ in any respect: either of which to affirm, is impious and blasphemous. Nor doth their communion one with another as saints, take away or infringe the title or property which each man hath in his goods and possessions.*

Westminster Confession of Faith, 26.3

*Q. 75. What is forbidden in the eighth commandment?*

*A. The eighth commandment forbiddeth whatsoever doth, or may, unjustly hinder our own, or our neighbour's, wealth or outward estate.*

*This doctrine of the divine right of property is the only security for the individual or for society.*

Charles Hodge

Stealing is rooted in the idea that other people and their property are not worthy of our respect. Therefore, it is justifiable to take what is theirs because we want it. We violate this Commandment whenever we exploit others for our personal gain.

***A thief must certainly make restitution, but if he has nothing, he must be sold to pay for his theft.***

Ex. 22: 3b

The human capacity to rationalize behavior allows people to justify almost anything they do. Through self-deception, people convince themselves that their actions are not wrong. The Commandment does not allow for rationalizations.

Bottom line: *If you didn't buy it, earn it, been legally given it, or inherited it, it isn't yours to take, or to use.*

***Jesus answered: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"***

Luke 10: 27

We can also violate this Commandment by *omission*. We are responsible to see that our neighbor is not deprived of that which is rightfully his. Because we don't want our personal property stolen, we have an obligation to protect our neighbor's property, too.

#### *Paying the Price*

Biblical law is as concerned with restitution to the victim as it is with punishment for the offender. This is a concept sadly missing from modern criminal codes. Perhaps laws against stealing would have greater deterrence if the perpetrator knew he would have to make restitution.

***The LORD said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites: 'When a man or woman wrongs another in any way and so is unfaithful to the LORD, that person is guilty and must confess the sin he has committed. He must make full restitution for his wrong, add one-fifth to it and give it all to the person he has wronged.***

Numbers 5: 5-7

If a thief owns up to his sin, his restitution is 120% of what he took. The admission of guilt is the first step of genuine repentance.

***. . . the thief, if he is caught, must pay back double.***

The unrepentant thief is required to pay back *double* what he stole. The thief was not only to repay what he took, but to add to it an equal amount, thereby suffering himself the same harm he had inflicted on his neighbor.

With a diminished penalty for sincere confession, the Bible provides an incentive for rehabilitation.

#### Other Violations

##### *Time*

***For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.***

Eph. 2: 10

*It has been my observation that most people get ahead during the time that others waste.*

Henry Ford

God created us to do **good works**. He may want us to do them in a church, or factory, or field, or office. He may want us to do them wearing a shirt and tie, a uniform or an apron.

The point is: When we waste time, we insult God and violate this Commandment.

#### *Innocence*

***Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin.***

Luke 17: 1-2

*The first great gift we can bestow on others is a good example.*

Thomas Morell

Parents who permit liquor at teen parties; teachers who help students cheat on exams; denominations that encourage sinful behavior by calling it *alternate lifestyles*; are violating this Commandment.

#### *Character*

***A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.***

Proverbs 16: 28

*It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to lose it.*

Warren Buffett

People who would never think of stealing someone's physical possessions think nothing of engaging in character assassination. Too often the main dish at Sunday dinners is *roast preacher*. Many a person's good name is stolen away in gossip.

*Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,  
Is the immediate jewel of their souls.  
Who steals my purse, steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;  
'Twas mine, 'tis his and has been slave to thousands;  
But he that filches from me my good name  
Robs me of that which not enriches him,  
And makes me poor indeed.  
William Shakespeare, *Othello**

To listen to gossip is almost as bad as spreading it. Gossip is a violation of the Commandment and should not be tolerated by God's people.

Here, more than anywhere else, we can demonstrate our faithfulness to our Lord, by being obedient in our respect for what properly belongs to others, and that, most definitely includes their reputation.

*Happiness is not having what you want, but wanting what  
you have.*

Rabbi Hyman Judah Schachtel

*O God, who hast taught us to keep all Thy Commandments by loving Thee and our neighbor:  
Grant us the spirit of peace and grace, that we may be both devoted to Thee with our whole heart  
and treating each other as we would like to be treated.  
Teach us day by day what Thou would have us do, and how Thou would have us do it, and give  
us grace and power to fulfill Thy will for our lives.  
May we never covet what we will not work for;  
demean another, to enhance ourselves;  
or take the hours of this day for granted.  
In Jesus' name we pray.  
Amen*

For Discussion

1. What are some of the most common ways “good Christians” violate this Commandment?
2. Do you think we, as Christians, have a responsibility when we know others are violating this Commandment? What is that responsibility?
3. What can the Church do to help members who habitually violate this Commandment?

