

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS - PART 1

Testimony from Mount Sinai

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Exodus 2-20
Subject:	What the LORD God did through Moses
Complement:	delivered the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage and gave them the ten commandments from Mount Sinai.
Exegetical idea:	The LORD God used Moses to deliver the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage and give them the ten commandments from Mount Sinai.
Homiletical idea:	Listen to these words of blessing from our loving God!
Purpose:	To encourage my hearers to listen to the words of blessing from our loving God.

Introduction

(Heavy breathing) Whew! I'm tired. I must stop to rest! Climbing mountains at my age is hard work! And these precious stone tablets are heavy too! But I'm not complaining. I will remember this day for the rest of my life!

What an amazing experience! I have been communing with the LORD our God on this holy mountain for the past 40 days. The glory of His presence is like a consuming fire, but I was not afraid. I have never felt more alive than I feel right now! I am filled with love and joy and peace, but I am also filled with sadness.

I have always believed that the LORD our God is the only true God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He has been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth or ever He had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, He is God! But I never thought that I would meet with Him like this, on this holy mountain. He gave me these precious stone tablets! These are the words of blessing from our loving God. Hallelujah! I have seen precious stones before during my years in Egypt, but I have never seen anything like this.

Some of you seem a little surprised to see that these tablets are made of sapphire. Did you expect them to be made of worthless rock? They come from the presence of the LORD our God, written with His finger! Where the LORD God sits enthroned, his throne is made of sapphire and even the pavement beneath His feet is made of sapphire! (Exodus 28:18) But more precious than these stones are the words of blessing that are written on them.

When I was a young child, my birth mother Jochebed told me stories about the LORD our God. I learned that He is a mighty God. A miracle-working God. I heard the stories of our forefather Abram...how the LORD our God promised him that his descendants would be so numerous that they could not be numbered, just like the stars of heaven. Abram had no children at the time that promise was given, and he was an old man, almost as old as I am now. But the LORD God fulfilled His promise to Abram, and his son Isaac was born 25 years after the promise was given! Then the LORD our God changed Abram's name to Abraham because, through Isaac, he would become the father of many nations. The LORD our God is faithful to His Word!

I heard stories about our forefather Jacob. I remember the story when Jacob was running for his life from his brother Esau. Our forefather Jacob had just deceived his father and manipulated his older brother. And he had to run away in order to save his life. I thought of that story when I was fleeing toward Midian. And I found hope when I remembered that the LORD our God came to our forefather Jacob in a dream. It was a dream about a ladder stretching from earth to heaven, and angels of God were ascending and descending upon it. At the top of that ladder was the LORD our God, and He said to Jacob, "I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac." And the LORD our God promised Jacob that in spite of his failure,

the LORD would be with him and bless him.

I heard the stories about our forefather Joseph. From those stories, I learned that the LORD our God can reveal the future to His people through visions and dreams. Our forefather Joseph was sold into slavery, and yet at the appointed time he was set free and used by the LORD our God to do mighty work for his people. I heard all of these wonderful stories and many more, from my birth mother Jochebed.

My birth mother Jochebed told me how the LORD our God had sent His angels to protect me at the time of my birth. The Pharaoh had declared that all of the Hebrew baby boys should be killed, thrown into the river Nile. My mother obeyed that command to throw me in the river Nile, but she provided a little protection for me! Isn't that just like a loving mother?! She placed me in a little boat of reeds. As a young boy, I can still remember the tears running down her cheeks as she told me that story. And I can still remember my mother's smile as she told me how the LORD our God watched over me and my life was miraculously spared.

The LORD God used my Egyptian mother, daughter of the great Pharaoh to save my life! Isn't the LORD our God an amazing God? Hallelujah! I was adopted into the Pharaoh's own family, and became the son of Pharaoh's daughter. I was trained in all of the wisdom of Egypt. I was given every privilege and opportunity.

But I also had to live in the midst of all of false gods of Egypt. The Egyptians worshiped more than 100 gods. As a young man, I was expected to learn about all of the gods of Egypt: Aken, Aker, Am-Heh, Ament, Ammit. Then there was Amun-the king of the gods, Anuket, the fertility goddess of the Nile. And, of course, there was Ra, the sun god and on and on and one the list went. One god after another! But I knew, deep in my heart, that there was only one true

God—the LORD God, creator of the heavens and the earth.

I spent the first half of my life in Egypt. But many years ago, 40 years ago, I left Egypt. I was forced to run for my life, to flee as a fugitive. I made a terrible mistake. I killed an Egyptian taskmaster who was abusing one of my Hebrew brothers. I know, it was wrong. I should not have acted in anger like that. I was not humbly following the leading of the LORD our God, but rather proudly following my own impulses.

When a report of that incident was given to the Pharaoh, I was portrayed as a traitor and worthy of death. I had no choice but to run for my life. I have never felt so alone in my whole life. I ran east, toward the rising sun. Filled with fear and remorse. I had failed, and failed miserably. But the LORD our God watched over me. He is such a merciful God, isn't He? He will never leave us for forsake us!

I fled through this wilderness, east to the land of Midian. That's where I met Jethro and his family. They were nomadic shepherds, just like my ancestors. But Jethro was also a priest, a servant of the Most High God. Jethro has been good to me. He opened his home to me. He treated me like a son, part of his family. He even gave me one of his daughters to be my wife—Zipporah. In my opinion, Zipporah is the most beautiful of all of Jethro's daughters. Zipporah has brought me joy in the midst of my sadness, love in the midst of my loneliness. The LORD our God has blessed us with two sons: Gershom and Eliezer. My family is here now. They are waiting for me at the base of this mountain. Father Jethro arrived with them just before the LORD our God called me up to meet with Him on this mountain.

Until just recently, I thought that I would spend the rest of my days there in the land of Midian, as a contented husband and father. When I was a young man, I believed that the LORD

our God had a special plan to use me to deliver our people from bondage. In fact, even the leaders of my people believed that. But I had failed and failed miserably. The LORD our God would surely choose someone else to do His work.

But an event took place just a few months ago that has changed my life forever. I was on the other side of this mountain, caring for my family's flocks and herds. And all of a sudden, one of the bushes on the mountainside burst into flames. That wasn't so unusual. We have fires around here. It is so dry and barren. But this fire was different. The bush was burning but it was not consumed. It burned brilliant, like an oil lamp glowing in the darkest night. I drew closer to see this strange sight. And that is when I heard a voice...like the sound of many waters: "Moses! Moses!" I didn't know how to respond. I have never talked to a burning bush before! And yet I sensed deep in my soul that I was in the midst of a sacred encounter. "Here I am," I replied, as I took one step closer toward the burning bush. Then I heard these words: "Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground!"

The voice seemed to come from the midst of the burning bush. Who was speaking to me, and how did he know my name? My question was soon to be answered. "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."

That was the first time that I heard the voice of the LORD our God, speaking directly to me. My strength left me and I fell on my face. The LORD our God told me that He was going to use me to lead my people out of the land of Egypt, out of bondage of slavery. There was a time in my life when I would have boldly stepped forward and said, "Here am I, LORD God. I am Your servant! And I am ready." But as I lay prostrate before that burning bush, I remembered by failure and my pride. I remembered my foolish self-confidence as a young

military leader in Egypt. Could God still use me in spite of my failure? I learned that day that the LORD our God doesn't give up on His children just because they stumble and fall. He is a merciful God, full of forgiveness and love!

The LORD our God performed miraculous signs that day at the burning bush to show me that He would be with me. Perhaps you have heard what happened to my rod! I won't throw it down now, because you might become frightened! But the LORD God asked me a question that day. It seemed like a strange question at first: "What is it that you have in your hand?" "A rod," I replied. "Throw it down!" And when I obeyed His command, the rod became a serpent! And I was ready to run, just as I had run when the Pharaoh wanted to kill me! But the LORD God said to me, "Pick it up, pick up the serpent by the tail!"

Now I don't know a lot about serpents. But this much I do know. You don't pick up a serpent, especially a dangerous serpent, by the tail. Human wisdom tells you, if you have to pick up a serpent, that you should seize it right behind its head. That way, it can't turn and bite you! But the LORD God said to me, "Pick it up by the tail!"

In my mind, I wanted to argue. That's one weakness of my character. I wanted to argue. But then I asked myself, "Who am I to argue with the LORD God, Creator of the heavens and the earth?" So I reached down and seized the serpent by the tail....and it became a rod again!"

In the last few months, God has used this to show His mighty power. When our people stood on the banks of the Red Sea, with the armies of the Pharaoh close behind us, my people were filled with fear. But I told them, "Stand still and see the salvation of the LORD!" Then I did what the LORD our God has instructed me. I stretched out my rod toward the sea, and the sea divided. When our people were dying of thirst, God told me to take this rod and to strike a

rock at Horeb. And when I struck the rock, water flowed from the rock! Perhaps you are thinking, “That is a powerful rod!” But it’s not the rod that’s powerful. It’s the LORD our God who is powerful. Hallelujah! It’s the LORD God who is mighty.

The LORD our God confronted the Pharaoh and all of his false gods. He has demonstrated that He alone is God, the only true God. By a strong and mighty hand, the LORD our God brought us out of Egypt, out of the bondage of slavery. He delivered us from our enemies. He has provided sweet water at Marah. He has given us Manna, bread from heaven. He has poured forth water from the Rock.

Surely, the LORD our God is an awesome God. He is the only true God. We have witnessed one miracle after another. He has carried us on eagles’ wings. And He has not just brought us out but He has brought us here to commune with Him. He wants us to know Him as the LORD our God!

I have just met with the LORD our God on this holy mountain. He summoned me to come up and meet with Him. I have been up on this mountain for the past 40 days, miraculously sustained in His presence. He has spoken His words of blessing to us. (Pick up stone tablets) And He was written these words of blessing with His own finger on these tablets of precious stone. These words of blessing from our loving God will guide us as we continue our journey to the land of promise. I am excited that I can share these words of blessing with my people.

That is why I am filled with joy. But I am also filled with sadness. (Place stone tablets down on/behind the rock and pick up staff) Just before I left the presence of the LORD our God, He told me that my people were in rebellion at the base of the mountain. He told me that my people have made a golden calf and they are saying, “This is the god who brought you out of

Egypt!” How can my people so quickly turn away from the LORD our God? How can they so quickly rebel in their hearts? I would not believe it unless the LORD our God had told me Himself! That is why my heart is filled with sadness.

Ah, there is Joshua. He has been waiting for me near the base of the mountain. I see the anxiety on his face also. And now I can hear the Egyptian music coming from the camp. And I can see the people dancing in a frenzy around the golden calf. How can my people so quickly turn away from the LORD our God? After all that the LORD our God has done. He has redeemed us. He has delivered us. He has provided for us. He has called us His own special people.

Is this how we respond? Is this how we respond? After all that the LORD our God has done? He sends us words of blessing and we don’t even want to listen? What is wrong with us? Why do we refuse to listen to the LORD our God?

(Moses falls to the ground and begins to weep. Breaks the tables of stone at 2nd and 3rd service)

(Narrator)

“Today, if you hear God’s voice, do not harden your heart as our forefathers did in the wilderness. Listen to these words of blessing from our loving God.”

(Read Exodus 20:2-17)

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

[3] "You shall have no other gods before me.

[4] "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. [5] 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, [6] but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

[7] "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

[8] "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. [9] Six days you shall labor and do all your work, [10] 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. [11] 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.

[12] "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

[13] "You shall not murder.

[14] "You shall not commit adultery.

[15] "You shall not steal.

[16] "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

[17] "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."

Listen to these words of blessing from our loving God. Amen!

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS - PART 2

God and God Alone

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Exodus 20:2-3
Subject:	How we should respond to the LORD our God who has brought us out of bondage
Complement:	we should have no other gods before Him.
Exegetical idea:	We should have no other gods before the LORD our God who has brought us out of bondage.
Homiletical idea:	The LORD God, creator of the heavens and earth is saying to you, “I want to be <u>your</u> God!”
Purpose:	To encourage my hearers to give the LORD God is rightful place as God their lives.

Introduction

I'm excited about this new series of messages on the 10 Commandments! There is a great deal of talk today about the 10 Commandments. Some say that these ten sayings are out-dated rules. Old-fashioned. Irrelevant. Others say that these ten sayings, written by God on tables of precious stone, are just as important as they were on the day that they were given to Moses on Mount Sinai.

In this sermon series, we are going to take a fresh look at the 10 commandments. We will discover that the 10 sayings are not a list of out-dated rules from a demanding Deity but rather they are words of blessing from our loving God. And we need to listen to these words of blessing.

