

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

A 10-Week Study

with Emma Danzey



THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

1. THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME.
2. THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO THEE ANY GRAVEN IMAGES.
3. THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN.
4. REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY AND KEEP IT HOLY.
5. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.
6. THOU SHALT NOT MURDER.
7. THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.
8. THOU SHALT NOT STEAL.
9. THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOR.
10. THOU SHALT NOT COVET YOUR NEIGHBOR.

If you have ever been curious about the standard of holiness, it is found in Exodus 20. God gives Moses and His people the ten commandments.

Exodus 20:1-2 says, "And God spoke all these words: 'I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.'"

I believe it is incredible how God makes it clear that this is His standard, spoken by Him. He reminds His people – before ever stating the first commandment – that He was the One who brought them out of slavery. As we think about sin, we have all been enslaved to sin and the devil. We were living in darkness, but Christ set us free. There is a beautiful point that God, who is about to reveal His law, is reminding His people that He knows we cannot keep His commandments. But He is the Rescuer. Jesus was coming. Jesus would bring the New Covenant and keep the 10 Commandments perfectly. All who would believe in Him would be forgiven.

As we begin our series on the 10 Commandments, it will be vital that we approach these Scriptures with hearts of repentance, humility, and the perspective that Jesus has set all believers free. My prayer is that this study will draw us closer to our Savior and cause us to be more appreciative of His death on the cross for our personal sins. I pray that our eyes would be opened to the areas of struggle that we are going through now and how to combat sin with the Spirit and the Word of God.



THE FIRST COMMAND

“You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:3).

The first word of this command is “you.” REV Bible Commentary shares, “The ‘you’ is singular from the singular verb.” This means that there is a personal accountability when it comes to the commandments of God. There is not a “grading scale” based on how a local church, or a family, or a group of friends does on keeping the 10 Commandments. This is a personal call to every individual.

I remember growing up in school, how frustrating it was trying to be a “good student.” There were always a few troublemakers who would shorten our class recess or cause us to have silent lunch. It seemed so unfair. In fact, it was unfair. Our teacher punished everyone. I am sure that in her mind, she thought this would teach valuable life skills or the children who misbehaved would learn and not do it again so their peers would not be mad at them, but it never seemed to accomplish that goal because it happened again and again.

The beauty is that we are all personally responsible for our own sins. We do not carry the accountability of other’s sins to the Lord. However, Jesus took on the personal responsibility of everyone else’s sins. This was no small task. He took the beating, the mocking, and the murder. And I was over here frustrated about my recess being shortened. Jesus took the cross that I deserved and the cross that you deserved, so that we could be forgiven and reunited. He loves us so much.

WHAT IS A GOD?

It is easy to assume god means a golden calf, physical idols, or a worldly temple. However, a god is anything that takes the place of the One True God in our lives. Anything or anyone whom we put above Jesus is an idol. A god can be something that is bad like pornography or gossip. But a god can also be made out of something that is good like a friendship, family, or even a ministry. If we value our looks, our home, our job, our family, sports, celebrities, politicians, money, popularity, or our cell phones more than we value Jesus, this is a god.

My guess is that most of us break the first commandment more than we know or more than we would like to admit. Every day there are volumes of people and things competing for our hearts and focus. If we are not surrendered to Jesus and fixing our eyes on Him, we can easily get our priorities out of place.

Hebrews 12:1-2 says, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

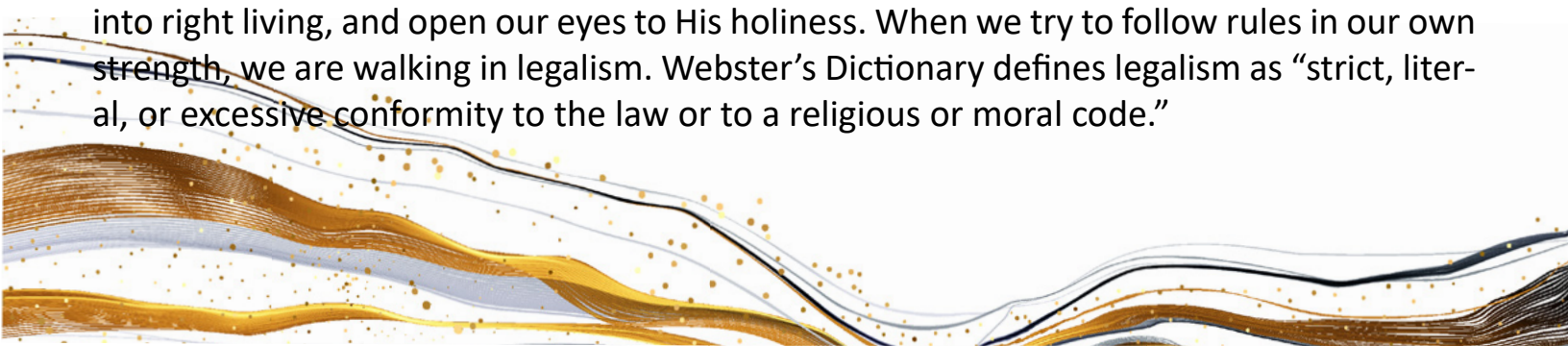
We are commanded by God to throw off everything that hinders us. When we are chasing other gods, we are disobeying the first commandment. We cannot be running after Jesus and running after the world. What gods are competing for your personal attention? Take some time to pray Psalm 139:23-24, "Search me, God, and know my heart; Put me to the test and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there is any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way." Amen.

EMPOWERED BY LOVE

One of my favorite Bible Studies of all time is No Other Gods by Kelly Minter. She shares, "I think the other nine commandments are irrelevant to us if we neglect the first one. If God is not the God of our lives, the rest of His commandments become mere suggestions... This personal, pursuing, and liberating love of God will be the power by which we'll demolish the idols of our hearts as we move forward."

I love that! The Lord is teaching us first things first; if He is not our God, then none of His ways will matter to us. If we do not rely on His love, then we have no way of living out His commands. We are invited into a beautiful relationship of trust and dependence upon our Savior.

Something that I want us to ponder in our hearts as we study the 10 Commandments is to remember the purpose. God gave these commands not so that we would keep them perfectly (He knew we already failed), but to reveal our need for the Messiah, guide us into right living, and open our eyes to His holiness. When we try to follow rules in our own strength, we are walking in legalism. Webster's Dictionary defines legalism as "strict, literal, or excessive conformity to the law or to a religious or moral code."



This is how the enemy works, he either wants us to go break all of the law rebelliously, or he wants us to believe that we are god and we can uphold and add or subtract to what the One True God has established. This is why it is vital that we pray and ask the Spirit to help us live out of love. We can ask Him to empower us to live by His Spirit and not our flesh. That He would help us to turn away from any sin that would entangle us, and help us walk in the freedom found in Christ Jesus.

Maybe you have tried to keep the law for religion's sake? You have tried to be a "good person" and do the right thing. Perhaps you have the 10 Commandments framed in your house? You might know each one by heart, however inside you are driven by fear or pride. This is so easy for any of us to do. Surrender to the Lord today and ask Him to set you free. Ask Him to show you that you are a sinner, but that you are saved by His grace, not by your works. Take steps to look at God's law as completed by Christ and leaning on Him to live it out, because you are loved.

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENTS

To be clear, Jesus was asked by the Pharisees which was the greatest commandment. He knew exactly how to answer it, because Jesus created the commandments.

"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" (Matthew 22:37-40).

(See also: Mark 12:30-31, Luke 10:27)

Jesus always has an answer, even if there seems to be mystery to it. This week, may we live in His power to love Him, ask His Spirit to reveal any other gods in our lives, and repent from them in His strength.





THE SECOND COMMAND

“You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth” (Exodus 20:4).

The word idol in this verse is *pesel*. In the Hebrew it is translated, “A graven image, or a carved image.”

There are still cultures and religions around the world today that worship physical idols. This was absolutely seen in Exodus 32 when the Israelites became weary of waiting on Moses to return from the Mountain, and decided to create their own god out of their golden jewelry. Sadly, verse 4 says, “Then they said, ‘These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.’”