### The Ninth Commandment

***You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.***

Exodus 20: 16

*If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything.*

Mark Twain

Integrity is demanded in everything we say and do. This Commandment forbids the use of language to suit one's own ends. We are never willfully to pervert the truth.

*Question 144: What are the duties required in the ninth commandment?*

*Answer: The duties required in the ninth commandment are, the preserving and promoting of truth between man and man, and the good name of our neighbor, as well as our own; appearing and standing for the truth; and from the heart, sincerely, freely, clearly, and fully, speaking the truth, and only the truth, in matters of judgment and justice, and in all other things: Whatsoever; a charitable esteem of our neighbors; loving, desiring, and rejoicing in their good name; sorrowing for, and covering of their infirmities; freely acknowledging of their gifts and graces, defending their innocency; a ready receiving of a good report, and unwillingness to admit of an evil report, concerning them; discouraging talebearers, flatterers, and slanderers; love and care of our own good name, and defending it when need requires; keeping of lawful promises; studying and practicing of: Whatsoever things are true, honest, lovely, and of good report.*

*Question 145: What are the sins forbidden in the ninth commandment?*

*Answer: The sins forbidden in the ninth commandment are, all prejudicing the truth, and the good name of our neighbors, as well as our own, especially in public judicature; giving false evidence, suborning false witnesses, wittingly appearing and pleading for an evil cause, outfacing and overbearing the truth; passing unjust sentence, calling evil good, and good evil; rewarding the wicked according to the work of the righteous, and the righteous according to the work of the wicked; forgery, concealing the truth, undue silence in a just cause, and holding our peace when iniquity calls for either a reproof from ourselves, or complaint to others; speaking the truth unseasonably, or maliciously to a wrong end, or perverting it to a wrong meaning, or in doubtful and equivocal expressions, to the prejudice of truth or justice; speaking untruth, lying, slandering, backbiting, detracting, tale bearing, whispering, scoffing, reviling, rash, harsh, and partial*

*censuring; misconstruing intentions, words, and actions; flattering, vainglorious boasting, thinking or speaking too highly or too meanly of ourselves or others; denying the gifts and graces of God; aggravating smaller faults; hiding, excusing, or extenuating of sins, when called to a free confession; unnecessary discovering of infirmities; raising false rumors, receiving and countenancing evil reports, and stopping our ears against just defense; evil suspicion; envying or grieving at the deserved credit of any, endeavoring or desiring to impair it, rejoicing in their disgrace and infamy; scornful contempt, fond admiration; breach of lawful promises; neglecting such things as are of good report, and practicing, or not avoiding ourselves, or not hindering: What we can in others, such things as procure an ill name.*  
Westminster Larger Catechism

### Peanuts

Charley Brown: *We're supposed to write home to our parents and tell them what a great time we're having here at camp.*  
Linus: *Even if we're not? Isn't that a lie?*  
Charlie Brown: *Well . . . it's sort of a white lie.*  
Linus: *Lies come in colors?*

### *Truthfulness -- A Divine Attribute*

The Commandment to keep the truth is sacred because it is the ultimate attribute of God. Apart from the element of *truth* in God, there would be no certainty in this life.

***And the words of the LORD are flawless,  
like silver refined in a furnace of clay,  
purified seven times.***  
Psalm 12: 6

***Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."***  
John 14:6

Anything that is contrary to *truth* is contrary to the very nature of God.

\*Unless God really is what He declares Himself to be, unless He really means what He has said, unless He will do what He has said He will do, the whole idea of deity is absurd.

\*If God's nature is not truthful, He cannot be sovereign; if He is not sovereign, He is not God.

\*God's truthful nature is the foundation of all moral and physical order. (This is the reason sinful humanity is constantly seeking "scientific" explanations which exclude God.)

\*God's ordinances are the manifestation of His nature. If He is not true, His ordinances are not binding.