So let's begin by looking at these 10 sayings in their context. The 10 commandments are recorded in the books of Moses, and referred to in other parts of the Old and New Testaments. The primary passage of Scripture that we are going to study today is Exodus 20. This is the most well-known passage that records the 10 commandments. Unfortunately, many people start reading a verse too late! They start reading in Exodus 20:3, “You shall have no other ...,” when

we need to start with Exodus 20:2. So take your Bible and open it to the second book of the Old Testament, Exodus, chapter 20. We'll start reading in Exodus 20:1 and I want you to pay special attention to Exodus 20:2 "....."

The words that we just read are crucially important if we are to understand the sayings that follow. "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery."

For the Jews, Exodus 20:2 is so important that they consider this verse the first commandment, the first of the 10 sayings that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Most Christians do not view Exodus 20:2 as the first commandment but some scholars do suggest that Exodus 20:2 is actually part of the first commandment, recorded in Exodus 20:2-3.. In other words, some scholars suggest that the first commandment should read, "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."

You say, "I've never seen it written like that on all of the pictures of the 10 commandments." And you're right. Most of the time, people just start with Exodus 20:3, "Thou shalt have no other..., or You shall have no other..." Our sermon study group that meets every Wednesday evening agrees with those Bible scholars who assert that Exodus 20:2 should be considered as part of the first commandment. But we also want to suggest that Exodus 20:2 is part of the second commandment. And the third commandment. And the fourth commandment. Each of the ten commandments should be read in context like this: "I am the LORD your God....." Exodus 20:2 is a preface to all of these ten words of blessing. And the restatement of those commandments in Leviticus 19 supports that conclusion.

So whether you consider Exodus 20:2 as the first commandment or the vital preface of every saying that follows, it is certainly foundational to our understanding of the words that the LORD God gave to Moses on the mountain. “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” “I am the LORD your God! The One who rescued you. The One who brought you out of bondage.”

The LORD God had just delivered the children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt. For generations they had been used and abused, beaten down and humiliated. But now the LORD God has brought them out of bondage! He had used Moses to confront the stubborn and arrogant Pharaoh. The LORD God had opened the Red Sea and made a way of escape for His people. He had provided manna for them to eat and water for them to drink in the desert. To the children of Israel, He says, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.”

But you say, “That was over 3,000 years ago. What does an event that happened over 3,000 years ago have to do with me today?” The answer is simple. The LORD God is still the One who brings His people out of bondage! We may not have been in bondage in Egypt. But we have been in bondage to sin. And the LORD God is the One who can bring us out of bondage and set us free. Is there someone here today who can bear witness that the LORD God has delivered you from bondage? Is there someone here today who can testify that the LORD God has set you free?

Fourteen hundred years after the LORD God gave these ten sayings to Moses on Mount Sinai, Jesus, the Son of God, came to this earth and testified that He had also come to set the captives free. He set people free who were bound by Satan. He set people free who were bound

by destructive sinful habits. He set people free who were bound by death. And Jesus declared that if the Son sets you free, you are free indeed. So the LORD our God is still the One who is bringing us out of bondage, out of slavery!

And it is this LORD our God who gave the 10 sayings to Moses on Mount Sinai. He loves us. He is concerned about us. He wants to be our God. He wants us to recognize that we are His people. And what the LORD our God is about to share in the 10 sayings that follow must be understood in the context of that loving relationship. These 10 sayings are words of blessing from our loving God.

So let's look at the first saying that the LORD God wrote with His finger in the tables of precious stone: "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." Why do you think that the LORD God chose as the first saying, "You shall have no other gods before Me"? Because this is our most important response once we recognize that He is our God!

Unfortunately, as sinful selfish human beings, we are constantly putting other beings, other things, other desires, ahead of God in their lives. In Exodus 32, we have a vivid example of how quickly people put "other gods" before the LORD God, Creator of heaven and earth. Look at the story recorded in Exodus 32, beginning with verse 1 "....."

The children of Israel were breaking several commandments that day. The 2nd commandment, the 3rd commandment, the 7th commandment, the 9th commandment. But they were also breaking the 1st commandment. They were calling a golden calf their god. And they were putting that god before the God of heaven.

Around the world, people choose a variety of gods to worship. We heard about the 100+

gods of Egypt last week. Aken and Aker, Ah-Heh, Ament, Ammit, Amun, Anuket...and that's just the "A"s! At the time that the 10 commandments were given to Moses on Mount Sinai, the Philistines were worshipping their fish god, Dagon. The Canaanites were worship Baal and Ashtoreth. The children of Israel were surrounded by nations who were worshipping a multitude of other gods besides the LORD God, creator of the heavens and the earth.

And there are still parts of our world where people embrace a multitude of gods. We have people watching and listening from all around the world. You are aware of the other gods that are worshiped in your culture. But what about us right here at Forest Lake Church? What about you? What about me? We don't have any other gods besides the God of heaven, do we? The answer to that question might surprise us!

Skit:

John: Time to get ready for the big date! Oh, boy. Am I excited?

God: John. Are you getting ready for church?! Are you going to spend time with Me today?

John: (shocked) Oh, good morning, Lord! How are you doing today?

God: I'm happy that we can spend some time together! I love you, my child.

John: Thanks, Lord. I love you too. But I've got a date today, Lord. She's really cute! There's something missing in my life and I think that she might be it!

God: You could invite her to come with you to our special time together! I'd like to spend time with her too!

John: I don't think so, Lord. I don't scare her away. Besides, we're going to a ball game! You know how much I love ball games!

God: Yes, John. I've noticed that. It seems that you're at a ball game almost every weekend. We're you watching ball games all last night!

John: (shocked) How did you know that? Oh, I forgot. You know everything. Well, my team is a having a great season. We might even win the World Series! It's a big deal, God.

God: It certainly is a big deal for you, John. It's taking most of your energy and most of your resources.

John: I haven't forgotten that all of my blessings come from you, Lord. I asked my sister to put a \$40 in the offering plate last week!

God: \$40!

John: Yes! \$40. I made a big sacrifice and went to a less expensive restaurant before the ball game last week.

God: I'm not looking for your money, John. I'm looking for you. I want to truly be your God.

John: I know, Lord. I know. But I've got to run now. But just to make you happy, I'll read one of the Bible texts from my morning devotional box:(Take a card out of your devotional box)

“You shall have no other gods before Me.” (Act surprised and shocked!)

We don't like to admit it, but we all have had times when we have put someone or something else before God. Isn't that true? And that is a breaking of the first commandment. Anyone or anything that we put first in our lives, before the LORD God, creator of the heavens and the earth, anything else or anyone else that we put first in our lives...that becomes our god.

So what is the most common god of our culture today that people put before the God of heaven? The answer is a 4-letter word in the English language. S-E-L-F. Self! Our neo-pagan culture says, “You are god. You are goddess. You are at the center. Everything revolves around you. Your desires. Your pleasures. Your wishes.” Forget about the first commandment given by the LORD God to Moses on Mount Sinai! You are your own god!

Putting self in the place of God is not a new idea. When Lucifer, one of the leading angels in heaven, decided to rebel against God, his driving desire was to put self before God. He determined that he would directly and deliberately break this first commandment. Listen to these words of Lucifer, recorded in Isaiah 14:12-14. “.....”

Did you notice who was #1? I will, I will, I will, I will, I will be like the Most High! It's painful to realize that I may have pushed God aside because I want to be #1. Lucifer, now called the Devil and Satan, wanted to put himself first. He wanted the place that belonged only to the LORD God. And so Lucifer rebelled against God and there was war in heaven. The book of Revelation records in Revelation 12:7-9, “And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”

And even though Satan has been cast out of heaven, his rebellion has not ended. He is actively trying to seduce each one of us to join him in his rebellion...to join him in transgressing the commandments of God, especially the first commandment...to put self first, to make self our god.

But Satan doesn't tell you the devastation that results when you disregard this first commandment. Did you really expect Satan to tell you the truth? Jesus called him a liar and the father of lies. Satan doesn't tell you the damage that you will experience when you disregard and disobey the first commandment. Not only you, both those around you.

I was talking to a friend of mine this past week. He is a member of our church family. He told me some of his life story. As a young man, he made self his god. He was preoccupied with pleasure. Having fun! He wanted to do what he wanted to do. Whatever would bring him pleasure. If someone had accused him of breaking the 1st commandment, he probably would have denied it. But that is exactly what he was doing. He was his own god.

He wanted to drink what he wanted to drink. And he wanted to inhale what he wanted to inhale. Satan was seducing him at every turn. Satan didn't tell him about the devastating consequences, not only for his own life but also for his children. Satan didn't tell him smoking marijuana when his children were young would result in devastating methamphetamine and heroin addictions in his children. Satan didn't tell him that his inappropriate sexual conduct when his children were growing up would predispose his children to rampant sexual promiscuity and abuse. You see, Satan is a liar. So Satan doesn't tell you the devastating consequences of displacing God from His rightful place in your life. Satan simply says, "You be God. You be #1. Your pleasure. Your desires. Your wishes."

But the LORD God loves us. He cares about us, and about our families. That's why the LORD our God begins these 10 sayings with "You shall have no other gods before Me." He knows our tendency to put someone else or something else first in our lives. And He knows how that behavior will not only damage us personally, but also damage those that we love.

But I don't want us to remember this first saying just in the negative. I want us to think of this first word of blessing in the positive. If the negative is "You shall have no other gods before Me," what is the positive? "You shall have Me as your God." The LORD God is saying to you, "I want to be your God!"

The "you" that is used here in the 10 words of blessing is in the 2nd person singular. It's personal. It's direct. The LORD our God is saying, "John, don't let anyone or anything come before Me in your life. John, I want to be your God! Pamela, I want to be your God! Frank, I want to be your God." Put your name there. "Bodil, Mark, Jackie, Don....the LORD God is saying to you personally, "I want to be your God."

So what happens when you make a decision to completely and unreservedly ask the LORD to be your God? I have asked a woman of God to help us answer that question this morning. Sabine, you have such a vibrant connection with God! We've seen the devastating consequences of displacing God from His rightful place in our lives. I want to talk about what happens when we consciously invite the LORD God to be our God!

Interview with Sabine:

-How old were you when you first began to seek a personal intimate relationship with God?

-How does it affect you to know deep in your heart that the LORD God wants a personal relationship with you?

-How are you sensing the reality of God's presence in your life right now?

Thank you, Sabine. What an amazing testimony! Thank you for reminding us that the LORD our God, creator of the heavens and the earth, wants a personal relationship with us. He wants us to experience intimacy with Him. You are His precious child and He loves you. He wants a relationship with you. He longs for you to experience intimacy with Him as your God, like the psalmist David, who wrote: "O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands." Psalm 63:1-5

Now when you think about this first commandment, it seems totally different! It's so much more than don't have any other gods before Me. The LORD our God is saying to us, "I want to be your God!" I want a relationship with you! Personally!

Will you let Him be your God today? Do you have the courage to say, "LORD, show me anything or anyone that is displacing You from Your rightful place in my life. I don't want to have other gods before You. I want you to be my God!"

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS - PART 3

Dead idols and the Living God

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Exodus 20:4-5
Subject:	Why we should not make any craved images, bow down and worship them
Complement:	because the LORD God is jealous and will hold us accountable for our behavior.
Exegetical idea:	We should not make, bow down to, and worship any craved images because the LORD God is jealous and will hold us accountable for our behavior.
Homiletical idea:	Our God is the great and awesome God!
Purpose:	To encourage my hearers to recognize God as the great and awesome God.

Introduction

In my opinion, making a carved image and then bowing down to it is a foolish idea. Think about it for a moment. A person cuts down a tree. Half of the tree, he chops up and uses the wood to make a fire. He cooks some food over the fire and warms himself, saying “Ah, I am warm; I see the fire.” Then he takes the other half of the tree and carves it into a god, bows down to that carved block of wood and says, “Save me; you are my god!”

Ridiculous! And I’m not the only one who thinks that’s foolishness. The LORD God thinks that’s foolishness too! That scenario that I just quoted...about the man cutting down the tree...I didn’t make that up. I quoted that from the words of the LORD, recorded in Isaiah 44. That hunk of wood knows nothing. It understands nothing. If the man puts that wooden idol in his house, and the man’s house catches on fire, the man has to rescue his god. The god can’t rescue him. Do you see how ridiculous this is? If the man doesn’t rescue his wooden god that he has carved, the god will get burned up in the fire! If a person makes a god of stone, he can crush it! If a person makes a god of metal, he can melt it!