As we approach the second commandment, may we remember that even if we are not physically fashioning an idol to worship, that our hearts can quickly turn towards other gods to fill spaces where we neglect to trust Jesus. As we come with confession and repentance, we know that Christ’s love leads us out of darkness and into His marvelous light.

Today we will study the second commandment: You shall not make for yourself an idol.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE 1ST AND 2ND COMMANDMENTS

You might be asking the question, “What is the difference between having no other gods and not making for yourself an idol?” The first and second commandments go hand in hand. John 14:6 says, “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” Jesus is the I Am. He is the only way to heaven. He is the only one worthy of our worship.

However, the second commandment builds upon the first. The Gospel Coalition shares, “The second commandment is similar and tells us that we are not to worship God accord-

ing to our own conception of God, what the Bible calls idolatry. We must worship God according to who he is and not according to what we want him to be. In other words, do not worship false gods, and do not worship God falsely.”

This is a wonderful definition. We have to be extremely careful not to use God’s name to fit a god that we want Him to be. We have to be very cautious not to create our own savior and say that it is based on Jesus and the Bible. Only God defines Himself. We also have to recognize if there are other false gods we are worshiping in our lives.

What Is an Idol?

“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, ‘These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt’” (Exodus 32:7-8).

The Israelites were trying to apply God’s work and power to a golden calf. We notice that they were quick to turn away. They made an image and tried to apply the Lord to it. They bowed to it, sacrificed to it, and said that it brought them up out of Egypt. Is this not just like the enemy? He leads us to doubt God, become impatient with Him, and then try to redefine Him.

I cannot help but be burdened by the many people who claim to follow Jesus today, yet they have said that He says things He never said, or believe that He supports sins that He has never supported. It can be so discouraging to live in a culture that truly does not worship Jesus, the Word and the Way. But we cannot lose heart.

I was reminded today in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 that it says “we are perplexed, but not in despair.” God is still on the throne. He sees the evil that the enemy is working in the world through people. He knows the truth. He still has the victory and He still is returning one day to make all things new.

Until then though, we know that we too are susceptible to the enemy’s tactics. We can easily doubt, become impatient and try to redefine God.



A REAL-WORLD EXAMPLE

Doubt: Did God ever actually say...

Impatience: I'm tired of not fitting in or holding back how I actually feel...

Redefine: This specific thing was never written in the Bible and plus Jesus hung out with sinners... (Making Jesus who we want Him to be)

The Answer: Does this show love and honor to God and other people? Our greatest commandments are to love God and love people. Even if someone said that something is a "gray topic," I would always lean on the side of holiness to honor Christ than to push the limits to do what I want. Because let's face it, I am a sinner.

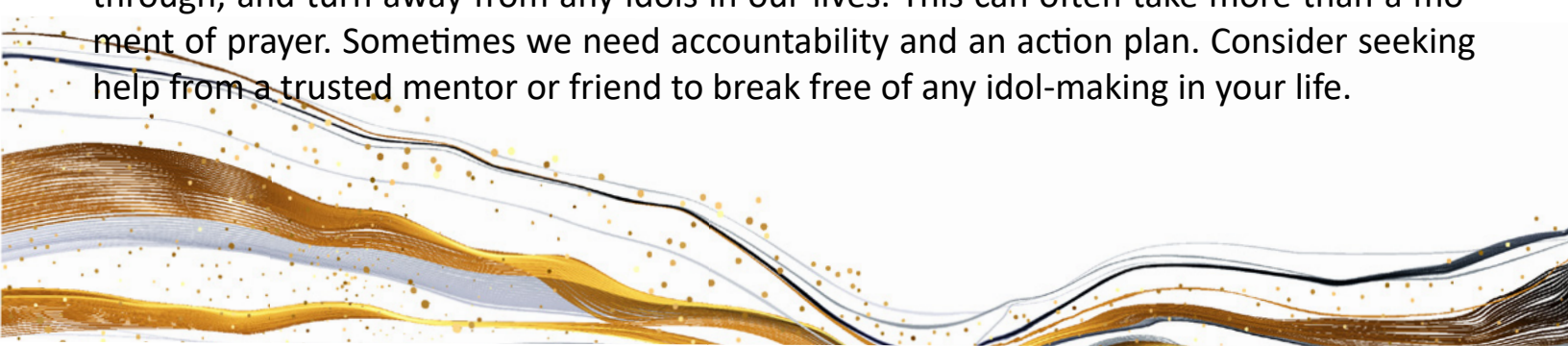
4 WAYS TO BE GUARDED AGAINST IDOLS

1. Be on high alert with the help of the Holy Spirit. Social media profiles for example, can quickly become idol worship platforms for ourselves or others.
2. Take our questions to God before doubting Him leads to impatience. The Lord cares about our thoughts and emotions. He wants to hear from us. The best decision that we can make is to call out to Him in our struggles and questions.
3. Notice any lies that you believe about the Lord or yourself. Ask the Spirit to help protect you from believing those lies that lead you into sin.
4. Live a life of repentance. Be humble always. Remain faithful to confess your sins and thank Jesus for what He has done for you. This will help you avoid making yourself into your own "god."

Possible idols to think through include:

- Phone
- TV
- Popularity/Fame
- Social Media
- Ministries
- Family
- Friends
- Hobbies/Sports
- Celebrities
- Food
- Comfort
- Fashion
- Cars
- Prestige/Money
- Grades/Awards

This week, may we live in His power to trust Him, ask Him any questions we are wrestling through, and turn away from any idols in our lives. This can often take more than a moment of prayer. Sometimes we need accountability and an action plan. Consider seeking help from a trusted mentor or friend to break free of any idol-making in your life.





THE THIRD COMMAND

“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain” (Exodus 20:7).

My sweet niece is just shy of three years old. She recently heard someone use God’s name as a curse word. Her mom quickly tried to recover the situation by telling her, “We don’t say God.” The ever-popular phrase, “Oh my - - -” has become all too common and accepted, even among believing Christians.

This precious little girl took what her mother said quite literally and whenever they talked about God or wanted to pray to God she would respond, “We don’t say God.” Her mom was mortified, she wanted her daughter to learn and love God, but she did not want her taking His precious name in vain. My niece is now beginning to learn the difference in her toddler mind.

This comical story sets us up to ponder the holiness and beauty of our Lord’s mighty name. We will now take a deeper look at the third commandment: You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.

WHAT DOES “IN VAIN” MEAN?

Hopefully we are using God’s name all of the time. Ideally, we are praying to Him and talking about Him in our daily lives. Using His name is not a sin, unless it is in vain. Strong’s Hebrew Concordance tells us that shav is the Hebrew word translated “in vain,” in Exodus 20:7. The meaning is, “Evil, idolatry, uselessness.”

Evil: How do we use God’s name for evil? I think about cursing. There are so many phrases people like to use to cuss that include one of the names of God. Jesus’ name, too, has power in it. God’s name has power in it. People know that and pair His name with evil to accomplish sin.

Idolatry: In thinking back on the first two commandments, we take God's name in vain when we call something else god that is not Him. He is the only one true God (John 17:3). When we dumb Him down to our manmade religions, it is in vain because calling on any name other than Jesus our Lord is useless. You might see temporary demonic or fleshly results, but true eternity weighs on Jesus alone.

Uselessness: This is an important point as well. The term "useless" reminds us that we should not talk about God in ways that are pointless. We should remember Who He is and what He has done for us. We should be considerate to speak positively of Him and respectfully of Him. He is also in relationship with all who believe in Him, and so we should be careful not to ignore that relationship, but to cultivate it with purpose and speak to Him and about Him with intent.

IS THIS MORE THAN USING GOD AS A CURSE WORD?