\*God's laws are the promises on which we rely, and by which we regulate our conduct. (As my friend Butch Moberly says: *Gravity . . . it's not a suggestion; it's the LAW!* God's moral laws are just as absolute as His physical ones.) If these laws were capricious, if the same effects did not uniformly follow the same causes, life, as we know it in this world, would be impossible.

***The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.***

Romans 1: 18-21

The *truthfulness* of our sovereign God is revealed in creation. The *truthfulness* of God is the foundation of all knowledge

***The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,  
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.***

Proverbs 9: 10

***The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments,  
because this applies to every person.***

Eccl 12: 13

Unless God is *true*, we can never be sure of anything. We can never know any real security. We have no basis of confidence with which to face the future. Unless God is *true*, we have no assurance that good will triumph over evil.

Because God is *truth*, He gave us the Ninth Commandment so that we would respect the sacredness of truthfulness. Nothing bears witness to the *total depravity* of humanity, and its fall from the divine image in which we were created, like this Commandment.

***And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.***

***For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race.***

***But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God;***

***from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.***

James 3: 6-10

A person who violates this Commandment sins against the very essence of the life God created us to live. A person who compromises *truth* is morally handicapped; he can never be the person he was created to be; he can never have the integrity he should have. The violation of this Commandment forfeits any claim we might have to basic goodness.

***For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.'*** "

Matt. 15: 19-20

Violating this Commandment is *spiritual suicide*, since each act of dishonesty and deception eradicates a little more of the image of God in which we were created.

#### *False Testimony*

***There are six things the LORD hates,  
seven that are detestable to him:***

***haughty eyes,***

***a lying tongue,***

***hands that shed innocent blood***

Proverbs 6: 16-17

Another attribute of God is *justice*. There can be no *justice* without *truth*. It can be argued that lying is *worse* than stealing. The thief takes only material possessions, while the liar deprives others of their just due.

This Commandment is recorded twice in the Torah, with two different Hebrew words used for *false*.

***You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.***

Exodus 20: 16

***You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.***

Deut. 5: 20

In Exodus, the word used means *lying, untrue*. In Deuteronomy, the word used means *insincere, empty, frivolous*. The Commandment is concerned with both *what* we say and *how* we say it. A person could report accurate data in a way which would lead another to an erroneous conclusion. This would be a violation of the Commandment.

Generally speaking, there are three aspects of *false testimony*.

*\*Presentation of false information;*

*\*Intention to deceive/mislead;*

*\*Violation of a promise.*

Are these *hard and fast rules*? No.

*\*The author of fiction presents information which isn't true.*

*\*The midwives who saved Moses (Ex. 1: 19-20) deliberately practiced deception. \*A captured soldier withholds facts from the enemy.*

There is no violation of the Commandment in situations where an individual is under no obligation to be truthful. But those incidences are very rare.

*\*Ends justify means* does not waive this Commandment.

*\*Crossing our fingers* does not remove our obligation to truthfulness.

When we focus on *how* to get around our obligation to truthfulness, we destroy our ability to discern *right* from *wrong*. This is a sure way to establish ungodly values and priorities in our lives.

*You cannot play with the animal in you without becoming wholly animal, play with falsehood without forfeiting your right to truth, play with cruelty without losing your sensitivity of mind.  
He who wants to keep his garden tidy doesn't reserve a plot for weeds.*

Dag Hammarskjöld

### *Why People Lie*

***Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.***

Col. 1: 21

Before the Holy Spirit regenerates a sin-dead heart, people have a difficult time imagining what ***evil behavior*** they have done which would warrant Christ's *substitutionary atonement* on the Cross. Sin-dead people see themselves as *basically good*, certainly no worse than many and much better than some. (Dead people do not seek medical help, only those who know they are sick seek assistance.) *Total depravity* is a concept that can only be rightly understood by a regenerated heart.

### ***As it is written:***

***"There is no one righteous, not even one; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God***

Romans 3: 10,23

Nowhere is the validity of this passage seen more clearly than in our handling of truthfulness. We lie because of . . .

\**malice*. Gossip, slander, blasphemy are all byproducts of *malice*.

\**fear*. People will say anything to escape the consequences of their actions.

\**laziness, carelessness*. It takes *discipline* to be an honest person.