That’s why the LORD God says through the prophet Habakkuk, “Of what value is an

idol, since a man has carved it....he makes idols that cannot speak. Woe to him who says to the wood, "Come to life!" Or to a lifeless stone, "Wake up!" (Hab 2:18-19)

It's so foolish. So why doesn't the LORD God treat making a carved idol as foolishness and just ignore it? Why did the LORD God devote the 2nd of 10 sayings from the mountain to this issue? "....." (Exodus 20:4-5) Apparently, the LORD God has strong feelings about this issue. That's why He also said through His servant Moses, "Cursed is the man who carves an image or casts an idol..." Deut 27:15

But why is the LORD God so opposed to the practice of making carved images, bowing down to them and serving them? Let me suggest two reasons. First, if the carved image represents anything other than the LORD God, then making a carved image and bowing down to it is a direct transgression of the first commandment. If you remember our previous study on the first commandment, the LORD God declared: "I am the LORD your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods besides Me." The LORD God is saying to us personally, "Let me be your God!" He is the LORD God, the only true God, creator of the heavens and the earth. But He wants to be our God. He wants to be your God. He wants to be my God. So one reason why the LORD God would oppose the practice of making carved images, bowing down to them and worshiping them is this: if those carved images represent anything other than the LORD God then we are directly transgressing the first commandment. We should have no other gods besides the LORD God, creator of the heavens and the earth.

There are many parts of the world where people still carve gods for themselves out of wood and stone. Just like the gods of Egypt, some gods look like birds of the air, some look like

animals or humans, some look like water creatures. When a new family is formed, the husband and wife bring their gods with them to their new home. When Rachel, the wife of Jacob, left her father's home, she brought her family gods with her in her saddle bags. And she even lied to her father so that he wouldn't find them. It's not easy to break away from those family traditions that have been followed for generation after generation.

In other parts of the world, people may not carve idols out of wood or stone but they carve idols in their imagination. They idolize movie stars and sports heroes. They collect pictures and memorabilia about their idols. And all they ever talk about is their idol. They bow down to their idols in their minds and serve them. And that is just as much a breaking of the 2nd commandment as carving an idol out of wood or stone, isn't it? So whether you are carving an idol out of wood or stone, or carving an idol in your imagination and bowing down to it, the LORD God says, "You shall not...." There are no other gods besides the LORD God, creator of the heavens and the earth. That's one reason why we should not make carved images and call them gods.

But I want to suggest a second reason why the LORD God opposes the practice of making carved images, bowing down to them and serving them. Sometimes people try to make carved images to represent Him. They want to shrink the LORD God down to something that they can grasp, something that they can handle. Their rationale sounds good. They say, "I just want to sense God's presence near, and so if I make this idol, this carved image, to represent Him, then it is easier for me to sense His presence."

But there is something terribly wrong with that logic. By shrinking the LORD God down to something that they can handle, they distort the truth about our great and awesome God. He is

the Almighty One. He cannot be portrayed with a chunk of wood. He cannot be confined in a block of stone.

Listen to the Word of God through the prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 43:1-3, 10-13. “.....” Listen also to these inspired word, written 3,000 years ago by the Psalmist David. “.....” Psalm 139:1-3, 7-9. Surely, the LORD our God is an awesome God! What do you say?

Solomon spoke words of truth at the dedication of the Temple of God in Jerusalem, when he said, “The heavens, even the highest heavens cannot contain You. Much less this temple I have built.” 2 Chronicles 6:18

And that is why it is such an offense to God when people try to shrink God down into a carved idol—a chunk of wood or a block of stone. That distorts the truth about the greatness of our awesome God. So why do people make carved images, carved idols to represent the God of heaven? Any ideas? Either consciously or subconsciously they are creating the illusion that they have control over God. If they are doing something that they don’t want God to see, they can just cover His eyes. If they are having a conversation or a heated argument that they don’t want God to hear, they can just cover His ears. If they don’t want God around for a while, they can just put Him in the closet, or take Him to another room.

I know. It’s a ridiculous idea.. And I’m sure that most people don’t consciously say to themselves, “I’m going to manipulate God!” But in reality, that’s what they are trying to do. To shrink God down to a manageable size, so that He can be controlled.

I ’m concerned that some of us have a similar attitude when we pray. Instead of filling our prayers with praise and thanksgiving, and bringing our requests to God with a humble

submission to His will, we can easily fall into the snare of trying to manipulate God with our prayers. “Oh God. I’m giving you one last chance. Help me, Lord. If you don’t help me, I don’t know what I’m going to do!” It sounds rather religious, but actually it’s a veiled threat!

We can’t control God! We can’t manipulate the Almighty One! He is not our errand boy! Our servant! We need to pray like the Psalmist David, “I will bless the LORD at all time, His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall makes its boast in the LORD. The humble shall hear of it and be glad. Oh, magnify the LORD with me and let us exalt His name together. We need to pray like Saul at the time of his conversion, “Lord, what do you want me to do!” rather than “Lord, here’s what I want You to do!” We may not make a carved image in an attempt to have control over our God, but we might try to manipulate God just the same.

We may also fall into idolatry in different ways. Some people build ornate Christian churches to remind themselves of the greatness of God, but the end up worshiping the building rather than worshiping God. Others start worshiping a church organization rather than the God it was designed to serve. So rather than looking at others to see if they are breaking the 2nd commandment, we need to carefully examine our own lives, our own families, our own church. The LORD God says, “You shall not....” Are we misrepresenting the truth about our great and awesome God in any way? Are we allowing Him to be the great and awesome God that He is?

There is some wording in the last half of this second commandment that has caused a lot of confusion and concern. I might be easier to just ignore the second half of the 2nd commandment for that reason, but that would be a mistake. The LORD God includes the words in the second half of this 2nd commandment and we need to listen to them and understand them.

Look at the second part of Exodus 20:5. “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.” At first reading, I don’t like the picture of God that emerges from these words. What does it mean that the LORD our God is a jealous God? That specific Hebrew word is used 5 times in the books of Moses, always in reference to God. When this passage was translated into the Greek Septuagint, scholars used the Greek word $\zeta\epsilon\lambda\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$, from which we get the English word “zealous.” Perhaps the words of the apostle Paul can also help us to answer that question. Paul is writing to the Christians in Corinth, recorded in 2 Corinthians 11:2. “I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy.” Here again, the Greek word is $\zeta\epsilon\lambda\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$, from which we get the English word “zealous.” Godly jealousy is a passionate zeal that is motivated by love. Paul is passionately concerned about the well-being of his spiritual children. And if Paul is passionately concerned about his spiritual children, how much more is the LORD our God passionately concerned about us. He loves us with an everlasting love. He longs for us to know the truth about His loving and merciful character. He longs for us to receive Him as our great and awesome God. And that’s why He is so offended by carved images. No matter how big they are, no matter how ornate they are...these carved images, these idols tell only lies about God!

But I have another question about the closing words in this 2nd commandment. I like that part which says that the LORD our God shows love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commandments. I like that part. Because his commandments, his 10 sayings are just words of blessing from our loving God. Certainly, the picture of God that is revealed in the life and ministry of Jesus is one of compassion and mercy. God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved. So I’m attracted to the part of the 2nd commandment that portrays God showing love to a thousand generations of

those who love Him and keep His commandments.

But the part that troubles me is the closing part of this 2nd commandment which says that the LORD our God “punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the 3rd and 4th generation of those who hate Me.” I don’t like the sound of those words, do you? Punishing the children for the sin of the fathers? I thought that Jesus said, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son what whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” So what does this mean that the LORD our God punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the 3rd and 4th generation?

That doesn’t sound fair. And it isn’t fair! It isn’t fair that a father should not only live in rebellion against God but teach his children to also be rebellion against God. That isn’t fair for the children, but that’s the ugly nature of sin. I was visiting a family in Pittsburgh, PA. We were holding some meetings in that city, and a lady was attending those meetings. When we visited her in her home, I noticed the scares on her face. She looked like a boxer. Now I know that some women have taken up the so-called sport of boxing, but there was a deep sadness on this woman’s face. She told us a tragic story of pain and abuse. Her husband had physically abused her for many years. He could lie and make excuses, but the scars on his wife’s face did not lie. She was married to an evil monster. But that wasn’t her greatest sadness. Her eyes began to fill with tears as she told us that just recently her 17 year-old son had beaten her. The sins of the fathers are all too often passed down to the children. And no, it isn’t fair. But those children are still held accountable for their sin. However, an evil parent must be held doubly responsible for the devastation that they pass on to their children.

I have told people who don’t want to live for God, I have told people who want to live for

the Devil, who want to use and abuse themselves in a futile search for never-ending pleasure...I've told them...please don't have children. Please don't bring little ones into the world and then drag them down to destruction with you.

I have a close friend who walked away from God when he was a young man. For many years he lived a dangerous and destructive lifestyle. But there is one decision that my friend made that I really respect. He decided that he would not father any children if he was unwilling to responsibly care for them.. I really respect him for that.

Because even though it's not fair, the sins of the fathers, and the mothers, have devastating consequences on the children. And parents who hate God can teach their children to hate God too. People who are addicted to alcohol can put beer in their baby's bottle and laugh about it. People who are thieves can train their children to steal in order to fulfill their own selfish desires. And their children will be held accountable for those sins.

What a mess our world is in? Our world desperately needs to know the truth about our loving God. They need to know that the LORD our God, creator of the heavens and the earth, is not a demanding Deity, passing down a list of arbitrary rules just to exercise His power and authority over us. The LORD our God is a loving God who gives us words of blessing to guide us and to protect us.

And in the 2nd saying that God gave to Moses on the mountain, the LORD our God is saying, "Don't do anything to diminish the truth of who I am!" Don't serve dead idols. Serve the living God!

My prayer today is this: (And I have written it on the back of your bulletin insert, in case you would like to pray this prayer with me) **LORD God, I recognize you today as my great and awesome God. Please forgive me for the times that I have misrepresented you. Please continue to show me what a great and awesome God You are and help me to share the**

truth about You with others! Amen.

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS - PART 4
The Name of the LORD our God
Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage: Exodus 20:7
Subject: Why we should be careful how we use God's name
Complement: Because He will hold us accountable if we misuse His name.
Exegetical idea: We should not misuse the name of the LORD because he will hold us accountable if we misuse His name.
Homiletical idea: **Bless the name of the LORD!**
Purpose: To remind my hearers that we should not only not misuse the name of the LORD but we should call upon the name of the LORD and trust in the name of the LORD and praise the name of the LORD!

Introduction

My wife and I were walking through a little store in Mount Dora, Florida, some weeks ago and we saw a country version of the 10 commandments. The wording of the 3rd commandment caught my attention. Two words: NO CUSSIN'. That's American slang for NO SWEARING. NO PROFANE LANGUAGE.

That's probably what most 21st century Christians think about when they read the 3rd commandment. These words were spoken by the LORD God on Mount Sinai and written with His finger on tables of precious stone. The words of the 3rd commandment are recorded in Exodus 20:7. Most of us have heard this commandment in the King James Version: "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in VAIN."

I want to suggest to you today that the country version of the 3rd commandment is right! This 3rd saying that God gave on Mount Sinai is a warning against careless speech, but it is so much more than that! The Hebrew word translated "in vain" in the KJV literally means "for unreality," "for nothingness," "to no purpose." The same Hebrew word is used in Exodus 23:1 where it says, "Do not spread false reports." And the verb "take", as in "You shall not TAKE the

name of the LORD your God in vain,” –the verb “take” literally means “to lift up” or “to carry.” You shall not lift up the name of the LORD your God falsely. You shall not carry the name of the LORD your God for nothingness.

The translators of the NIV use these words to translate Exodus 20:7: “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.” Clearly, the 3rd commandment is a warning against a false use of the name of the LORD our God.

I want to suggest that a person can misuse the name of the LORD our God in two ways: careless speech and careless living. Let’s first consider what it means to take the name of the LORD our God in vain through careless speech. Have you noticed how careless people are with their use of the name of the LORD? When I was a young college student, I worked for a summer for a trucking company. Having just completed my first year at a Christian college campus, I was not prepared for the profanities that I would be subjected to from day to day. It seemed that almost every other word was corrupt. And many times the name of the LORD, the name of God, and the name of Jesus were thrown into the profane conversation.

What a contrast with the way that the Jewish scribes honored the name of the LORD. When the scribes were copying the sacred Scriptures, and they came to one of the secondary names of God, like El Shaddai, God Almighty, they would stop, put down their old pen, and take a brand new pen to write this name of God. But when they came to the sacred name, YHWH, the personal name of the LORD God, they would stop, go and bathe themselves, confess their sins, and then take a new pen to write the sacred name of the LORD.

What a contrast with how so many in our generation use the name of the LORD! Today, people frequently use the name of God, the LORD, and Jesus Christ as a part of profane speech.