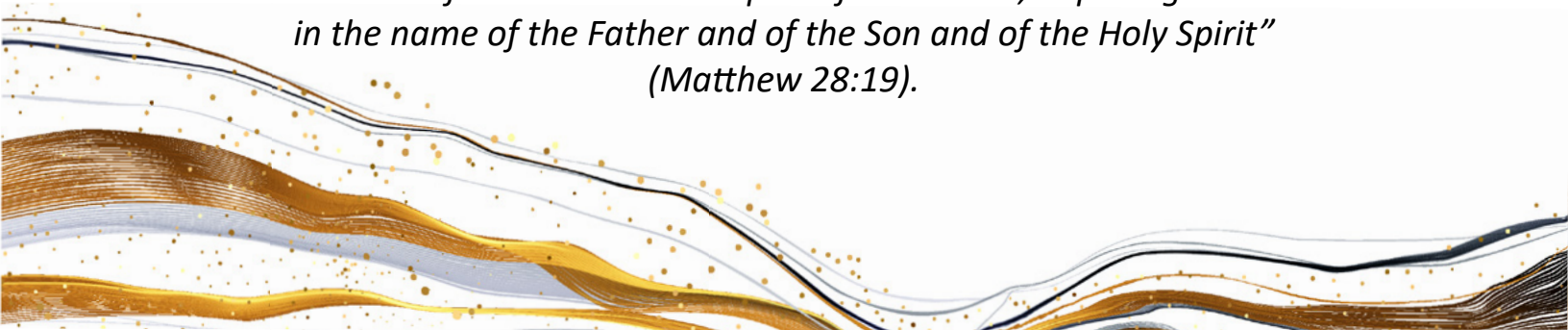
This is more than just avoiding cussing. As we have seen from the Hebrew, we are to avoid evil, idolatry, and uselessness when it comes to the name of God. I believe the concept of this commandment can be seen in other places in Scripture.

"God said to Moses, 'I am who I am.' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel: 'I am has sent me to you'"
(Exodus 3:14).

*"I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other,
nor my praise to carved idols"*
(Isaiah 42:8).

*"And My people who are called by My name humble themselves,
and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will
hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land"*
(2 Chronicles 7:14).

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them
in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"*
(Matthew 28:19).



*“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”
(Acts 4:12).*

*“So that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”
(Philippians 2:10-11).*

The names of God (Jesus, Holy Spirit, Father, Lord, Yahweh, I Am, etc.) need to be revered. He is our Savior. He is our Creator. He is our Redeemer. He is our King. Our mindset when it comes to Him should be loving, respectful, and treasuring His name because of who He is and has always been.

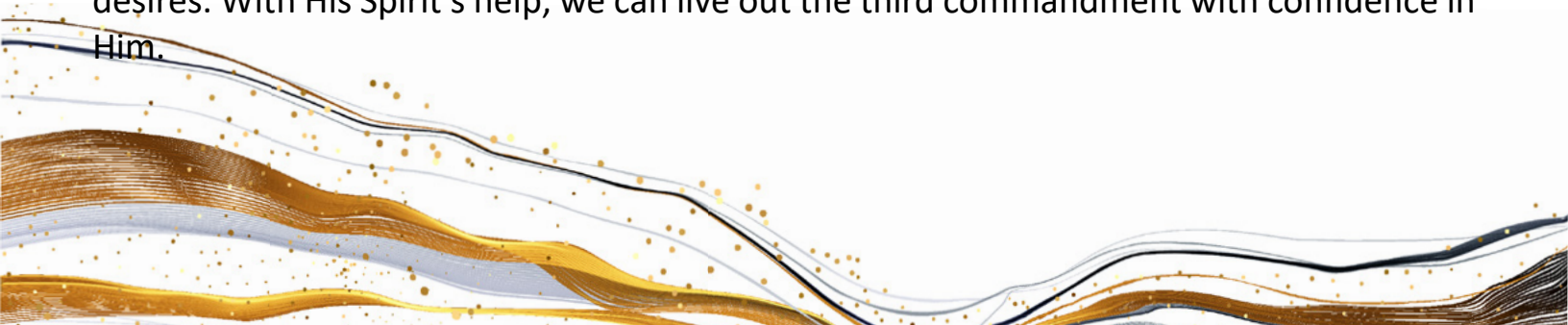
THE HOLY NAME OF GOD

In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus provides the model prayer for us. He begins in Matthew 6:9 with, “Pray then like this: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.’” To be hallowed is to be holy. The name of God is holy. Do we see His name as precious and worthy of our praise? Do we speak about Him in a way that honors Him? Do we use His name to bless or to curse?

When we have the Holy Spirit, there should be a very real conviction in our hearts if we misuse the name of our Lord. Maybe we just have not been truly appreciative of His name? Is so, we can repent and turn towards Him and away from apathy. Lord, forgive us for ever dumbing down Who You are by Your name.

He has the name that can save. At the sound of His name demons flee (Luke 10:17) and the sick are healed (Mark 16:18). He has full power and authority. He is worthy. May we not water down His holiness by tossing around His name inappropriately.

This week, may we live in His power to use His name properly. May we confess any ways in which we have used His name for evil, idolatry, or uselessness. Only He is the One who can help us to turn from our sinful ways. He sees our hearts and He knows our genuine desires. With His Spirit’s help, we can live out the third commandment with confidence in Him.





THE FOURTH COMMAND

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy” (Exodus 20:8).

Have you ever heard that if you work with your hands then it is good to rest with your mind, but if you work with your mind it is beneficial to rest with your hands? This statement stuck out to me in a podcast once. If we work tirelessly in a data entry position, it might be helpful for us to go on a walk or play pickle ball on a Saturday. However, if we are chasing around children and home keeping, we might be restored with a book or crossword puzzle.

God created rest and modeled it before sin entered the world. Today we are going to take a closer look at the fourth commandment: Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

WHAT IS THE SABBATH?

“Sabbath” is not a word that I hear regularly. However, this word was very well known and used in the Jewish culture. The Hebrew Concordance shares that the word for Sabbath is shabbath, meaning: Intermission, the Sabbath. When I hear intermission, I first think about a theatre performance or a long movie. There is a break for everyone to stretch, go to the restroom, get more food, and then return.

An intermission causes us to take a momentary pause from the action to “reset.” At the end of a busy week, God invites us to stop and reset before His kingdom work picks up again (like the second act of a show). God gives us the Sabbath not to say, “well done;” He gives us the Sabbath to say, “I’m not done, but you need renewal before getting back in the game.”

Think about a sports team that has been playing hard in a game. Half time comes and the players are able to breathe, refocus, hydrate and hear from their coach to motivate them to finish strong. God has designed us to be dependent upon Him. This means that we are “in the game” but we need a break each week. We are not God, we are finite. Our Creator

did not actually need rest on the seventh day. However, He chose to rest as an example and to bless that day as holy for us.

“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 male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 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 20:9-11).

The Sabbath should not be seen as a burden to us, but rather a blessing and delight. The Lord knows we are dust, yet He strengthens us and aids us in our weaknesses to recharge and reconnect with Him. The purpose of the Sabbath is absolutely to physically rest, but also to spiritually renew and reconnect with our Savior. It is ironic because it seems in our American culture, we have to work hard to intentionally rest. We live in an overachieving culture, but we also live in a lazy culture. With technology, we can consider binge watching a show or scrolling on social media as rest, however was this really what God meant?

I spoke with a Christian couple from Israel recently who sabbath on Saturdays. They spend intentional time in prayer and in worship. They avoid things that distract them from God. They cease from chores and cooking on that day of the week. It really was beautiful hearing them share about their decision to follow this lifestyle command from Scripture. They were eager to seek their Savior on their day off.

Are we eager to do so? Is Saturday (or Sunday if you choose) all about what you want to do or accomplish? Or, is it about resting in the work of Christ? Jesus came and did the work so that we could rest.

3 TIMES JESUS HELPS OTHERS ON THE SABBATH

1. Once the Pharisees tried to stump Jesus because He picked some heads of grain in a field with his disciples on the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-28). He reminded them of David and his friends needing food and that Abiathar the high priest gave them the consecrated bread meant for only priests. Jesus brings up this point:



“Then he said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath’” (Mark 2:27-28).

The Sabbath was created to be a blessing to man, but Jesus is saying if someone is starving, it is more important to get food to eat than to be overly concerned with the perfectionism of Sabbath law. Jesus never sinned (2 Corinthians 5:21). He remembered the Sabbath day and He kept it holy. It was the Jews who added to the 10 Commandments.