\**vanity*. One of the hardest kinds of truth to tell is the truth about ourselves. We are neither *the giants of our dreams* or *the dwarfs of our fears*. *Self-deception* is a violation of the Commandment.

\**profit*. Be it for money, security, status, etc., compromising the truth for personal advantage is a violation of the Commandment.

### *How We Lie*

There are at least three ways this Commandment is commonly violated.

\**Silence*. Failure to tell the truth when we know it is a violation.

\**Half-truths*. This is more deceptive than a complete falsehood.

\**Self-deception*. *Repetition does not transform a lie into a truth.* (Franklin D.Roosevelt) Just because we tell ourselves something often enough, does not make it true (e.g., *We are good; superior to others; free to do whatever we choose.*)

*Good intentions will always be pleaded for every assumption of authority. It is hardly too strong to say that the Constitution was made to guard the people against the dangers of good intentions.*

Noah Webster

Conclusion

***And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.***

II Cor. 3: 18

The glorious hope of our Christian faith is that sinners like us are transformed *back* into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Nothing works harder *against* this transformation than violating the Ninth Commandment.

(No, Linus, *lies don't come in colors!*)

*Sovereign God of Truth,  
establish within us Thy holy integrity.  
Lift us above worldly deception and dishonesty,  
into Thy Truth, Thy Way, and Thy Life.  
In all things draw us to the mind of Christ, that Thy lost image  
may be traced again, and Thou mayest own us as at one with Thee.  
In Jesus' name we pray.  
Amen*

For Discussion

1. A minister who is in charge of Church funds knowingly promises to others more money than is available. Has he violated this Commandment?
  
2. Do you think he acted with *integrity*?
  
3. A young man takes a young lady out for a date; when he gets her home, he says, *I'll call you*, even though he has no intention of doing so. Has he violated this Commandment?
  
4. Do you think he acted with *integrity*?

5. The President takes his country to war with an evil dictator because most of his advisors tell him that this dictator has weapons of mass destruction. None were found. Did the President violate this Commandment?
  
6. Do you think he acted with *integrity*?
  
7. As Christians, what is the single most important thing to remember when it comes to acting truthfully?

#### 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.***

Exodus 20: 17

*He asks too much to whom God is not sufficient.*

#### Trust God, Not Things

The tenth Commandment addresses our *mental attitude* toward the society in which we live.

The Ten Commandments began by instructing us that there is only one, true, sovereign God and they conclude by instructing us to trust in the sufficiency of God.

***So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.***

Matt. 6: 31-34

*The World is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.*

Question 147: What are the duties required in the tenth commandment?

Answer: The duties required in the tenth commandment are, such a full contentment with our own condition, and such a charitable frame of the whole soul toward our neighbor, as that all our inward motions and affections touching him, tend unto, and further all that good which is his.

Question 148: What are the sins forbidden in the tenth commandment?

Answer: The sins forbidden in the tenth commandment are, discontentment with our own estate; envying and grieving at the good of our neighbor, together with all inordinate motions and affections to anything that is his.  
Westminster Larger Catechism



***"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder' and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.***

***"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.***

***"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.***

Matt. 5: 21-30

God is as concerned with our *attitudes* as He is with our *actions*.

### To Covet

To covet is to desire something which is not ours and which we have no right to have. The Hebrew word for covet is *betsa*, which means *dishonest gain*.

***Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and give him the praise. Tell me what you have done; do not hide it from me." Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred***

*shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath." So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent, and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver underneath. They took the things from the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites and spread them out before the LORD.*

*Then Joshua, together with all Israel, took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the gold wedge, his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and all that he had, to the Valley of Achor. Joshua said, "Why have you brought this trouble on us? The LORD will bring trouble on you today."*

*Then all Israel stoned him, and after they had stoned the rest, they burned them. Over Achan they heaped up a large pile of rocks, which remains to this day. Then the LORD turned from his fierce anger. Therefore that place has been called the Valley of Achor ever since.*

Josh. 7: 19-26

Achan coveted that which he had no right to possess. He trusted possessions more than God for his security. As a result of his sin, he brought disaster upon his nation and death to himself and his family.

In the New Testament, there are six words which can be translated in some form of covet.

\**Pleonexia*. This describes the person who always wants *more*.