Unfortunately, even some of those who claim to honor God are guilty of careless speech. The apostle Paul encourages us to “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths” (Eph 4:29), and that would certainly include not speaking the name of the LORD profanely. When you challenge someone about such profanity, you’ll often hear, “Oh, I didn’t mean anything by saying that! It’s just a figure of speech.” But the 3rd commandment warns that God holds a person accountable who takes His name in vain.

But this commandment is warning against more than just careless speech. It is also a warning against careless living. You shall not carry the name of the LORD your God falsely. When we carry the name of the LORD our God, when we claim to be a follower of the LORD our God, and we live carelessly, this is a second way that we take His name in vain. The Old Testament speaks very strongly about making a promise in the name of the LORD, or making a promise as one who carries the name of the LORD, and then failing to keep that promise. That careless living dishonors the name of the LORD our God.

Jesus also rebuked those who carry the name of the LORD but live carelessly. In Luke 6:46 we read, “Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do the things that I say?” If we carry the name of the LORD and then live carelessly, we are taking His name in vain and we are guilty of transgressing the 3rd commandment.

We have heard too many stories in recent years of those who have taken the name of the LORD in vain by careless living. A Christian evangelist claims to be following the Word of God and preaches about moral living, only to be arrested trying to solicit a prostitute. A Christian radio broadcaster hosts a program on family values, only to be released from his position due to marital infidelity.

Careless living by those who claim to be Christians not only damages their reputation and hurts their family; it publically dishonors the name of the LORD our God. Tell me, why does God feel so strongly about His name? Because His name is a reflection of His character. Listen to the testimony of Moses about the name of the LORD. Exodus 33:19 and Exodus 34:5-7a. “And the Lord said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” “Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, ‘The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.’”

The name of the LORD is a reflection of His character of love and mercy. The Psalmist was right when he described the name of the LORD as a “great and awesome name!” Psalm 99:3. We ought to be very careful not to misuse the name of the LORD by careless speech or careless living. The LORD will hold those accountable who misuse His name.

So far in this message we have been focusing on what NOT to do. Don’t misuse the name of the LORD our God by careless speech or a careless life. But now I want us also to focus on the positive. I did a Bible search on the phrase “the name of the LORD,” and I found 109 references in the Bible: 88 references in the Hebrew Scriptures and 21 references in the New Testament. Of those 109 references, only a handful focus on the negative...warning against a misuse of the name of the LORD our God. The vast majority focus on the positive, appropriate ways to lift up the name of the LORD our God.

Call upon the name of the LORD. Trust in the name of the LORD. Praise the name of the LORD. Bless the name of the LORD. Serve in the name of the LORD. I want focus on 3 appropriate ways that we can lift up the name of the LORD! First, we can call upon the name of the LORD. The apostle Peter quoted the words of the prophet Joel on the day of Pentecost when he said, “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved!” Acts 2:21 That good news! What do you say? Everyone who calls upon the name of the LORD will be saved. That is a positive use of the name of the LORD. Luke records that a dying thief hanging on a cross next to Jesus called upon the name of the LORD and he was saved. And you can also be saved if you call upon the name of the LORD.

The Word of God also encourages us to TRUST in the name of the LORD our God. That’s a second appropriate way of lifting up His name. One of my favorite words of Scripture is found in Psalm 20—a psalm of David. In Psalm 20:7, we read, “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.” Amen! That’s what young David did when he faced the Philistine giant, Goliath. He said, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.” At that moment, Goliath should have known that he was in serious trouble. Young David wasn’t trusting in his expertise with a slingshot. David was trusting in the name of the LORD our God!

And David’s son, King Solomon declared in Proverbs 18:10, “The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.” And that trusting in the name of the LORD our God is not a one time decision. It’s a moment by moment commitment. The prophet Micah puts it this way, in Micah 4:5: “All the nations may walk in the name of their gods; we will walk

in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.”

A third appropriate way to lift up the name of the LORD is to PRAISE the name of the LORD. We hear this appeal repeated over and over in the Word of God. Listen to this exhortation in Psalm 113:1-3. “Praise the Lord. Praise, O servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord. Let the name of the Lord be praised, both now and forevermore. From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised.”

And again in Psalm 135:3, we read, “Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing praise to his name, for that is pleasant.” And that is exactly what David did. Listen to his testimony in Psalm 7:17. “I will give thanks to the Lord because of his righteousness and will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High.” And in Psalm 145:1-2, “I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever. Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever.” Read all of these psalms at the close of the book of psalms and you’ll hear one message over and over again: PRAISE the name of the LORD!

And Job taught us that we shouldn’t just praise the name of the LORD when things are going well. We should praise the name of the LORD even in the midst of adversity. Even after Job had lost all of his possessions and all of his children, he declared, ““Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.””

We can praise the name of the LORD our God even in difficult times because He is our great and awesome God! He is our Rock and our Salvation. He is the LORD our God who brought us out of bondage. He is the LORD our God who loves us so much that He sent His own Son to save us from sin and death. So let us praise the name of the LORD and give Him

glory!

That's the positive message that I want us to take away from this study of the 3rd commandment, the 3rd saying of the LORD our God, written with His finger on tables of precious stone. Not only should we not misuse the name of the LORD our God by careless speech and careless living, but we should lift up the name of the LORD our God in appropriate ways by calling upon the name of the LORD our God and trusting in the name of the LORD our God and praising the name of the LORD our God!

This past week, I had the opportunity to meet a woman of God who has experienced the joy of calling on the name of the LORD, trusting in the name of the LORD, and day by day is praising the name of the LORD! I have asked Stephanie Holbrook to share part of her story with us today.

-Stephanie, when did you first call upon the name of the LORD?

- You shared with me this past week about a recent experience of trusting in the name of the LORD. What was going on in your life?

-What are some things that have happened that have caused you to praise the name of the LORD?

Thank you, Stephanie, for sharing your testimony with us today. This message on the 3rd commandment has been divided into two parts. First, the negative. (Pick up frowning face) Don't misuse the name of the LORD our God by careless speech or careless living. And that's important. Isn't it? God will hold a person accountable who misuses His name. But we've also

noted the positive. We have been encouraged to lift up the name of the LORD our God in appropriate ways by calling on the name of the LORD, and trusting in the name of the LORD and praising the name of the LORD.

From the rising of the sun, to the place where it sets, may the name of the LORD be praised! As we leave this place, may our words and our actions send a clear message to those around us: Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name!

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS - PART 5

A God to Remember

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage: Exodus 20:8-11
Subject: Why we should remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy
Complement: Because God rested on the Sabbath day, blessed it and made it holy.
Exegetical idea: We should remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy because the LORD our God rested on the Sabbath day, blessed it and made it holy..
Homiletical idea: **Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.**
Purpose: To remind my hearers that the Sabbath is a special gift of time to remember the LORD our God.

Introduction

I wish that Christiana Ham-Ying could have been here today to share her testimony with us. She was a remarkable woman of God. Her grandson, Dr. Michael Ham-Ying, is a deacon here at the Forest Lake church. When he shared his grandmother's testimony with me just a few weeks ago, I knew that I had to share that testimony with you today!

Christiana was raised in a Christian home on the island of Trinidad. She faithfully attended church every Sunday and read her Bible every day. One day, Christiana had a dream about the 4th commandment. In fact, she had the same dream more than once. What Christiana saw in that dream troubled her. She was shown that an important truth contained in the 10 commandments had been forgotten. She had been breaking one of the 10 commandments without even knowing it!

There is only one of the 10 commandments that begins with the word "remember." I have no doubt that the LORD our God wants us to remember all ten commandments and put them all into practice in our lives. Don't you? After all, these 10 sayings are words of blessing from our loving God. He spoke them from Mount Sinai, and wrote them with His own finger on tables of precious stone. But only one of the 10 commandments begins with the word

“remember.” It’s the commandment that Christiana saw in her dream. We can find that commandment recorded in Exodus 20:8-11. “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. [9] Six days you shall labor and do all your work, [10] 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. [11] 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.”

What does the LORD our God ask us to do in this 4th commandment? **Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.** The Hebrew verb, translated remember, means to imprint. In English, we use expressions like “make a deep impression on your mind” or “let this sink into your head.” Imprint. Remember. This same Hebrew word found in the 4th commandment is used twice in the first part of the book of Exodus in reference to God. God remembered His covenant with His people. (Exodus 2:24, 6:5) I’m thankful that we have a God in heaven who does not forget us, aren’t you? He remembers His people, and He asks His people to remember Him. This 4th saying from the mountain is not just about remembering a day. It’s about remembering the LORD our God!

The wording of this 4th commandment is a clear reference back to creation week. Look at Exodus 20:11 again. “.....” We can read the account of that first Sabbath that God shared with Adam and Eve in the book of beginnings—Genesis. In Genesis chapter 1, the events of the creation week are recorded, culminating at the end of Genesis chapter 1 with the creation of our first parents on the sixth day. In Genesis 1:26-27, we read these words: “God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea

and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ [27] So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

Now let’s continue to read in Genesis 2:1-3, “Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. [2] By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. [3] And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.” “God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.” It is this seventh day that God in referring to in the 4th commandment the LORD our God says, “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.”

What does that mean? To keep the Sabbath day holy? Well, Scripture records that God is holy. The Psalmist declares, in Psalm 99:1-3, “The Lord reigns, let the nations tremble; he sits enthroned between the cherubim, let the earth shake. [2] Great is the Lord in Zion; he is exalted over all the nations. [3] Let them praise your great and awesome name—he is holy.”

And the apostle Peter also calls Christians to reflect the holiness of God. 1 Peter 1:15-16. “But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; [16] for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’” In other words, we are to reflect the character of our holy God.

But what does it mean to remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy? Something becomes holy because God’s presence is there. When Moses stood before the burning bush in the wilderness, he was told, “‘Do not come any closer,’ God said. ‘Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is....?’ “Holy ground.” (Exodus 3:5) Why was the ground holy? Because God’s presence was there. The LORD God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush.

The Psalmist declares, "The Lord is in his holy temple." Psalm 11:4 God's temple is holy because His holy presence is there. So what does God mean when He says, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy?" We keep the Sabbath holy when we fully recognize God's holy presence with us during that special period of time. That's why we are encouraged to refrain from our labor. Listen again to Exodus 20:8-11. "....."

Simply refraining from labor doesn't make a day holy. There are plenty of people who refrain from labor day after day after day, just because they are lazy. An absence of labor on a particular day doesn't make that day holy. Rather, we refrain from our regular labor on the Sabbath day so that we can fully recognize God's presence with us during that special period of time. It's a time to focus in a special way on our Creator.

And remember that each of the commandments is prefaced by these words: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." The Sabbath is a time to focus in a special way on our Creator and our Redeemer!

So when is this Sabbath time that is set apart for us to enjoy special communion with the LORD our God? "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 seventh day. Does that mean any seventh day? No. This commandment clearly states that "the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God," not a seventh day.

So how do we know which day is the seventh day, the Sabbath that God blessed and made holy? Even before the giving of the 10 commandments on Mount Sinai, the LORD God clearly identified which day was the Sabbath day. Look with me at Exodus 16:4-5. "Then the Lord said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each

day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. [5] On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.”

Now notice what happened. Exodus 16, beginning with verse 21: “Each morning everyone gathered as much as he needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away. [22] On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much--two omers for each person--and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses. [23] He said to them, "This is what the Lord commanded: 'Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.' "

[24] So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it. [25] "Eat it today," Moses said, "because today is a Sabbath to the Lord. You will not find any of it on the ground today. [26] Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any." [27] Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none. [28] Then the Lord said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions? [29] Bear in mind that the Lord has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where he is on the seventh day; no one is to go out." [30] So the people rested on the seventh day.”

Who decided which 7th day would be the Sabbath of the LORD our God? Did each person decide that for himself, for herself? No. God revealed which day was His holy Sabbath day. It is the same seventh day that He blessed at creation. The LORD our God clearly identified the Sabbath, not just on this one occasion, but every week, 52 weeks a year for 40

years, while the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness. By thousands of miracles in the giving of the manna over a 40 year period, the LORD our God clearly identified which seventh day was His holy Sabbath day. It wasn't left to chance. No one had to guess. "I wonder which day I will remember as the Sabbath day?" No! The LORD God clearly identified which day was the Sabbath day that He had blessed and made holy. It is that particular day that the LORD our God calls us to remember by keeping it holy.

So God clearly revealed to the children of Israel which day was His holy Sabbath day. What about today? How do we know which day is the Sabbath today? Manna doesn't fall from heaven six days a week, with a double portion on the sixth day and none of the Sabbath day. How do we know which day is the Sabbath of the LORD our God—the day which the LORD God blessed and made holy?