2. Another time on the Sabbath a man with a shriveled right hand was in the presence of Jesus in the synagogue. The Pharisees were observing Jesus’ response to find a reason to accuse Him.

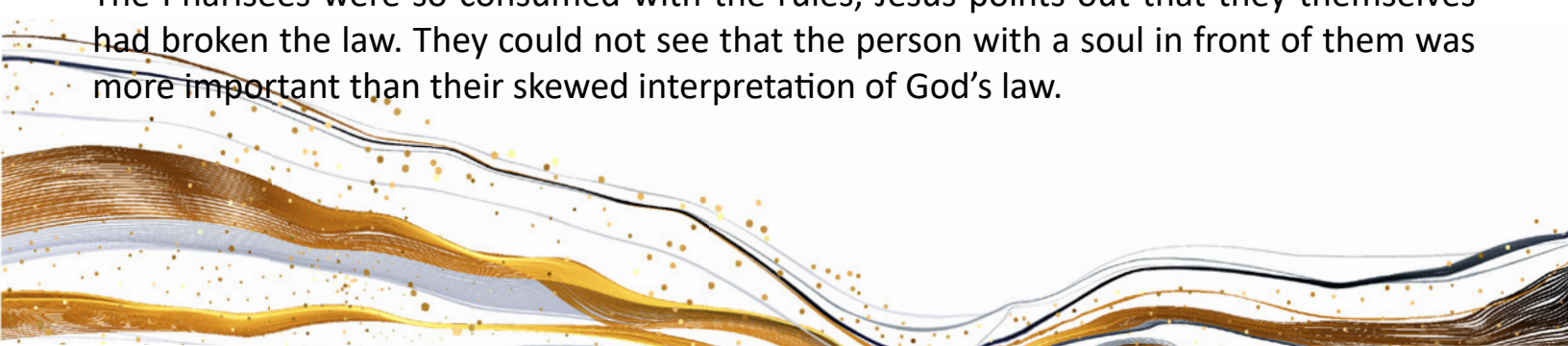
“Then Jesus said to them, ‘I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?’ He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ He did so, and his hand was completely restored. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus” (Luke 6:9-11).

Jesus asked if the Sabbath was for good or evil. He chose to do good. The Pharisees were so angry at Jesus for healing a man in need. They did not care about people, but about Jewish practices. Jesus was teaching that when we become burdened by legalism, we miss the blessing of His intended Sabbath. The Sabbath was created as a gift to believers; it was not supposed to be a burden to us.

3. Once the Pharisees tried to stump Jesus because He chose to heal on the Sabbath (Luke 13:10-17). A woman who had been crippled by a spirit for 18 years approached Jesus while He was teaching on the Sabbath. He declared her free, put his hands on her and she was healed and praised God. The Pharisees chastised Jesus and He responds:

“You hypocrites! Doesn’t each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?” (Luke 13:16-17).

The Pharisees were so consumed with the rules, Jesus points out that they themselves had broken the law. They could not see that the person with a soul in front of them was more important than their skewed interpretation of God’s law.



THE HOT DEBATE

There is still a huge debate that goes on in Christian circles today. Does the Sabbath still apply today? I believe this question appears mainly because of Jesus' responses on the Sabbath to the Pharisees. However, in my humble opinion, I believe that all of God's law is perfect (Psalm 19:7) and we should be careful not to pick and choose what we obey from it. Viewing the 10 Commandments through the lens of a forgiven believer reminds us that the law is there for our freedom and our benefit. Jesus has blessed us with the freedom to take a day off, reconnect with Him, and love Him and others.

Jesus modeled this. He was on Sabbath, but as He saw those in need, He loved them and fulfilled the two greatest commandments (Matthew 22:35–40). He states in verse 40, "All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Hebrews 4:1-11 teaches more in-depth on the Sabbath after Jesus' ascension into heaven.

Hebrews 4:9-11 says, "There remains, then, a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For whoever enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from His. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following the same pattern of disobedience."

So I choose rest. I choose renewal and intermission to receive this blessing that was good enough for God to receive Himself on day seven of creation. I am a work in progress with learning how to spend the time off, but I believe it is a blessed day for family and friends to connect with our Savior and with one another. Notice the phrase, "Make every effort to enter that rest." This does not come naturally to us; we have to fight for it, we have to ask the Spirit to lead us into the rest. But it is worth it when we follow Him.

This week, may we remember that we are invited to take an intermission one day. We are commanded to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. May we walk in freedom knowing that heart and purpose for rest. God is so kind to us.





THE FIFTH COMMAND

“Honor your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the Lord your God is giving you” (Exodus 20:12).

This might be one of the most well-known commandments. Parents eat it up. We love to have a verse in there about respecting our roles. However, what does this really mean? Does honoring parents apply to young children as well as adult children? How can we teach this concept to our children, while also being obedient to it as adults?

This week in our study, we will learn about the fifth commandment: honor your father and mother.

WHAT IS HONOR?

The word here in Exodus 20:12 for honor is kated. According to the Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon, kated means, “Heavy, great/important, burdensome.” In other words, we should have great value and respect for our father and mother. There should be a weight of honor that we bear for them.

Honor could look like:

- Responding in appropriate ways even when we disagree.
- Obeying them (when we are children living under their care)
- Speaking kindly about them and to them
- Playing our role in the home (doing chores, helping out, etc.)
- Showing gratitude for the ways in which they provide for us

Webster’s Dictionary defines honor as “recognition, a person of superior standing, integrity.”

Does honoring my father and mother mean I will have a long life? Obviously this is not a guarantee. It is more of the concept that honoring your parents and obeying their instructions can lead to a long life. Case in point: remembering your parents’ instruction to “look

both ways before crossing the street” or “don’t eat that, it is poisonous” could very well be moments where honoring their voices leads to a longer life.

HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO ADULT CHILDREN?

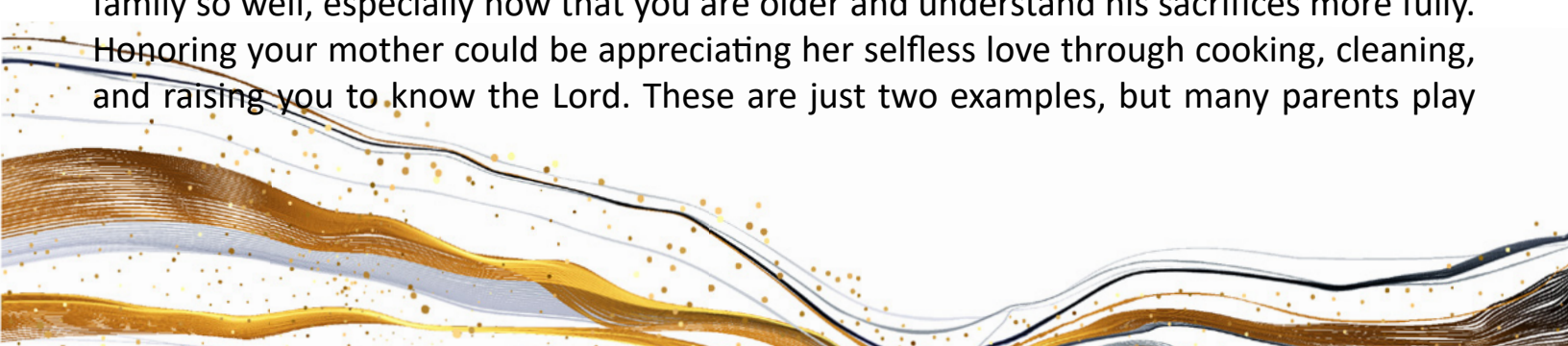
Sure, this command is pretty straightforward for children, but what about adults? Before the fall of humanity, God ordained that when a boy became a man, he would leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife (Genesis 2:24). A new family is born when a man and a woman marry. They might have their own children and be honored by them. However, what does their relationships look like with their parents? Or for another example, what does this parental relationship look like for an independent single woman who is out of her parents’ home?