A sage was asked: *Who is more content, the one with \$10 million or the one with 10 children? The sage replied, The one with 10 children; he will never want for more!*

***Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."***

Luke 12: 15

***One man gives freely, yet gains even more;  
another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.***

Proverbs 11: 24

*Not he who has much is rich, but he who gives much.*

Erich Fromm

*Pleonexia* is the quality of a person who will use his position to exploit others in order to gain his desire.

\**Pleonektes*. This is the kind of coveting which makes an idol of possessions.

***For of this you can be sure:  
No immoral, impure or greedy person -- such a man is an idolater -- has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.***

Eph. 5: 5

*A young professional was driving his new Lexus home when a puppy darted into the street in front of him. When he swerved to miss the puppy, his car hit a concrete pillar, shearing off the left side of his new car.*

*As he stood looking at his wrecked vehicle, he sobbed,  
My car! My car! My beautiful new car!*

*A neighbor who saw the whole thing came running to help. When he heard the professional's sobs, he said, Mister, forget the car; you just lost your left arm!*

*The professional looked and saw that the man was right.  
My Rolex! My Rolex!*

Serve God, not things.

\**Philarguros*. This describes a *lover of money*.

**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**

Money may define our values, but we must trust God to sufficiently provide for our needs.

\**Oregomai*. This literally means *to grab for*.

**For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have  
wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.  
I Tim. 6: 10**

No one can *cling to Christ* and *grab for money* at the same time.

\**Epithumein*. It describes *the overwhelming desire to get and possess*, whether the object be a person or thing. This is the word Paul used when he was quoting this Commandment.  
**The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule:  
"Love your neighbor as yourself."  
Romans 13: 9**

This word describes the compulsive desire to accumulate possessions, material and/or human.

\**Zeloun*. This word describes a *passionate desire*. In the New Testament, this is the word used when coveting is a good thing.

**But eagerly desire the greater gifts.  
I Cor. 12: 31a**

God so created humanity that to desire is a natural part of our character. Our desires are a vital force which motivates us. Desires, in and of themselves, are amoral; the morality of our ambition is determined by the purpose to which this energy is directed. If we are driven by selfish ambition, then we are in violation of the Commandment. If we covet the greater gifts, we will be equipped to do the work for which God created us.

**Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature  
desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the  
Spirit desires.  
Romans 8: 5**

Desires cannot be eradicated from the human heart, nor should they be. In the heart that has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, the heart where Jesus Christ reigns as Lord and Savior, we will discover in our desires the dynamic for abundant New Life. Because God's grace is irresistible, we can persevere as saints.

How To Judge

**So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.**

**But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.**

**The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.**

Gal. 5: 16-25

*The foes from whom we pray to be delivered are our own passions, appetites and follies; and against those there is always a need that we should war.*

Theodore Roosevelt

If our desires are directed towards glorifying Christ, we can be assured that we are living by the Spirit and our lives will bear the fruit of the Spirit. But if our passions are aimed at gratifying the desires of our sinful nature, then we will reap the fruits of violating God's Commandment.

**Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation. . .**

I Peter 2: 1-2

*A Cherokee Native American elder was teaching his grandchildren about life.*

*He said to them, "A fight is going on inside me ... it is a terrible fight, and it is between two wolves.*

*One wolf represents fear, anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.*

*The other wolf stands for joy, peace, love, hope, sharing, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, friendship, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith.*

*This same fight is going on inside you, and inside every other person, too."*

*They thought about it for a minute and then one child asked his Grandfather, "Which wolf will win?"*

*The old Cherokee replied... "The one you feed."*

The first nine Commandments focused on *outward* behavior. This Commandment addresses our *inward* motivations. God is as concerned with *why* we do things as He is with *what* we do. *God cares about which "wolf" we are feeding.*

**"As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts.**

1 Chronicles 28: 9

In this Commandment, God is reminding us that our actions begin in our hearts and with our thoughts. Evil thoughts inevitably lead to evil actions.

How?

Coveting material things can lead to:

\**dishonesty by cutting ethical corners.* In the business world, this can spell economic suicide. (Consider Martha Stewart: Her insider trading prevented her from losing about \$60,000. The day before the story broke, her company stock closed at \$14.46; 6 days later, it closed at \$9.55. Ms Stewart owns over 30 million shares! The money she saved through insider trading is nothing compared to the lost value to her company of her good name.)