Do you remember Christiana Ham-Ying, the woman of God whose testimony I shared at the beginning of this sermon? She had repeatedly dreamed about the Sabbath of the 4th commandment, she wanted to know the answer to that question too. Which day is the Sabbath of the 4th commandment. So Christiana went to her priest and asked for his help. Which day was the Sabbath of the 4th commandment? Saturday or Sunday? Her priest shocked her by telling her that Saturday, the 7th day of the week was the Sabbath.

Was her priest correct? Well, you could ask the Jews. They have remembered the Sabbath in an unbroken cycle since these 10 sayings were given on Mount Sinai. You could also examine various languages of the world and you would find that more than 100 languages of the world associate the seventh day of the weekly calendar with the Sabbath of Scripture. For

example, in Spanish, the 7th day of the week is called? “sabados.” In Italian, “sabato.” In Russian, “subbota.”

Scripture also clearly identifies which day is the Sabbath. Look with me at Luke 23:50- Luke 24:2. “.....” The holy Sabbath day is the day after Good Friday, when Jesus died, and the day before Easter Sunday.

Christiana was shocked. How could so many who claim to be followers of God’s Word have forgotten the one commandment which begins with the word “remember”? Some claim that the church has the authority to change the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. Others say that early Christians just decided to change the day of worship from the Saturday Sabbath of the 4th commandment to Sunday in honor of Christ’s resurrection. Still others say that it doesn’t matter which day you remember, as long as you worship God on one day.

But Jesus did not give a single word of instruction about forgetting the Sabbath of the 4th commandment and worshipping on the first day of the week in honor of His resurrection. He had ample opportunity during the 40 days that he taught His followers after His resurrection. If Jesus wanted His followers to forget one of the 10 commandments, don’t you think that He would have given clear instruction to His followers? What Jesus did say was “if you love Me, keep my commandments.”

The 4th commandment clearly directs us to remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. And it tells us that the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD our God. The fourth commandment is the only commandment that the LORD specifically exhorts us to remember. And yet, unfortunately, it is the one commandment that so many have forgotten.

After her conversation with her priest, Christiana Ham-Ying had a choice to make. Would she follow church tradition, human opinions, or the Word of God? To Christiana, the choice was clear. She went in search of a Christian church that honored the 4th commandment, remembering the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. She also shared that precious truth from the Word of God with her family and friends. For the next 70 years, Christiana looked forward to each Sabbath day as a time of special communion with the LORD her God, a time made holy by His presence and His blessing.

I am so thankful that we worship a God who remembers us, aren't you? He has not forgotten us. He created us. He loves us so much that He sent His own Son to redeem us. He will never leave us or forsake us. And He wants us to remember who we are and who He is. That's why He gave us the Sabbath, a special gift of time every week made holy by His presence and His blessing.

How will you respond to this word of blessing from our loving God? Some of you might say, "Pastor, I thank God for the gift of the Sabbath! I look forward to the Sabbath every week! It's not a burden. It's a blessing! I work hard six days a week, and I need the Sabbath as a time of special fellowship with the LORD our God! It's a time for our family to remember that we serve a great and awesome God!

Others might be thinking, "Pastor, this is a new idea to me! I've never thought about the Sabbath before. I have a lot of questions. I need to study this further." Then, I have a special gift for you. I have a booklet that I want to send to you. Just send an e-mail to dmorris@forestlakechurch.org. I'll reserve a booklet especially for you. That's dmorris@forestlakechurch.org. The LORD our God promised through the prophet Jeremiah,

“Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”

Jeremiah 33:3 And Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would lead us into all truth. John 16:33.

So claim those promises as you continue to study this important topic.

And I'll be praying for each one of you. Because we all have a choice to make, don't we? Will we follow church tradition? Human opinions? Or the clear Word of God?

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS - PART 6

Honor and Blessing

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Exodus 20:12
Subject:	What happens when we honor our father and mother
Complement:	our days will be lengthened in the land that the LORD our God gives us.
Exegetical idea:	When we honor our father and mother, our days will be long in the land which the LORD our God gives us.
Homiletical idea:	When you live with honor, you will be blessed!
Purpose:	To encourage my hearers to live with honor, honoring their parents/elders and demonstrating a life of honor.

Introduction

This cookbook may not look that special to most of us. But to the man who bought it, this blueberry cookbook is priceless. If this cookbook could talk, it would tell a wonderful story of honor and blessing. And we would all be encouraged to live in harmony with the fifth word of blessing that God wrote with His finger in tables of precious stone.

This is the sixth message in our series entitled “Words of Blessing—a fresh look at the 10 commandments. We began with a testimony by Moses from Mount Sinai. And in the past 4 messages, we have looked at the first four commandments. We have discovered that these commandments are not harsh requirements from a demanding Deity. Rather, they are words of blessing from our loving God.

Today, we are going to consider the 5th saying, recorded in Exodus 20:12. “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.” In a perfect world, a sermon about honoring your father and mother would be an easy message to preach. All fathers and mothers would live honorably and it would be a natural response for children to honor their parents. But unfortunately, we don’t live in a perfect world. So this message on the 5th commandment may cause us some pain and some sadness.

Let's start by affirming what this commandment is NOT saying. This commandment is not saying that we should obey our parents no matter what they ask us to do. When Clifford Brown was a young preacher, he visited a juvenile detention center in the Washington, DC, area. After the group had listened to a short devotional about our loving heavenly Father, Clifford turned to one of the young boys and said, "Tell me about your father." Clifford was shocked by the young man's response. "I hate my father," the young man snapped. "My father is a crook and a robber. He tried to rob a post office and he forced me to be his accomplice. Now he is in jail, and I am in jail too. I hate my father!" If the young man in the juvenile detention center thought that honoring his father meant obeying him no matter what he asked him to do, then he was terribly mistaken. When asked by his father to do something illegal, that young man should have disobeyed his father because we ought to obey God rather than man. Isn't that right? It's true that the Scriptures call upon us to obey our parents in everything, but the same apostle Paul clarifies that we ought to obey our parents in the Lord. So this 5th commandment is NOT telling us to obey our parents no matter what they ask us to do.

Secondly, this commandment is NOT telling us to say wonderful things about our parents that aren't true. Some of you sitting here or listening on the radio or television grew up trying to hide the truth about your parents. People outside of your home thought that your parents were wonderful people, but you knew the truth about how they acted behind closed doors. This commandment isn't telling you to say wonderful things about your parents that aren't true just to make them look good. That would be bearing false witness, a transgression of the 9th commandment. For the young man in the juvenile detention center to say that his father was the most honest man he had ever met would be a lie. Honoring your father and mother doesn't mean

that you have to lie in order to make them look good.

So what is the LORD our God asking of us in this 5th commandment? Let's read it again. Exodus 20:12 "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you." Let's begin by examining the "honor". In the Hebrew, the word translated "honor" literally means to make heavy, to make weighty. To honor your parents means that you recognize that your parents carry more weight than the stranger walking down the street. Your parents have a unique relationship with you, and you recognize that relationship by the way that you relate to them.

To honor your parents when you are a child means that you listen to your father and your mother and obey them as long as they are not asking you to do something that's wrong. If your friends want you to stay out and play, but your parents ask you to come in for supper, you obey your parents. You don't say, "Well, I have 5 friends here who want me to play, and 2 parents in there who want me to come in for supper, so my friends win!" No! When you are a child, your parents carry more weight than your friends. You honor your parents by obeying them, as long as they aren't asking you to do something that's wrong.

When you get older and move away from home, you should still honor your parents. Your mother and father should still carry more weight than a stranger walking down the street. Your parents don't tell you what to do anymore—at least they shouldn't! But their opinion, their counsel, should carry more weight than the opinions of the multitude. After all, your parents gave you life. In most situations, parents have sacrificed to care for you. You don't have to do everything that your parents ask you to do, or even agree with everything that they say, but you ought to at least receive their suggestions with respect.

And you ought also to be attentive to their needs. To care for someone who is begging beside the road and not to care for your own parents is dishonoring to them. To be preoccupied with your own wants and desires, and ignore the needs of your parents is dishonoring to them. Jesus rebuked the religious leaders of his day for trying to sidestep their responsibility of caring for their parents. Apparently, there was a religious tradition that allowed irresponsible grown children to ignore the needs of their parents. Listen to the words of Jesus in Matthew 15:4-6. “For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' [5] But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is (Korban) a gift devoted to God,' [6] he is not to 'honor his father' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.”

The words of Jesus are clear. We need to honor your father and mother by caring for their needs. Don't care for everyone else and neglect your own parents. Don't be absorbed with your own wants and desires and ignore the needs of your parents.

It's true that honoring your father and your mother is made much easier if your parents are honorable people. And here's where the young man at the juvenile detention center was struggling. You see, his father was NOT an honorable person. He was a crook and a robber. He was a dishonorable person. And that made it very difficult for this young man to honor his father.

But most of us, if we look carefully, will find at least a few reasons why we should honor our parents. A member of our Wednesday evening study group shared this testimony with me in connection with the 5th commandment. “My father was not a church member but he taught me more about honesty, hard work and faith than I can say. He encouraged me in my faith in God

and always reminded me of God's care. Even though he told my mother, my sister and me not to be baptized, he was the one who encouraged me in my faith. He is gone now, but when I fear and my faith begins to shake, I can almost hear his words of encouragement and faith."

That is an example of honoring your father and mother. Was this person's father a perfect individual? Far from it. But he had many qualities. And if this person was going to say good things about anyone, she was going to say good things about her father. After all, he carried more weight with her than others. So she found something good to say. And in so doing, she was honoring her father.

A mother in Tuscon, Arizona, shared this story about honoring her father, mother, and grandmother by simple acts of kindness"

I was out at my mother and father's house, a 70 mile round-trip from my own, because my mother needed a little help. She needed a little help because my father, who has full-blown Alzheimer's, had taped duct tape all over the three long windows in the bathroom so that the "little people" who haunt his days and nights wouldn't be able to look in. She needed a little help because her mother (my grandmother) who lives with them and who will be 102 in December, like to snack in bed and bugs were starting to show up in her room, which was generally a mess anyway.... There were certainly other things I'd rather have been doing that day, but I love them dearly, so there I was "helping." I emptied and washed my grandmother's reeking chamber pot, scrubbed the bathroom floor where she regularly missed the toilet, took Daddy shopping for a bathroom curtain, pulled off all the tape, hung the curtain, washed and hung out several loads of really stinky laundry, scrubbed and swept, changed bedding and tablecloths, loaded the dishwasher, etc. Then, weary and depressed, I sat down to dinner with my three darlings and a peculiar thing happened: I was overcome with a feeling of immense gratitude. It occurred to me that it was my honor to give them that measly gift of a single day's servitude out of the many thousands of such days my mother puts in single-handedly without a word of complaint." *The Ten Commandments* by Dr. Laura Schlessinger, 148-149.

That is an example of honoring your parents by simple acts of kindness.

I believe that we honor our father and mother by the way that we live. People used to

speaking about “upholding the family name.” We carry a family name, and when we live honorably, we honor our parents. The wise man Solomon put it this way, “The father of a righteous man has great joy; he who has a wise son delights in him. [25] May your father and mother be glad; may she who gave you birth rejoice!” Proverb 23:24-25 And we can choose to live honorably even if our parents were dishonorable. We can choose, by the grace of God, and His mighty power, to break those destructive family traditions. And by choosing to live honorably, you honor your parents.

Conversely, if you live in a dishonorable way, you bring sorrow to those who gave you life. Unfortunately, there are many children who live in such a way that they bring nothing but grief and sorrow to their parents. And it’s not acceptable to simply say, “This is my life. I can do what I want with it.” Living dishonorably is a direct transgression of the 5th commandment.

So in this 5th word of blessing from our loving God, we are called both to honor our parents by giving weight to their speech and to their needs, and also by living an honorable life.

And notice that there is a blessing attached. The apostle Paul calls this commandment the first commandment with a promise. “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.”

I love the Greek translation of the Hebrew expression “live long”—it’s *macrochronios*. That you may have a *macro-chronology*—as opposed to a *micro-chronology*! What is it about honoring your parents and living honorably that leads to a long life, a *macro-chronology*?

Let me suggest three ways in which honoring your parents might lead to a long life. First, when you choose to honor your parents, you will be a healthier, happier person. You know more than anyone else that your parents are not perfect, but you choose to focus on the positive,

rather than the negative. And as the wise man Solomon observed, “A cheerful heart is good medicine!” So honoring your parents can result in a healthier, happy, longer life here and now.