The concept of honor does not go away. However, I would argue that the concept of obedience does diminish. Psalm 127:4 teaches that children are like arrows. Have you ever practiced archery? You pull the arrow back with the bow and steady it towards your target. You hold tightly to that arrow and aim with precision, then in strength you release that arrow towards the goal set before you.

Godly parents should have the goal of raising a child to know Jesus (Proverbs 22:6) and releasing them into adulthood. In a similar way, an adult child has been released from the authority of parents. However, they still respect and cultivate that relationship. They might honor them by seeking out wisdom from their parents, or listening to their stories from the past. They might honor aging parents by providing a place for them to live under their care or the care of another. They might honor them by respecting their thoughts and opinions, even if they are different.

Matthew Henry adds, “Endeavoring, in every thing, to comfort parents, and to make their old age easy; maintaining them if they need support, which our Saviour makes to be particularly intended in this commandment, Mt 15:4-6.”

Honoring a father could be thanking him for how he provided, disciplined, and cared for your family so well, especially now that you are older and understand his sacrifices more fully. Honoring your mother could be appreciating her selfless love through cooking, cleaning, and raising you to know the Lord. These are just two examples, but many parents play



different roles that we often do not fully understand or appreciate until we become older ourselves. Part of honoring them can be the gift of gratitude towards their sacrifices over the years and celebrating their faithfulness to your family.

WHAT ABOUT HONORING HURTFUL OR ABUSIVE PARENTS?

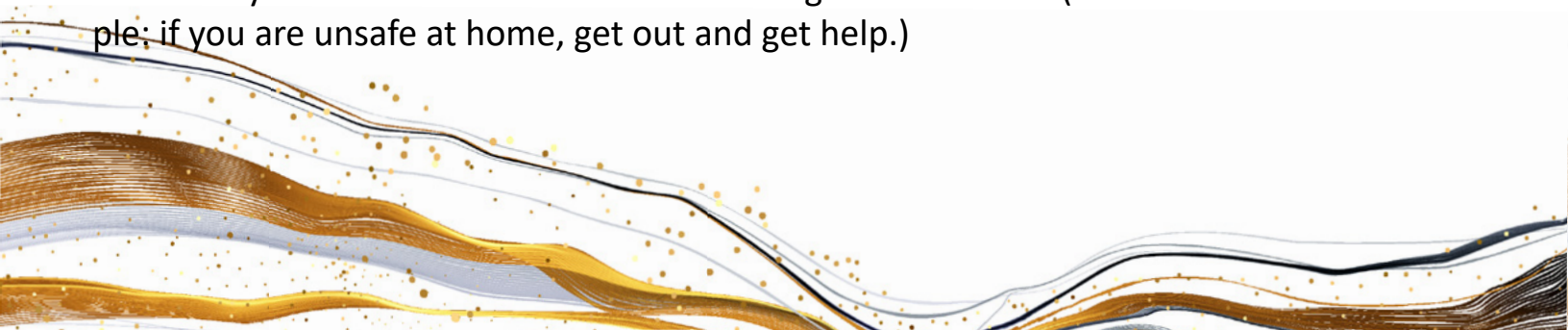
In this verse we see Biblical evidence of God's design for a household. One Father, one mother, and the child (or children). In a day when culture is running away from the original design for a family, it is important to acknowledge that the Lord who gave us His 10 Commandments included one with honor for a father and a mother. This type of marriage is blessed by Christ. It is sacred because it points to His love for the church. The role of a father is unique from the role of a mother, yet both play a crucial role in the development, security, and long-term wellness of their children.

Maybe you do not come from a background with both a father and a mother. Perhaps you have grown up in a divorced home or with a widowed parent. Maybe your parents have chosen lifestyles that do not line up with God's design. Or you might be from a single-parent home.

Whatever your history, you have been given wholeness in Christ Jesus. Maybe your parents did not deserve honor. There could have even been abuse involved. If that is the case, I want to apologize for their sin that hurt you. This was not God's hope or heart for you. It is easy to agree with honoring your father and mother when they are worthy of respect or have been great parents, but what if that has not been your story? How do you live out this commandment?

1. Honoring Does Not Mean Supporting

You can honor your parents without supporting their decisions. You can have an attitude of respect without respecting or agreeing with their actions. I think about King David before he was king. King Saul at the time was literally trying to kill him, but David refused to hurt Saul because He was God's chosen leader at the time. He instead trusted in the Lord to move and work out his situation (1 Samuel 24:10). He honored King Saul, but he also set healthy boundaries with him to avoid being hurt or worse. (Take note from this example: if you are unsafe at home, get out and get help.)



2. Honoring Does Not Mean Obeying

If a parent is ever asking you to sin, then your responsibility is not to obey that parent, but to obey the Lord. Honoring them is not a command to obey them. However, if a parent is giving instruction that a child does not like or that sounds unfair, then obedience is part of honoring them.

“But Peter and the apostles answered, ‘We must obey God rather than men’” (Acts 5:29). Obeying Jesus trumps obeying parents. We honor God above all. Honoring God leads to honoring our parents, but if our parents do not honor God, we must always choose Jesus first. In fact, some have been disowned or endangered by their own families to follow Jesus. He responds with blessing to them (Matthew 19:29).

3. Speech Seasoned with Honor

The people who know us the best can often be the ones whom we easily hurt the most. It is common for children of any age to respond with dishonor towards their parents. The words and tones we use say a lot about if we are following the 5th Commandment, and ultimately if we are living by the power of the Holy Spirit.

“Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person” (Colossians 4:6).

We can speak kindly of our parents or we can gossip and slander them. Part of honoring them is understanding that they too are sinful people who make mistakes, and we have much grace to give. We love each other, we have been blessed to have a family, and our words can honor or tear down. May we be the kind of children (or adult children) who honor our parents with our speech and our lives.

This week, may we honor our parents, whether they deserve it or not. May we choose to speak kindly of them, show gratitude towards them, and care for their thoughts and opinions. The family unit is a gift from God and may we always be thankful for that and ultimately honor the Lord for being our Heavenly Father.





THE SIXTH COMMAND

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

You might be thinking that this simple statement is obvious and we can all move on to the next commandment. However, “Do not murder” has a much deeper meaning than meets the eye. Have you murdered? Have I murdered? Maybe you have not committed a crime and taken a life, but this commandment is still relevant for all of us.

Today, we will look at what the Bible says regarding the sixth commandment: do not murder.

WHAT DOES THE COMMAND NOT TO MURDER INCLUDE?

Webster’s Dictionary defines murders as: “The crime of unlawfully and unjustifiably killing a person, to kill (a person) unlawfully and unjustifiably with premeditated malice, to put an end to: destroy.”

Jesus further defines murder in Matthew 5:21-22:

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.”

We can often jump to the conclusion that the sixth commandment is really about people who chose to physically kill someone else. However, Jesus teaches us that it is much more than this. God cares about not only the sinful conditions of our bodies, but also the sinful conditions of our hearts. Sin is not solely an action, it can also be the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts.

“For the word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, even penetrating as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

Hebrews teaches us that the Bible is living and active and actually judges the thoughts and intentions of our hearts. When we read Scripture (all inspired by God), His Spirit guides us and convicts us. We are then transformed.

HAVE I MURDERED?

Have you murdered before? Perhaps you actually have physically sinned in this way. Do not forget that Jesus transformed the lives of Paul, King David, Moses, and others who physically murdered. They had to deal with consequences and the weight of guilt from their choices, however Jesus came for them and He came for you too. No sin is too difficult for Jesus to cover by His perfect sacrifice and resurrection.

“Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:15).

Maybe you have never physically murdered anyone, but your heart and thoughts would say otherwise. You have hated someone so much and with such fury. Maybe this person wronged you or a loved one and it felt justified to hate them and wish evil on them? However, hate is hate. At the end of the day, God tells us in His Word that hate is tantamount to murder.

When I was young, I remember thinking that I had only broken most of the commandments. Unfortunately, as I have grown older, I do not believe that anyone of an accountable age has kept any of the ten commandments. Ouch!

Romans 3:23 tells us all have sinned. Psalm 73:26 teaches us that our flesh and our hearts may fail, but God is our strength. Romans 3:10-12 tells us that there is no one righteous. When we truly look deeper at each commandment, we realize what great sinners we are. But it compels us to celebrate what great a Savior we serve. Jesus has set us free.