\**exploitation by making personal gain at the expense of others.* It is counterproductive not to allow workers to benefit from their labors.

\* *"get-rich-quick" endeavors* (e.g., gambling). It is a violation of the Commandment to seek material privilege without taking moral responsibility. Calvin observed that there is nothing wrong with desiring to be wealthy; the sin comes in desiring to be wealthy *quickly*.

Coveting status is a violation of this Commandment.

Linus: *I'd like to make a lot of money, but I'd hate to be a snob.  
I've given this a lot of thought.*

Charlie Brown: *So what have you decided?*

Linus: *So I've decided to be a very rich and famous person  
who doesn't really care about money,  
and who is very humble but still makes a lot of money  
and is very famous but is very humble and rich and famous. . .*

Charlie Brown: *Good luck!*

Status seeking, too, is counterproductive; it leads to prejudice and stifles productive relationships. It also leads to self-deception which retards personal growth.

Coveting people may be the most hurtful.

***In the course of time, Amnon son of David fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of Absalom son of David.***

***Amnon became frustrated to the point of illness on account of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible for him to do anything to her.***

***Now Amnon had a friend named Jonadab son of Shimeah, David's brother. Jonadab was a very shrewd man. He asked Amnon, "Why do you, the king's son, look so haggard morning after morning? Won't you tell me?"***

***Amnon said to him, "I'm in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister."***

***"Go to bed and pretend to be ill," Jonadab said. "When your father comes to see you, say to him, 'I would like my sister Tamar to come and give me something to eat. Let her prepare the food in my sight so I may watch her and then eat it from her hand,' "***

***So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. When the king came to see him, Amnon said to him, "I would like my sister Tamar to come and make some special bread in my sight, so I may eat from her hand."***

***David sent word to Tamar at the palace: "Go to the house of your brother Amnon and prepare some food for him." So Tamar went to the house of her brother Amnon, who was***

*lying down. She took some dough, kneaded it, made the bread in his sight and baked it.*

*Then she took the pan and served him the bread, but he refused to eat.*

*"Send everyone out of here," Amnon said. So everyone left him. Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food here into my bedroom so I may eat from your hand." And Tamar took the bread she had prepared and brought it to her brother Amnon in his bedroom. But when she took it to him to eat, he grabbed her and said, "Come to bed with me, my sister." "Don't, my brother!" she said to him. "Don't force me. Such a thing should not be done in Israel! Don't do this wicked thing. What about me? Where could I get rid of my disgrace? And what about you? You would be like one of the wicked fools in Israel. Please speak to the king; he will not keep me from being married to you." But he refused to listen to her, and since he was stronger than she, he raped her.*

*Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her. Amnon said to her, "Get up and get out!"*

II Sam. 13: 1-15

We violate this Commandment when we covet *idols*. *Anything*, job, family, that takes priority over God is an *idol*. Since the determining factor in godly desires is glorifying Christ, it stands to reason that goal will lead to sin. The purpose of this Commandment is to teach us to trust the sufficiency of God.

*The Remedy to Sinful Coveting: Contentment*

***I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.***

Phil 4: 11b

What a tremendous lesson to have learned!

Christian *contentment* is not resignation to the status quo.

***I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.***

Phil 4: 13

*Contentment* comes from the confidence we have in Christ.

***And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.***

Romans 8: 28

We know that the power of God is working for us when we channel our desires according to His purpose.

Christian *contentment* comes from the active utilization of all our energies in godly living.

***You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?***

James 4: 3-5

*You cannot play with the animal in you without becoming wholly animal, play with falsehood without forfeiting your right to truth, play with cruelty without losing your sensitivity of mind.*

*He who wants to keep his garden tidy doesn't reserve a plot for weeds.*  
Dag Hammarskjöld

The world would have us believe that the secret to happiness is having *more!*

*Whenever Richard Cory walked downtown  
We people on the pavement looked at him:  
He was a gentleman from soul to crown,  
Clean favored and imperially slim.*

*And he was always quietly arrayed,  
And he was always human when he talked;  
But still, he fluttered pulses when he said,  
"Good morning," and he glittered when he walked.*