A second way in which honoring your parents might lead to a long life is this: if you honor your parents, caring for them to the best of your ability, you are modeling honorable conduct to your children, who in turn are more likely to honor and care for you. It doesn't always work that way, but you are certainly increasing your odds of being honored by your own children if you honor your parents and care for them. Many older individuals just give up on life because there is no one who cares for them. Without meaningful relationships, they lose a desire to live. But if you are surrounded by people who love you and tenderly care for you, you'll probably have a macro-chronology rather than a micro-chronology!

A third way in which honoring your parents might lead to a long life is this: When you honor your parents, and live honorably yourself, you demonstrate a living connection with a loving and merciful heavenly Father. By honoring your parents, you are also honoring your heavenly Father. And the long life that He promises us through faith in Jesus Christ doesn't end at 70 or 80 years. Jesus said, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16

Now that is a macro-chronology! Everlasting life. Now let's be clear that we don't earn everlasting life by honoring our parents or living honorably. No! We honor our parents and live honorably because we have a living connection with our loving heavenly Father. Keeping the 5th commandment is the result of a living connection with our great and awesome God!

If you are listening to this message, and you're thinking to yourself, “I am so blessed to have had wonderful parents!”, then I challenge you to tell them how blessed you feel! Say

something, do something to honor them. Make a phone call. Make a visit. Write a letter or send an e-mail. If you appreciate them, let them know. Build them up. Honor them!

Do you remember the blueberry cookbook that I referred to at the beginning of this message? I told you that it was priceless to the man who bought it. And if it could talk, it would tell a wonderful story of honor and blessing. Well, here's the rest of the story. Ten years ago, our church administrator, Roger Anderson, was on a work assignment in New England. Before flying home to Orlando, he decided to stop at the L.L. Bean store in Freeport, Maine, and buy a gift for his mother. Roger's father had died 8 years earlier of bone marrow cancer, and now Roger's mom was living alone. Roger's mother loved to cook, and so when Roger saw this blueberry cookbook, he decided to buy it for his mother. He would mail it to her when he got back to Orlando.

But when Roger got to the airport in Boston, he felt impressed NOT to fly home to Orlando, but rather to look for a flight to Lincoln, Nebraska. He felt deeply impressed that he needed to deliver this gift of love by hand. As you can imagine, Roger's mother was delighted to see him. They were able to spend the entire weekend together, eating, laughing, reminiscing, eating, viewing old family videos, eating. Remember, his mom loved to cook! They were able to attend church together at the College View church. Roger's father had served as the chairman of the building committee when that church was built. So there were lots of precious memories. Roger and his mother shared a wonderful weekend together. He honored his mother, not just by giving her a blueberry cookbook, but by the gift of his presence.

On Monday morning, when Roger said goodbye to his mother, he had no idea that this would be the last conversation until Jesus returns in glory. The following week, Roger's mom

had a cerebral hemorrhage, and three hours later she was dead. If you ask Roger if he has any regrets about taking the detour honor his mother, you all know what he will say, don't you? "No regrets." He honored his mother and they were both blessed!

So, if you're listening to this message, and you're thinking to yourself, "I am so blessed to have had wonderful parents, let them know." If they are no longer living, let someone else know what wonderful parents you had. Tell your children. Tell your friends. Honor the memory of your parents.

And if, like many of us, you had less than ideal parents, I hope that this message will challenge you to find something positive that you can say about them. You know the faults that no one else knows about. But don't forget to look for the positives. Just like the person in the Wednesday evening study group, say something good about your parents. Don't tell lies to make them look better than life. Just tell the simple truth. If your dad had a foul mouth, but he worked hard and provided for his family, then honor him for being a hard-working provider. He might be so shocked to hear you say such kind words about him that he might apologize for his foul mouth! And even if he doesn't, you have honored him by saying something good about him.

And what of those who can't think of a single good thing to say about their parents? Then think about those godly men and women who were spiritual fathers and mothers to you. Honor them. Build them up by your words and actions.

And we can all determine to live honorable lives ourselves so that our parents, our children and those within our circle of influence will be honored and blessed. And the blessing will not end with you. That blessing will be passed down to the generations that come after you. So live honorably, and you will be blessed.

“My father was not a church member but he taught me more about honesty, hard work and faith than I can say. He encouraged me in my faith in God and always reminded me of God’s care. Even though he told my mother, my sister and me not to be baptized, he was the one who encouraged me in my faith. He is gone now, but when I fear and my faith begins to shake, I can almost hear his words of encouragement and faith.”

A mother in Tuscon, Arizona:

I was out at my mother and father’s house, a 70 mile round-trip from my own, because my mother needed a little help. She needed a little help because my father, who has full-blown Alzheimer’s, had taped duct tape all over the three long windows in the bathroom so that the “little people” who haunt his days and nights wouldn’t be able to look in. She needed a little help because her mother (my grandmother) who lives with them and who will be 102 in December, like to snack in bed and bugs were starting to show up in her room, which was generally a mess anyway....There were certainly other things I’d rather have been doing that day, but I love them dearly, so there I was “helping.” I emptied and washed my grandmother’s reeking chamber pot, scrubbed the bathroom floor where she regularly missed the toilet, took Daddy shopping for a bathroom curtain, pulled off all the tape, hung the curtain, washed and hung out several loads of really stinky laundry, scrubbed and swept, changed bedding and tablecloths, loaded the dishwasher, etc. Then, weary and depressed, I sat down to dinner with my three darlings and a peculiar thing happened: I was overcome with a feeling of immense gratitude. It occurred to me that it was my honor to give them that measly gift of a single day’s servitude out of the many thousands of such days my mother puts in single-handedly without a word of complaint.”
The Ten Commandments by Dr. Laura Schlessinger, 148-149.

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS - PART 7

Many ways to kill.

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Exodus 20:13
Subject:	what we should not do
Complement:	kill
Exegetical idea:	We should not kill.
Homiletical idea:	God wants you to be a channel of life and peace and love.
Purpose:	To encourage my hearers not only not to murder, but to find freedom from destructive anger and hatred and to love all of God's children.

Introduction

The 6th commandment is one of the shortest of the 10 commandments. Two words in Hebrew. Four words in most English translations. The KJV translates the 6th commandment with these words: Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not kill. Many of us have heard the 6th commandment on numerous occasions, or seen it in print, or engraved in stone—thou shalt not kill. But what does it mean—thou shalt not kill? And how does this 6th commandment relate to our lives today?

A careful study the Scriptures reveals that there are many ways to kill. In Hebrew, there is a verb that is used for killing an animal. For example, when the children of Israel were instructed to kill an animal as an offering to God, like the Passover lamb, the verb SHACHAT is used. That is NOT the verb that is used in the 6th commandment. Thou shalt not kill. So whatever this 6th commandment is saying, it's not talking about the practice of killing or sacrificing an animal.

There is a Hebrew verb that is used for putting a person to death as a punishment for committing a crime. (MUTH). You may be surprised to learn how many crimes were to be punished by death: crimes like sacrificing a child to a pagan god, various forms of sexual immorality, and various forms of witchcraft were all punishable by death. Offenders were either

to be stoned or burned. But that Hebrew verb, meaning to execute a person guilty of a crime worthy of death, is NOT the verb used in the 6th commandment. So whatever this 6th commandment is saying, it's not talking about putting a person to death as a punishment for a crime.

The Hebrew verb used in the 6th commandment, Thou shalt not kill, is the verb RATSACH. That Hebrew verb, RATSACH, implies an act of violence that results in death. That is why the NIV translates the 6th commandment this way: "You shall not murder." Look at another text where this same Hebrew verb is used. Jeremiah 7:9 "Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known." Even the translators of the KJV translate RATSACH as murder here. It's the same verb that is used in the 6th commandment. This is quite different from killing an animal or putting a person to death as a punishment for a crime. This is an act of violence. The implication is that it is an act of violence against an innocent person.

In the New Testament, when Jesus quotes the 6th commandment, the Greek verb that is used is phoneuo. This also implies killing as an act of violence, murder. A different verb is used for killing the fatted calf, in the story of the prodigal son. But when Jesus quotes the 6th commandment, the verb phoneuo is used. Here are two other examples of the use of the verb phoneuo in the New Testament. Matthew 23:31 "So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets."

It's clear from our study of Scripture that the Hebrew verb used in the 6th commandment in the Old Testament, and the Greek verb used in quoting the 6th commandment in the New Testament, both imply murder, killing as an act of violence against the innocent.

So don't use the 6th commandment, Thou shalt not kill, to argue in favor of being a vegetarian. Don't use the 6th commandment to argue against capital punishment. Don't use the 6th commandment to argue against having a law enforcement officers and military personnel who protect your life and liberty. This 6th commandment is very specific: You shall not murder.

And that is an essential commandment for any society. If people can take the lives of the innocent in acts of random violence, you have anarchy. Society would collapse is chaos. It makes good sense for the LORD our God to speak this word of blessing.

Satan has inspired a new temptation for breaking the 6th commandment in our 21st century culture: murdering people on video games as a form of entertainment. Many video games include the murdering of people as part of the game. Here is just one example: a car driving game called Carmageddon. "Carmageddon is a fast and frenzied speed-fest in which pedestrians are your target." Pedestrians? You murder pedestrians, vehicular homicide, murder, in order to earn points?

That's just one of hundreds of games like Doom and Mortal Kombat where people are murdered on video games as a form of entertainment. Ah, but someone says, "That's not real! It's just a game!" Why then is it that more and more frequently we are hearing reports of young people going into schools and randomly murdering people? Is it possible that these violent games give people permission to commit murder in their imaginations and it's just one more step to murder people in real life? Research has clearly demonstrated that violent video games may be even more harmful than violent television and movies because the video games are interactive and require the player to identify with the aggressor. (An article published in the APA's Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, April 2000, showed a direct correlation between playing

violent video games and aggressive behavior.)

People like Kimveer Gill, who opened fire in the parking lot at Dawson College, near Montreal, Canada. He murdered one, wounded 19, and then took his own life. Police later discovered that he liked to play a murderous video game called Super Columbine Massacre, which recreated the Columbine High School massacre of April 20, 1999.

Perhaps you should review the games that your children are playing, or the games that you are playing? A simple question to ask yourself would be this: Would Jesus play this video game with me? You say, “Don’t be ridiculous! Of course Jesus wouldn’t play that video game with me! Well, then, should you be playing it? We may break the 6th commandment by committing murder in real life, but we may also break the 6th commandment by committing murder in our imaginations as a form of entertainment.

Jesus also reveals a deeper meaning for this 6th commandment, this 6th word of blessing from our loving God. Look with me at Matthew 5:21-22a. “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ [22] But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.”

Jesus does not discard the 6th commandment here. Rather, He goes beyond the letter of the law to the spirit of the law. Not only should we not murder, but we should not hold on to anger that may lead to violence. I was interested in the message on our church sign this week: anger is only one letter away from danger! And that’s true. So Jesus says, “Don’t even get angry with someone. That’s a step towards murder.”

Some manuscripts, including the one used to translate the KJV, add “without cause” to the phrase “anyone who is angry with his brother”. Whether that word, translated “without

cause” is part of the original or not, the clear implication is that this is not a righteous anger.

This is not a justified response. Such anger is a breaking of the 6th commandment.

I’ve seen people look at me with such rage in their eyes. Have you? I remember one occasion quite vividly. I was convinced that the angry individual would have murdered me if he knew that he could get away with it. Jesus condemns such anger. When people commit acts of violence in their minds, that is also wrong. That is also a transgression of the 6th commandment.

Sometimes people attack you with words. They may not stab you with a knife, but they attack you with sharp words. But notice what Jesus has to say about that. “Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin.” Matthew 5:22b. The word “Raca” means “empty head.” A modern equivalent might be something like “you pea brain!”, “you dummy” or “you air-head.” Using the term Raca was an expression of contempt. Today, it’s fairly common to attack people with words, and most people don’t think that in so doing they are breaking the 6th commandment

You may be interested to know that according to Jewish law, if a person called another person “Raca”, they would be taken before the Sanhedrin. That was the equivalent of the supreme court for the Jews. If found guilty, the offender was charged a heavy fine.

Jesus continues in Matthew 5:22: “But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.” This is serious. In danger of the fire of hell! The expression, “You fool” literally means, “You rebel! You apostate. You enemy of all that is good.” Such an offense was punishable by cutting out the tongue of the offender and thrusting a hot iron, ten fingers in width, into the mouth of the person who used it.

Ouch! Now that sounds very severe to me. Barbaric even. If we implemented that

punishment for people who attacked others with violent words, we would have a lot of tongueless people in the world. Perhaps finally, people would realize that it is a serious offense to attack people with words.