3 PRACTICAL WAYS TO PREVENT HATE

1. Ask God to Search Our Hearts

It is important to recognize when we are heading down a mental path that will lead to murder in our hearts. We are called to take every thought captive to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). If the enemy is planting a lie in your head or trying to cultivate a bitter root in your heart, recognize it quickly. This is a great time to pray like David:

“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:13-14).

Will we be bold enough to ask God to search us and reveal sin in our lives?

2. Pray for Our Enemies

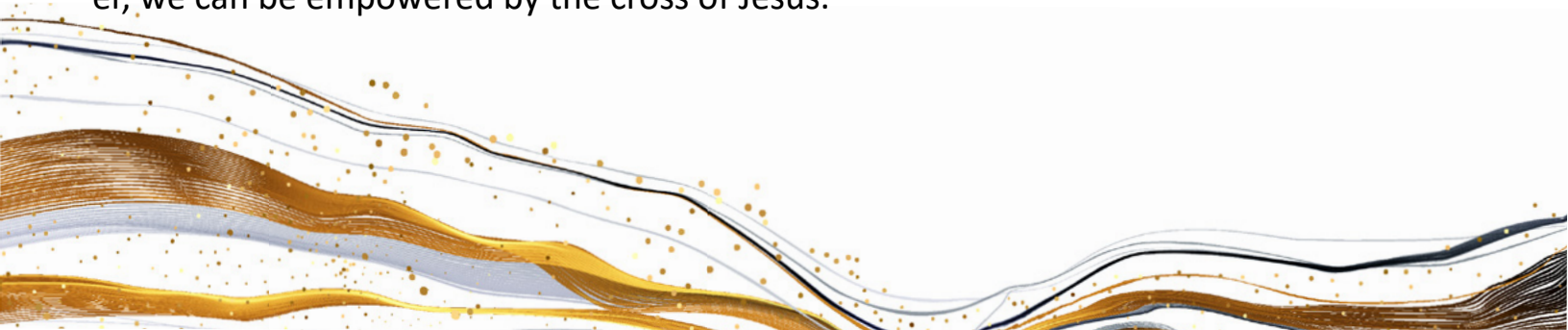
Jesus taught in Matthew 5:44, “But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” If we are proactive in the spiritual battle and pray for those who are our enemies or persecutors, we will safeguard by the power of the Holy Spirit against hating them. It is easy to pray for those we love and care about, but it is really challenging to pray for those who have hurt us or who even hate us. Prayer helps us to take situations to God and reminds us that they are also people made in His image. It humbles us to know that we are not sovereign, only the Lord is, and He is above the most difficult circumstances.

3. Remember Jesus

We were enemies of God. Romans 5:7-8 says, “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

When we are tempted to hate (murder in our thoughts or heart), we can ask the Holy Spirit to help us remember Jesus’ love for us – love that we did not deserve. We ourselves deserved punishment and death, but He gave us forgiveness and life.

This week, may we ask God to search our hearts, pray for our enemies, and remember Jesus. May we receive the love that Christ us for us even in our murderous minds and hearts. His mercy is greater and we do not have to live in defeat to the sixth commandment. Rather, we can be empowered by the cross of Jesus.





THE SEVENTH COMMAND

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

Our culture is obsessed with sex. There are TV shows that revolve around it, songs written about it, and news updates surrounding it. People love a good scandal, gossip about it rampantly swirls about, and forbidden love seems so exciting. With all the glamour, passion, and imaginary storylines, it can be tempting to believe that the enemy has something better for us than the Lord’s plan for marital love.

This week we will study the seventh commandment: Do not commit adultery.

WHAT IS ADULTERY?

Webster’s Dictionary defines adultery as: “voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and someone other than that person’s current spouse or partner.”

This is a very basic and worldly definition. It is accurate, but it is not a full definition that God gives to us. Jesus teaches us that adultery is more than just a married person having an affair.

Jesus defines adultery in Matthew 5:27-30.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall 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 stumble, 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 stumble, 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.”

Have you ever looked at someone else with lust in your heart? Have you ever viewed pornography? Have you ever had sinful thoughts, sexualizing another human being? Have

you ever read a scandalous novel? Have you flirted online with someone while being married? Have you lived with someone before you got married? Have you had premarital sex? These are just a few examples of adultery today. God is serious about sin. He had to die on the cross for these sins, but we can so quickly call them “common” or “the way things are today.”

Jesus says to be holy because He is holy (1 Peter 1:16) He says to set an example for the believers in our purity when we are young (1 Timothy 4:12). We do not let the culture define our sexuality; our sexuality is defined by our Creator for a purpose and for our good.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT SEX OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE?

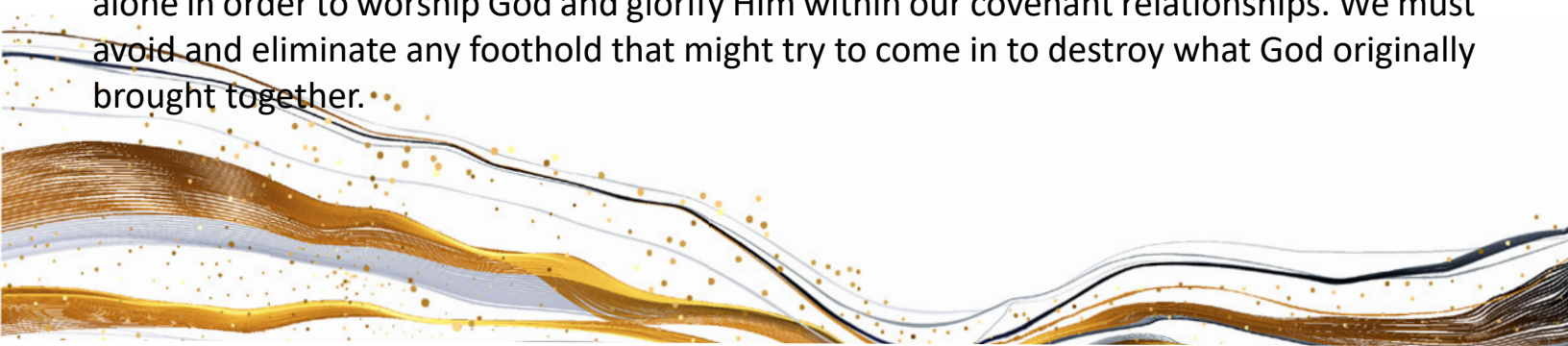
“Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous” (Hebrews 13:4).

“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality” (1 Corinthians 6:9).

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality” (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

If we are in covenant with Jesus as His church, that means that anything outside of His will is sinning against Him and breaking that covenant. This means that premarital sex of any form is committing adultery against God. It is not God’s will and it is not honoring marriage and the marriage bed. In fact, it is defiling the marriage bed. God’s perfect plan has always been for one man and one woman to enter into a marriage covenant together. We see this with Adam and Eve before sin entered the world.

Our highest goal in romantic relationships should be to seek the Spirit for strength, to set up healthy boundaries, to have accountability, and then to marry when the time is right. Our highest goal is for marriage to be intimate and to share that gift with our spouse alone in order to worship God and glorify Him within our covenant relationships. We must avoid and eliminate any foothold that might try to come in to destroy what God originally brought together.



WHAT IS SPIRITUAL ADULTERY?

Maybe you are still not convinced that you have committed adultery. I want to also add that the Lord makes it clear that we have all committed adultery against Him. As His church, we are His bride, we carry His name, and we have cheated on Him with the enemy and our sin. We have chosen temporary pleasures instead of being faithful to our Groom, Jesus.

“You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God” (James 4:4).

James implies that we have had relations with the world and the sin in it instead of staying in a covenant relationship with Christ. He made the covenant with us; He never breaks it. But we, like Gomer in the story of Hosea, have spiritually prostituted ourselves to chase after our sins instead of our First Love.

“Then the Lord said to me again, ‘Gomer has many lovers, but you must continue loving her. Do this because it is an example of the Lord’s love for Israel. He continues to love them, but they continue to turn to other gods, and they love to eat those raisin cakes’” (Hosea 3:1).