*And he was rich -- yes, richer than a king --  
And admirably schooled in every grace:  
In fine, we thought he was everything  
To make us wish we were in his place.*

*So on we worked, and waited for the light,  
And went without meat, and cursed the bread;  
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,  
Went home and put a bullet through his head.*

*Q. 1. What is the chief end of man?  
A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, [a] and to enjoy him for ever.*  
Westminster Shorter Catechism

*The staking of a [overall] goal compels the unity of the personality in that it draws the stream of all  
spiritual activity into it definite direction.*  
Alfred Alder

Christian *contentment* is established by harmonizing and channeling all our desires in  
obedience to the perfect will of God.

***Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living  
sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform  
any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.  
Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is -- His good, pleasing and  
perfect will.***

Romans 12: 1-2

*"But, if thou be a king, where is thy crown?"  
"My crown is in my heart, not on my head;  
Not decked with diamonds and Indian stones,  
Not to be seen.  
My crown is called Content;  
A crown it is that seldom kings enjoy."  
William Shakespeare, Henry the Sixth*

Christian *contentment* is never mere resignation to the *status quo*; rather Christian *contentment* demands the complete disciplining of all our desires.

*Do what you can with what you have, where you are.*  
Theodore Roosevelt

### Conclusion

The Ten Commandments begin with the *sovereignty* of God.

***"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.  
"You shall have no other gods before Me.***

The Commandments conclude with the *sufficiency* of God for all our needs.

### I WISH YOU ENOUGH

*At an airport I overheard a father and daughter in their last moments together. They had announced her plane's departure and standing near the security gate, they hugged and he said, "I love you. I wish you enough,"*  
*She said, "Daddy, our life together has been more than enough. Your love is all I ever needed. I wish you enough, too, Daddy,"*  
*They kissed good-bye and she left.*  
*He walked over toward the window where I was seated. Standing there I could see he wanted and needed to cry. I tried not to intrude on his privacy, but he welcomed me in by asking, "Did you ever say good-bye to someone knowing it would be forever?"*

*"Yes, I have," I replied. Saying that brought back memories I had of expressing my love and appreciation for all my Dad had done for me. Recognizing that his days were limited, I took the time to tell him face to face how much he meant to me. So I knew what this man was experiencing.*

*"Forgive me for asking, but why is this a forever good-bye?" I asked.*  
*"I am old and she lives much too far away. I have challenges ahead and the reality is, her next trip back will be for my funeral," he said.*

*"When you were saying good-bye I heard you say, 'I wish you enough.' May I ask what that means?"*

*He began to smile. "That's a wish that has been handed down from other generations. My parents used to say it to everyone." He paused for a moment and looking up as if trying to remember it in detail, he smiled even more.*

*"When we said 'I wish you enough,' we were wanting the other person to have a life filled with enough good things to sustain them," he continued and then turning toward me he shared the following as if he were reciting it from memory.*

*I wish you enough sun to keep your attitude bright.  
I wish you enough rain to appreciate the sun more.  
I wish you enough happiness to keep your spirit alive.  
I wish you enough pain so that the smallest joys in life appear much bigger.*

*I wish you enough gain to satisfy your wanting.  
I wish you enough loss to appreciate all that you possess.  
I wish enough "Hello's" to get you through the final "Good-bye."*

*He then began to sob and walked away.*

***And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you,  
for My strength is made perfect in weakness."***

II Cor. 12: 9a

*O Sovereign Lord,  
Thou hast ordered this wondrous world and Thou knowest all our needs.  
Fill our hearts with trust in Thee so that at all times and in all seasons  
we may confidently commit ourselves to Thy Providence.  
We know, O Lord, that all good desires come from Thee.  
Grant us that peace which the world cannot give  
that our hearts may be content to obey Thy Commandments.  
In Jesus' name we pray.  
Amen*

#### For Discussion

1. What is the best way to make sure your natural desires are channeled in a godly way?
2. What is the most effective way of resisting when you get the urge to covet that which you should not have?
3. You discover that you, a married person, have an overwhelming sexual attraction to one who is not your spouse – and the feeling is mutual. What should you do?
4. If you were single, and the object of your attraction was also, would the situation be any different? Would your desire violate this Commandment (or any other)? Does the sex of the other person matter?