Some one might be thinking, “Being angry with a person, attacking them with words, even hating them, that’s not as bad as murdering them, is it?” Listen to the Word of God through the apostle John. 1 John 3:15 “Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.” There are many ways to kill besides murdering a person with a weapon. You can kill them in your anger-filled mind. You can kill them with hostile words. You can kill them with lies and false rumors. All of these are a direct transgression of the 6th commandment.

At this point, some of us might be feeling somewhat discouraged. Perhaps we thought that we were keeping the 6th commandment because we haven’t murdered anyone. But Jesus has taken this 6th saying to a whole new level. Don’t be violent towards another person in your mind. Don’t be violent towards another person with your words.

How can we possibly live in harmony with this 6th saying from the mountain? Jesus makes it clear that thoughts and words come from the heart, from the mind. Listen to the words of Jesus to the religious leaders who were planning to kill him. “You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.”

Matthew 12:34

If we are going to live in harmony with the 6th commandment, we need new hearts. I was inspired this week by the prayer of the psalmist David, recorded in Psalm 51. Listen to this heart cry, recorded in Psalm 51, beginning with verse 1. “.....”

God wants to cleanse you, to heal you, to fill you so that you can be a channel of life and peace and love! Then we can truly live in harmony with the 6th commandment. It's more than not murdering, as important as that is. It's more than not harboring violent thoughts or using violent words. The true fulfillment of the 6th commandment is to be a channel of life and peace and love!

Is there anyone here who has broken the 6th commandment? Perhaps you murdered someone. Perhaps you're listening to this message in a prison cell. If that's you, then I have a word of hope for you! The Apostle Paul was a murderer. In those early years, his name was Saul of Tarsus. But he was a murderer. But there is grace for all you call upon the name of the Lord. Can you say Amen? All who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Saul of Tarsus not only called upon the name of the Lord and was saved. But he also became a preacher, a proclaimer of the Good News about Jesus!

Perhaps someone listening terminated a pregnancy because it seemed like the only way out, but you have been filled with grief and remorse. You haven't murdered anyone, but you feel like you took an innocent life. I want to bring you a word of hope this morning. The Lord wants to cleanse you and heal you. The Lord wants to restore to you the joy of His salvation, if you'll just open your life to Him today.

Perhaps you've never murdered anyone, but you are full of anger. And you realize today that you have also broken the 6th commandment. I lived many years of my life full of anger. But I'm here to testify today that the Lord God can set you free from your anger, by the power of Jesus name! He can use Christian counselors. He can use godly teachers. He can take you from being a cauldron of anger and transform you into a channel of life and peace and love!

I asked several Christian counselors for some resources that might be helpful in dealing with anger. Here are a few of them:

- Letting of your anger by Ron and Pat Potter-Efron
- Angry men and the women who love the, by Paul Hegstrom
- Making love last forever, by Gary Smalley (chapter on 7 ways to unload unresolved anger)
- Deadly Emotions, by Don Colbert
- Change your brain; change your life, Daniel Amen

If you send me an e-mail at dmorris@forestlakechurch.org, I'll send you a list of resources and also the names of some Christian counselors.

Others may plan to attend a seminar on forgiveness, or a presentation on how to handle conflict in a non-destructive way.. And remember, we are not seeking this healing so that God will love us. We are seeking this healing because He loves us. God wants you to be a channel of life and peace and love!

Is there anyone here today, or listening via our web church, via radio, or via television, and you want to say, "Pastor, please pray for me. I want to accept this 6th commandment as a word of blessing from our loving God. I want to not only not murder, I want to be free from angry thoughts, I want to be free from angry words, I want to be healed in my heart." I want God to transform me into a channel of life and peace and love.

If that's your heart cry today, I want to invite you to slip to your knees, wherever you are, just slip to your knees, and let us tell the LORD our God the prayer of our hearts.

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS - PART 8

How to save a marriage

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage: Exodus 20:14
Subject: what we should not do
Complement: commit adultery
Exegetical idea: We should not commit adultery.
Homiletical idea: **Save marriages; don't destroy them.**
Purpose: To encourage my hearers to save marriages, rather than destroy them.

Introduction

The sexual revolution of the second half of the 20th century has become the moral nightmare of the 21st century. Pornography is a multi-billion dollar industry. Sexually transmitted diseases are pandemic. Men and women are dehumanized. Young people are exploited. Children are abused. Pure and holy desires are perverted. Our villages, towns and cities are filled with broken hearts.

In the midst of this moral madness, we desperately need to listen to the 7th word of blessing from our loving God: You shall not commit adultery. As we take a fresh look at this 7th commandment today, we are going to answer 3 questions. First, what is adultery? Second, why is adultery so wrong? And third, how can we protect marriages against adultery?

Let's start with our first question. What is adultery? What did the LORD our God mean when He said, "You shall not commit adultery"? One little boy thought the 7th commandment was "Thou shalt not come eat all dirty!" But the 7th commandment isn't talking about washing your hands before you eat! What is adultery? I'm sure that we could find many definitions for adultery in different cultures. But I'm not so interested in public opinion. I want to know what God's Word has to say. What about you? So how does the Bible define adultery?

Let's begin our study with some passages in the Hebrew Scriptures that use the same Hebrew word found in the 7th commandment—you shall not commit adultery. Leviticus 20:10. "If a man commits adultery with another man's wife--with the wife of his neighbor--both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death." We could conclude from this text that adultery is an inappropriate relationship with a married individual.

Leviticus 18:20 is more specific. "Do not have sexual relations with your neighbor's wife and defile yourself with her."

In Jewish law, adultery was defined very specifically: sexual relations between a man and a married woman other than his wife. Sexual relations between a married woman and any man other than her husband.

According to the mosaic law, the consequence for adultery was very severe. In Deut. 22:22 we read, "If a man is found sleeping with another man's wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel." Notice that this penalty also existed if a woman was betrothed to be married, formally engaged. Deut. 22:23-26 "If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and he sleeps with her, [24] you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death--the girl because she was in a town and did not scream for help, and the man because he violated another man's wife. You must purge the evil from among you. [25] But if out in the country a man happens to meet a girl pledged to be married and rapes her, only the man who has done this shall die. [26] Do nothing to the girl; she has committed no sin deserving death."

The Word of God was clear, and the message is still clear. Do not be sexually active with another man's wife. Do not commit adultery.

At this point, some who might be looking for an excuse to be sexually promiscuous might say, “Alright! I won’t be sexually active with any woman who is married or engaged. I’ll just be sexually active with single women. That’s not adultery.” And technically speaking, at least according to Jewish law, that person would be correct. That person would not be committing adultery.

But what’s wrong with that logic? If individuals are sexually active with other unmarried individuals outside of marriage, they are predisposing themselves to unfaithfulness after marriage. If a woman will be sexually active with a man who is not her husband before marriage, what is there to prevent her from being sexually active with man who is not her husband after marriage? Sexually promiscuity before marriage predisposes a person to adultery in marriage.

That why the apostle Paul appeals to Christians to not only flee from adultery, but to flee from all inappropriate sexual activity. Listen to Paul’s words in 1 Cor. 6:18-20. “.....” Flee from sexual immorality. The Greek word that Paul here is the Greek word “porneia” from which we get the English word pornography. Porneia has a much broader meaning than adultery, a married individual having sexual relations with someone other than his or her spouse. Porneia refers to any kind of sexually inappropriate conduct. Run from it, Paul says, because inappropriate sexual conduct damages you personally and dishonors God publically.

Jesus goes one step further. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus has this to say about the 7th commandment. Matthew 5:27-28 “You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' [28] But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” If Jesus was walking in our midst in the 21st century, He would say, “Not

only should you not commit adultery; not only should a married individual not be sexually active with anyone other than his or her spouse. Do not expose yourself to sexually explicit movies or read sexually explicit books or magazine, or go to inappropriate web sites on the Internet.

Lustful thoughts are just one step away from adultery. In fact, Jesus said that a person who dwells on lustful thoughts has already committed adultery in his or her heart.

I vividly remember the day that a distinguished gentleman in his early 60s came into my office in Collegedale, Tennessee. His marriage was in crisis and so was his moral conduct smelled like a sewer. He had been surfing on the Internet and had found some inappropriate web sites. At first, he was shocked by the porneia that he saw. If he had listened to the apostle Paul's counsel, what would he have done at that moment? FLEE.

But this gentleman didn't listen to Paul's counsel. He loitered around, like the foolish young man described in Proverbs 6:7-23. "....." You may want to read Proverbs chapter 6 as a follow-up to this message. It's the story of a foolish young man who didn't flee from sexual immorality.

The elderly gentleman in my office didn't think that it would ruin his life when he loitered around those inappropriate Internet sites. At first, he just looked at pictures. After all, "It wouldn't hurt anyone, would it?" Oh yes. It will break hearts and break homes. Just wait and see." Having loitered at that inappropriate Internet web site, this gentleman came back, again and again. Then he went to chat rooms, just as a passive observer, you understand. But soon he was involved in two way conversations, then multiple secret liasons, and multiple adulterous relationships. When his wife found out about her husband's adultery, it broke her heart.

When he sat in my office, he was hurting too. Committing adultery will hurt you. The wise man Solomon was right when he said in Proverbs 6:27-29, “.....” And also in Proverbs 6:32-33, we read, “.....”

Adultery will damage your own life, your own heart. But as this elderly gentleman discovered, adultery will also break the hearts of those who you love, those who love you. If you commit adultery, you will break your spouse’s heart. Just ask any spouse who has been through that terrible ordeal. If you have children, you’ll break their hearts too. You will scar them for life. You’ll break the hearts of your friends too. People who looked up to you. People who trusted you. And most of all, you will cause intense pain to the heart of God. God loves you, and he wants your conduct to reflect His unfailing love, His faithfulness, His integrity. The LORD our God knows how many hearts will be broken. That’s why He gives us this word of blessing from the mountain—do not commit adultery. And that is why Jesus said to a woman caught in the very act of adultery, “Go now and leave your life of sin.” Adultery is so wrong because it damages us, it breaks hearts, its destroys home and it brings pain to the heart of the LORD our God.

What if you’re listening today, and you have already messed up? Is there any hope for you? Listen to these words of hope from the apostle Paul. Right before the warning to flee from porneia, the apostle Paul offers these words of hope to those who have messed up. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. “.....”

I say, “Hallelujah!” What do you say? Praise the LORD. 1 John 1:9 tells us that “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” And everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Romans

10:13

So there is hope! There is cleansing. There will still be scars. But we don't have to stay stuck in the muck and the mire. We can choose a new life in Jesus.

I've asked someone to share her powerful testimony with us today. It's a testimony of pain, but it's also a testimony of joy and hope. Yvette, thank you for your willingness to share your testimony today to bring glory and praise to the name of Jesus.

Yvette, your story begins with a life of pain and hurt and abuse. What was life like during your early years?

How did you find freedom from that destructive way of living? How did you find healing?

How is God leading in your life right now to bring hope and healing to others?

Yvette, thank you for sharing your powerful testimony with us. Instead of continuing a destructive cycle of breaking hearts, including your own, you have chosen to be a channel of healing and to help mend broken hearts. Instead of destroying marriages, you have chosen to help save marriages. May the name of the Lord be praised!

Let's look now at our third question: How do we protect marriages against adultery? Let me suggest four ways that we can protect marriages against adultery—both your own marriage and the marriages of those around you. First, choose to live a life of moral purity before marriage. Set healthy boundaries in your sexual conduct prior to marriage. Don't justify inappropriate sexually behavior and say, "I'll change once I get married." Many who have been through failed marriages will testify that it isn't that simple. Choose to live a life of moral purity before marriage. In practical terms, that means guarding your eyes and guarding your heart.

You can't just watch any movies or read any magazines. You can't just hang out with immoral people. If you go with the flow, you end up drowning in a sewer. Choose to live a life of moral purity before marriage.

A second way to protect marriages against adultery is to live a life moral purity in marriage. I remember a tearful man who came to me. He had encouraged his wife to watch pornography with him. He thought that it would add excitement to their relationship. If he had listened to the apostle Paul's counsel, he would have run from porneia. But unfortunately, he didn't. He encouraged his wife to watch pornography with him. And she became so addicted to pornography that she left him. She was deceived into thinking that she just couldn't be content with one man. That tearful ex-husband wished that he had lived a life of moral purity in his marriage.

Here is testimony that was sent to me this week about the impact of soap operas. (Read the testimony) By living a life of moral purity in marriage, this young mother was protecting her marriage against adultery.