Marriage is a covenant that is so powerful because it represents the love that Christ has for the church. He is the Groom and the people of God are His bride. Our sin is serious against Him because we are breaking our covenant. Much like the story of Hosea and Gomer, she continued to turn to her old lifestyle of sin, but Hosea wanted to set her free in the marriage relationship with him. This models how Jesus has brought us great freedom in our covenant relationship with Him.

HOW DOES DIVORCE FIT INTO THIS?

I know and love friends and family who have had the unexpected and undesired result of divorce in their marriage. Scripture makes it clear that if someone has been unfaithful, then divorce is acceptable and one may remarry. I know some who have been afraid of God’s anger if they remarried, but they overcame that fear, realizing that this was not a sin.



Perhaps you wrestle with that too. Look to the Bible, seek pastoral wisdom and thoughts from mentors and trusted friends to guide you in your unique decisions. The Holy Spirit will lead you and the Bible will be a guide. (Make sure to correctly interpret and apply Scripture to your situation.)

Bible Study Tools shares, “From these teachings, the Bible presents two clear grounds for divorce: sexual immorality and abandonment by an unbelieving spouse. Sexual immorality encompasses a broad range of inappropriate sexual behaviors, and Jesus’ exception clause permits divorce under these conditions (Matthew 5:32, 19:9). Abandonment by an unbelieving spouse is addressed by Paul, who allows the believing partner to accept the separation and move forward (1 Corinthians 7:15).”

Divorce is not black and white, so seek wisdom from others in regard to your situation. God cares for you. You need to be safe. Please get help if you are not.

Whatever the circumstances that we are in, how are we honoring God and being holy in our life and relationships? Our greatest joy is to bless Him and live set apart lives for His glory. He can welcome back and restore the most active adulterer. There is hope for everyone in Christ.

This week, pray and ask the Spirit to reveal any potential areas of deception or strongholds the enemy is trying to place in your life that leads to sexual sin. Confess and repent, turn from them, get accountability, and seek to honor God by the help of His Spirit in you.





THE EIGHTH COMMAND

“You shall not steal” (Exodus 20:15).

Have you ever stolen something that did not belong to you? Maybe it was a pack of gum? Perhaps you took money from a wallet that was left? Or did you ever steal someone else’s answer on a test in school?

What was the consequence for your decision? Did anyone ever find out? Maybe you were stuck with the guilt, but never got caught. God sees everything and He knows the times when we have been tempted to take things that do not belong to us.

Stealing comes in many different forms. Thankfully, this side of the cross, we have forgiveness, but we are still called into a life of repentance.

Today we will dive into the eight commandment, do not steal.

WHAT IS STEALING?

Maybe you thought stealing was only taking a physical object that belonged to another, like a bank robber or a street thief. Although these are true examples of breaking the eighth commandment, stealing covers a much broader concept than just that.

Some examples of stealing include:

- Using someone’s identity as if it were your own (i.e. fake ID)
- Copying an answer off of someone else’s test
- Taking money or an item that belongs to another
- Sneaking food or any item from a store without paying
- Getting paid by a company or ministry, but neglecting to work during those hours.
- Misusing a company card for personal use
- Cheating on your taxes
- Not paying what someone else is owed for the service given to you

Webster's Dictionary defines stealing as: "to take the property of another wrongfully and especially as a habitual or regular practice."

Have you stolen before? While this is something that might be more obvious or frequent in childhood, it can actually appear a lot in adulthood. The temptation is there whether it is something of great worth or small. We have to be on our guard.

WHAT ABOUT THOSE IN POVERTY?

What about people who are starving and steal food, or people who are cold and steal clothing? What does the Bible say about this in regard to stealing?

"Two things I ask of you, Lord; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God" (Proverbs 30:7-9).

Stealing can become a temptation at any point, but particularly in poverty. King Solomon makes it clear that he desires for his needs to be met, but not to be swayed by money either way. He says that if he were poor and stole, that he would dishonor the name of God. Stealing is not commended in the Scriptures, even in hardship. This is why it is important that we as the church are living out what God has asked us to do in caring for the poor, the widow, the orphan, and the foreigner. (Psalm 82:3, Proverbs 14:31, Proverbs 14:21, Isaiah 58:6-8, and Micah 6:8, Luke 3:11, and James 1:27).

Those in poverty are invited to call on the Lord for help (Psalm 34:6, Psalm 140:12). He cares greatly for all of us, even more than the birds or the lilies of the field. As believers, we should seek to help be the answer to someone else's prayer for God to meet their needs. We should take great joy in giving and blessing those in poverty so that they are not tempted to steal.

THE MAIN DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STEALING AND COVETING

Stealing and coveting seem to go hand in hand. We will get to the 10th commandment soon enough, but coveting can lead to the action of stealing. When we live in mindsets of



discontentment, envy, and negativity, we miss out of the greatest treasure that we already have access to in Christ.

Webster's Dictionary defines covet as, "to wish for earnestly; to desire (what belongs to another) inordinately or culpably." Coveting is meditation on envious desires, where stealing is the action of taking without a right to it.

Matthew 6:21 says, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." If we are treasuring anyone or anything that does not belong to us, our hearts will become attached. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" Our hearts can lead us into serious trouble if we allow them to. We can follow our feelings into sinful decisions that we would never have thought we would be involved in, all because we trusted our nature instead of our Savior.

When we think back to Adam and Eve in the garden, Eve stole the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. She took something that was not rightfully hers. The action was the stealing, but first she saw and was tempted, coveting the knowledge that God had and the fruit that she was not able to consume.

What in your life right now looks so appealing to you, but the Lord has clearly said this is not His will for you? Is there something that you want so badly that you would be tempted to steal it from another? Is your honesty and integrity on the line? Maybe someone took something from you and now you want to take something back from them in revenge?

The time to come before God and confess is now. Jesus came so that we could live in His freedom. We are called out of darkness and into His marvelous light. The life of a disciple of Christ is not easy, but it is an eternally rewarding one. Can we lay down the things that we want to treasure above Jesus and ask Him to remind us that He is greater than anything or anyone on this earth?

This week, may we confess any areas where we have been stealing. May we be empowered to live by the Spirit and not by our flesh, to fight for gratitude and contentment in whatever we have and whatever we do not have in life. May we realize that we already have all that we need in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:9 says, "And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."





THE NINTH COMMAND

“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor” (Exodus 20:16).

Have you ever watched a court drama show on TV, where you as the viewer have seen all aspects of the case, then you watch as someone lies on the stand about another person who is innocent? Even though the person placed a hand on the Bible and swore to tell the truth, sin so often leads to more sin. Someone willing to commit a crime is very likely someone who is willing to lie on the Bible in front of a judge and jury.

A false witness takes place when someone lies to damage the reputation or the life of another person.

A BIBLICAL EXAMPLE OF FALSE WITNESS

Remember the account of Joseph? He experienced the false witness of Potiphar’s wife. She accused him of sexual assault, when in actuality Joseph fled her pursuit and seduction. She grabbed his cloak that he left behind and used it against him.

“One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. She caught him by his cloak and said, ‘Come to bed with me!’ But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house. When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house, she called her household servants. ‘Look,’ she said to them, ‘this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed. When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house’” (Genesis 39:11-15).

Potiphar’s wife later goes on to tell her husband the same lie and he ends sends Joseph to prison because of it (Genesis 39:16-23). We cannot forget that God was with Joseph even in prison, however Joseph was innocent and did not deserve to be there.

BEARING FALSE WITNESS TODAY

Maybe you have not falsely accused someone or been falsely accused in a courtroom. Perhaps, however, you have made assumptions about people, spread vicious gossip or tried to break down someone's reputation due to hurt or revenge? Or maybe this happened to you? This is breaking the ninth commandment. It matters to God.

Our words have power. James 3 teaches us to tame our tongues.

"All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be" (James 3:7-10).

As believers in Jesus, it should break our hearts that we and others have praised God and cursed others with the same mouths. Maybe you think that you have information that is accurate, however if one small detail is wrong, this is false witness. We need to be sure that our information is correct before presenting it to others, and consider the heart behind sharing it. We need to pray that the Holy Spirit will take over our tongues so that we will not speak falsely or accuse others of things that they are innocent of.

You may not be the person who originally witnessed something in your office, your neighborhood or your church. If you are receiving second-hand information, be careful not to share that with others because you do not know the validity of it. False witness can be like a big game of telephone; somewhere down the line, the original message is skewed. The false witness does not just happen at the end of the line when the message is revealed, but it begins wherever the misinformation starts.

Proverbs 6:16-19 teaches about seven things that the Lord considers detestable. A lying tongue and a false witness who pours out lies are two included in this list. We need to take this seriously and ask the Holy Spirit to help us be honest people who are seeking the truth in love. This does not mean we never have to share hard truths or speak up on a stand for the justice of the innocent, but it does mean we need to be truthful when called to do it.



WHAT MOTIVATES FALSE WITNESS?

False witness can happen unintentionally through avenues such as gossip, or it can happen intentionally. I think about people who like to get to the top in unfair and dirty ways. Someone might lie about another employee to a boss or superior to make himself look better. Or in the classroom, someone might lie to a teacher about another student out of jealousy. A child might lie to a parent about something that their sibling did or said but never occurred.

This leads us to ponder what our motivation is in lying about someone else? We might be struggling with pride, hate, jealousy, envy, lust, or something else. People use false witness to break others down and puff themselves up. They use false witness to hurt or take vengeance on another. They might lie because they wish that they had something like a position or a relationship that another has.


The Bible even teaches us that if there is a conflict, you should take another person with you if the person you are confronting will not listen one-on-one (Matthew 18:15-18). Genuine witness is important.

This is why we need to remember that often in Scripture, we see a rule of two or more witnesses. Two or more witnesses can help lessen the possibility of a false witness. Dr. David Jeremiah shares, "According to a study by the American Judicature Society, eyewitnesses correctly identify suspects 87.8% of the time. This 12.2% margin of error provides one explanation for why Old Testament law required the testimony of two or three witnesses to prosecute a crime."

BE CAREFUL OF FALSE WITNESSES OF GOD

This leads us to remember that if people can lie about their neighbors, then they sure enough can lie about God. We often call them false prophets or false teachers.

Jesus had many witnesses of His death and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3-8). God describes the great cloud of witnesses in Hebrews 12:1 after Hebrews 11, the hall of faith. Nature gives witness to God (Psalm 19:1, Colossians 1:15-20, Romans 1:20). The Bible itself is a witness of Jesus and His redemptive plan.



God is serious about false prophets (Deuteronomy 18:20, Ezekiel 13:9, Matthew 7:15-20, Timothy 4:3-4, Acts 20:28-30, etc.) 1 John 4:1-3 teaches us, “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.”

A great way to know if someone is a false witness of God is if the person adds or subtracts from the Bible, because the Bible is God’s Word (Deuteronomy 4:2).

If someone says that God says something is acceptable that the Bible says is a sin, that is a lie.

If someone says that something is a sin that God never said was a sin, that is a lie.

If someone says that Jesus was a Prophet, but not the only way to heaven (John 14:6), that is a lie.

Be on the lookout for people and pastors who break the ninth commandment in leadership. We all need accountability to the Lord and each other.

This week, may we be prayerful and cautious with our words. May we ask the Holy Spirit to forgive us for times when we have used false witness against others, and ask Him to help us to speak the truth. May we pray for discernment in hearing witnesses from others about God and other people, so that we can live in His truth and have confidence in Christ.





THE TENTH COMMAND

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor” (Exodus 20:17).

We have come to our final commandment of the ten commandments. God wraps up His law to us with the command to not covet what other people have in this life. Indeed, coveting can lead us into breaking the other commandments.

Ultimately, the Lord wants us to be content in Him with what He has entrusted to us. Let’s dive into our study on the tenth commandment: Do not covet your neighbor. Be Watchful of Comparison

I was tempted in this area last night. My husband and I were watching one of the home renovation shows that I love. Most of the time I am normally inspired; I love the creativity and enjoy getting ideas from the remodeling. However, this time was different, something in me became covetous. I had thoughts like, “What are we doing with our lives, we will never have a house like that?” Or “Should I have learned woodworking skills so our home could look like that?”

The truth is that my husband and I have been called to full-time ministry individually and together. This is a sacrifice of the “American Dream,” and it is stretching at times, but it is also really good for us. It keeps our mindset on our eternal reward and our home in heaven versus building a temporary “kingdom” here.

I know this and I know that I am not a skilled woodworker (and historically would probably not thrive in that) so I have used the giftings and skills that the Lord has provided me with for His glory in my life. This may not look like a beautiful, handcrafted kitchen island, a stunning wrap around porch, or an immaculate primary bathroom, but the investments that I have made into the lives of young women, those in my community, and especially my household have been so significant.

Who are you coveting right now? Is it a house, someone's marriage relationship, someone's business/success, someone's possessions: cars, boats, pets, gardens, etc? It is very easy to fall into temptation to covet what belongs to a neighbor (aka any other person). This person might actually be your next-door neighbor, or he might be an influencer on social media miles away. We need to be careful and remember the Words of Scripture.

"I know how to make do with little, and I know how to make do with a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content — whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:12-13).

Paul had a variety of experience in his lifetime, but he knew the secret to his joy was found in Christ. True contentment is only found in Jesus. We can have this by the help of God.

GODLINESS WITH CONTENTMENT IS GREAT GAIN

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out. If we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" (1 Timothy 6:6-10).

As believers, when we covet, we forget that we already have our reward in Christ. We begin to shift our focus from Jesus the Savior and fixate on worldly things. We begin to desire the high-life and luxury instead of delighting in the Spirit and being grateful for our daily bread. Godliness with contentment is great gain. If someone is godly, but does not have contentment, this person can often be bitter, ungrateful, greedy, and negative. Contentment fuels our faith to see past the worldly treasures and hold tighter to the cross and the hope of heaven. When we are secure in our identity and our salvation, we can live out joyful lives no matter what material things we have or lack.

Jason Helopoulos from The Gospel Coalition shares, "Coveting relentlessly craves more of this world; and a person's thoughts, affections, and heart occupied with the world will



cease seeking heaven. It forsakes love for God and disposes one to hate their neighbor... It has rightly been said that when we break any of the first nine commandments, we also break the tenth commandment.”

COVETING WITHIN THE CHURCH

One of the saddest ways the enemy likes to divide the people of God is with coveting brothers or sisters in Christ. The church is supposed to function as a body, but coveting causes us to miss out on unity and friendship with one another.

When someone else gets the solo for the service, we can covet their opportunity or we can celebrate that God can use their gifts for His glory. When a couple is thriving in their marriage, we can covet the spouse that they have or we can cheer them on, pray for them, and be inspired in our own marriage or singleness. When someone is elected to the board of elders and you were not, you can covet this position or be grateful for how you get to uniquely serve the local church.

May we be careful and aware of our weaknesses and our thoughts that need to be taken captive to Christ. Sin begins with a thought. Thoughts can lead us into temptation if we do not deal with them. Following the tenth commandment means that we are keenly aware of our need to set our minds on things above and rid ourselves of our sinful desires through the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. It is only by His help that we can thrive as a church.

This week, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any thoughts or obsessions you have about possessions, positions, or people that belong to your neighbor. Ask for forgiveness for ways that you have coveted in the past and pray for the Lord to help strengthen you to be content and experience the great gain of joy as a believer in Jesus. Pray to have a mind that is set on kingdom vision and not worldly successes.

Emma Danzey's mission in life stems from Ephesians 3:20-21, to embrace the extraordinary. One of her greatest joys is to journey with the Lord in His Scriptures. She is wife to Drew and mom to Graham. Most recently, Emma released Treasures for Tots, (Scripture memory songs) and multiple books and devotionals for young children. You can view her articles on her blog at emmadanzey.wordpress.com and check out her Instagram @Emmadanzey. Photo credits: Unsplash/Wesley Tingey, Mounzer and ©Getty Images/-strizh-