A third was to protect marriages against adultery is to actively nurture your own marriage. I'm talking not to those who are married or to those who might be married in the future. Any wholesome activity that you engage in to nurture your own marriage is a way to protect your marriage against adultery. Don't be so preoccupied with your work that everyone else is noticing your spouse except you. Don't be so busy parenting your children that you neglect the needs of your spouse. Actively nurture your own marriage. Attend a family life seminar. Go to a men's conference that talks about moral purity and honoring your commitments. Go to a women's conference that inspires you to live a life of integrity and honor.

Read good books on nurturing marriage. Pray together. Worship together. Actively nurture your own marriage. That's a third way to protect marriages against adultery.

A fourth way to protect marriages against adultery is to actively nurture the marriages around you. Affirm the faithful commitments that you see in your family members and friends. Send a card. Give a word of affirmation. Encourage young people who are starting their married life together. Be a mentor to those who are preparing for marriage. Actively nurture the marriages around you.

Conclusion

We have taken a fresh look at the 7th commandment today. You shall not commit adultery. The LORD our God doesn't tell us "You shall not commit adultery" because He is trying to make life miserable for us. That's what the devil whispers in our ears. But the devil is a liar. The truth is this: adultery isn't fun. Adultery breaks people's hearts. Adultery destroys marriages. Adultery devastates children. Adultery dishonors the name of the LORD your God who created you and you redeemed you at an infinite price by His Son Jesus Christ.

We can choose to save marriages rather than destroy them. What were the four ways that we can protect marriages against adultery? Live a life of moral purity before marriage. Live a life of moral purity in marriage. Nurture your own marriage. Nurture the marriages of those around you.

I want to speak specifically to the men who are listening today. Young men. Older men. Married men. Single men. The world needs men who will live with integrity. Men who will live with honor. Men who will guard their hearts and guard their eyes. Men who will guard

their marriages and the marriages of those around them. Whether your young or old, married or single, is there a man here today who will covenant before God, by His grace and through His power, to be a man who saves marriages, rather than one who destroys them. If that's your commitment today, I want to invite you to stand. Stand wherever you are....whether here on campus, joining us via radio, television, web church...if you will covenant before God to be a man who saves marriages rather than one who destroys them, I invite you to stand right now.

Please remain standing. Now I want to talk to the women. The world needs women who will covenant to guard their hearts and guard their eyes and guard their mouths. Women who will save marriages, rather than destroy them. Whether you are young or old, married or single, will you covenant before God to be a woman of God who saves marriages, rather than a woman who destroys marriages? If that's your commitment today, I want to invite you to stand right now?

I praise God for everyone who has made an important commitment before God today. If you weren't able to stand, but you made a commitment before God in your heart, He knows the decision that you made. No commitment is missed by our loving heavenly Father. Let's just praise Him now for this word of blessing from our loving God.

Contact phone number for Yvette 407-382-5822 321-228-1233

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS - PART 9

No Scrumping!
Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage: Exodus 20:15
Subject: what we should not do
Complement: steal
Exegetical idea: Do not steal.
Homiletical idea: **Instead of taking what doesn't belong to you, cheerfully give away what does belong to you!**
Purpose: To encourage my hearers not to steal, to be content, and to give away with we see modeled in the gracious giving of the LORD our God.

Introduction

Many of you know that I was born in England. Sometimes people ask me, "Where's your British accent?" Don't forget that I've lived here in the United States of America for the past 30 years, but I'm happy to inform you that my British accent is carefully stored somewhere in my brain and spontaneously emerges on special occasions. Like when I set foot on British soil. "God save the queen!"

I'm reminded of my heritage at times when I use an expression that makes perfect sense to me but elicits nothing but blank stares from my listeners. Take the title of this sermon, for example. No scrumping. Most of you have no idea what that means! Isn't that true? You know that we are studying about the 8th commandment today, and scrumping sounds naughty, but you have no idea what it means!

Scrumping is an English verb. I scrump. You scrump. He scrumps. We scrump. You scrump. They scrump. Does that help? Not too much. I have a vague memory of scrumping when I was a little boy. Either I actually did go scrumping or I heard a story about scrumping and it was so real that I thought I was actually there! Scrumping is the British expression for

stealing fruit. Has anyone here ever taken fruit from a tree or a bush that didn't belong to you?

Ah hah! Then *you* are guilty of scrumping too! You are a scrumper!

We laugh, but actually, it's no laughing matter. One of the ten commandments tells us that no scrumping is allowed. To be more specific, it's the 8th commandment: You shall not steal.

I'd like to explore the meaning of this 8th commandment with you today. First, what we shouldn't do, and then what we should do. Perhaps it comes as no surprise to you that the LORD our God would include this commandment as one of the 10 sayings that He wrote with His finger on tables of precious stone. "You shall not steal." Stealing seems as old as sin, as old as selfishness. Stealing has been going on here on planet earth since the day that Satan tempted Eve to take something that didn't belong to her.

The LORD our God clearly instructs us, you shall not steal. Do not take something that belong to others. Whether apples, or anything else. You don't like people to steal from you, do you? If you plant a garden, and carefully tend that garden, and pull out the weeds, and water, and fertilize, and wait and wait and wait. You wouldn't like it if someone comes at harvest time and steals all of your produce, would you? Then treat others the way that you would like to be treated. That is the Golden Rule of Jesus. Do not steal things that belong to others.

I went online this week and got a few current examples of stealing: (share examples)

Greg was impressed that he needed to teach the importance of this 8th commandment to his son Daniel. Daniel's teacher had just called to inform Greg that his son has stolen a bag of cookies from off of the teacher's desk. The principal apologized that he needed to call a parent over such a small matter, but Daniel's dad encouraged the principal not to minimize the

seriousness of this offence.

So Daniel was suspended from school for one day. His dad took off work in order to supervise Daniel's labor activities for the day—weeding the vegetable garden, cleaning the yard, shoveling dirt, washing the cars. When Daniel thought his work was done, his father sent him up to his room to get his allowance. Father and son headed to the nearest store and purchased all of the supplies necessary to make cookies. Daniel baked 5 dozen cookies under his father's direction. The next day Daniel returned to school. His dad took an extended lunch break and came over to Daniel's classroom. Having apologized to his teacher, Daniel was instructed to make a public apology to his classmates for stealing. If he needed some encouragement, his father was willing to introduce him! Daniel grabbed the tray of cookies, walked in front of his classmates and said, "I just want to apologize to the class because I'm the one who stole the cookies from the teacher's desk. I made a bunch of cookies for us to all share." The class erupted with applause. More than one of Daniel's friends came up to him afterwards and told him that it was cool that he told the truth and that he shared with the class!(as told to Laura Schlessinger, *The Ten Commandments: the significance of God's Laws in Everyday Life*, p. 239-240).

With his father's support, that failure became a growing experience for Daniel, and a lesson that he will hopefully never forget. You shall not steal—do not take things that belong to others. And don't steal their reputations either. People do that by gossiping and starting false rumors. We going to talk about not bearing false witness in the next message in this series, but let me say this much today. Gossiping about people is stealing. You're stealing their dignity. You're stealing their privacy. You're stealing their reputations. If you hear some problem that a

person is struggling with, don't talk to everyone else about it. Talk to Jesus about it. Pray for that person. Bless them, don't curse them. Don't steal from them.

There is a story in the book of Genesis about a woman who tried to steal a young man's moral purity. She tried to seduce him. He was just a slave. She was the master's wife. But Joseph refused to compromise his convictions. Joseph refused to dishonor his master and most of all dishonor God. And how did Potiphar's wife respond? She stole Joseph's reputation instead. She accused him of trying to rape her! That was a lie, but it was also a transgression of the 8th commandment. She was stealing Joseph's honorable reputation. Perhaps you haven't thought of gossip or spreading rumors as stealing, but it may actually be much worse than taking material possessions that don't belong to you.

I want to suggest to you today that not only should we not steal material possessions or reputations from those around us, but we shouldn't steal from God either. You say, "Steal from God? How in the world does a person steal from God?" Let me suggest at least two ways that people frequently steal from God. First, people steal from God by refusing to return to God something that belongs to Him. Look with me in Malachi 3:8-10. "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, "How do we rob you?" In tithes and offerings. [9] You are under a curse--the whole nation of you--because you are robbing me. [10] Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."

That word of God is a wonderful promise, but it is also a rebuke for those who have been stealing from God. Returning a tenth of our income to God, that's what the word "tithe" means,

is a way of recognizing that all blessings come from Him. The tithe is holy. It belongs to God. The freewill offerings—that's just an additional thank you! Give as the LORD our God has blessed you. But tithe is not a gift. Tithe is holy to the LORD.

And I'm here to testify today that we have learned in our own family, you can never outgive God. He says, "Give, and it will be given to you, pressed down and running over!" When you are faithful to God with your finances, He does open the windows of heaven and pour out such a blessing that there is not room enough to receive it. Do I have a witness out there?

The 8th commandment says, "Do not steal." One way people steal from God is by failing to return to Him something that belongs to Him. A second way that people steal from God is by taking the glory that belongs only to Him. In a previous study on the book of Daniel, you may remember that Nebuchadnezzar had a dream, but he couldn't remember it. God used that opportunity to show His greatness to that pagan king. God revealed to Daniel the content of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and also its interpretation. And Daniel was careful to give all of the glory to God. But Arioch, commander of the king's guard, sought the glory for himself. He said to the king, "I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can tell the king what his dream means." Dan 2:26 Arioch hadn't found anyone. Daniel came to him! Arioch didn't deserve any glory. The glory belonged only to the God of heaven.

Many people act like Arioch, sometimes without even knowing it. We steal the glory that belongs only to God. God has blessed us, He has caused us to prosper, He has given us wisdom and success, and it's so easy to steal the glory that belongs only to Him.

We need always to remember the 8th commandment: you shall not steal. Do not steal from those around you. Do not steal from God. Some of us may have grown up in families

where stealing was commonplace. We stole by cheating on our income tax. We stole by taking advantage of people who were in vulnerable situations. We may have even stolen from God.

But the Word of God has this to say to all of us who have become followers of Jesus: Ephesians 4:28 “He who has been stealing must steal no longer...”

That’s a clear message from the 8th commandment—you shall not steal. But I want us to go beyond the negative of this 8th saying. I want us to find the positive. Not only should we not steal, but what should we do? What is the opposite of taking something that doesn’t belong to you? Any suggestions? What is the positive of not taking something that doesn’t belong to you? Giving something that does belong to you! Do you remember that comment from the apostle Paul about he who has been stealing must steal no longer? That’s was the first part of Ephesians 4:28. Let’s look now at the second half of that verse. Ephesians 4:48–“He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.”

When we give away what does belong to us Jesus reminds us in His sermon on the mount that we should give not to bring attention to ourselves, but to bring glory to God. Look with me at the counsel of Jesus in Matthew 6:1-4. “.....”

And when you give away what does belong to you, give cheerfully. God loves a cheerful giver. That’s in the Bible, you know. Unlike “God helps those who help themselves.” People think that’s in the Bible, but it isn’t. But God loves a cheerful giver *is* in the Bible. 2 Cor. 9:7 “God loves a cheerful giver.” Why does God love cheerful giving? Because a cheerful giver is a beautiful reflection of His generous character. We can give of our resources—our money, our time, our talents. We can give words of affirmation. Words of encouragement. And we can do

all of these things cheerfully. God loves a cheerful giver! As we give away that which belongs to us, we will discover that the words of Jesus are true: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Acts 20:35

Some of you may want to go home and repent of stealing. Either stealing for those around you or stealing from God. You may want to sit down with your spouse and talk about honoring God with your finances. He’ll bless you, you know. More than you can even imagine. Others may decide to give something away that can bless someone else’s life. If you have something special that you are impressed to give away and you don’t know who to give it to, bring it to the Gift and Thrift store. They’ll make sure that it blesses someone’s life and also provides some funds to bless other lives. Give away what does belong to you, and do it cheerfully. That’s the positive side of the 8th commandment.

And those gifts don’t just have to be material things. Give a word of affirmation. Give a word of encouragement. Give a word of hope. You could even do that today. Take one of the yellow cards in front of you. Write a message of encouragement. Leave it in the foyer, and we’ll address it and mail it for you!

If I have ever been scrumping in my life, I’m truly sorry. I have asked the Lord to forgive me. If I’m walking past someone’s apple orchard, and I see a delicious apple hanging over the fence, smiling at me, and saying, “Take me! Take me!”, I will ask permission first from the owner. Or buy a basket of apples from the fruit market!

And I’ll remember that this 8th commandment is about more than not stealing, from others and from God—it’s about cheerfully giving away what does belong to you.

And to help remind you not to scrump, to be content, and to be a cheerful giver, I brought

you a gift! (Uncover the apples) No, I didn't go scrumping! We bought these apples at the local fruit market. I want you to take one as a reminder of this message. Please don't eat it in the sanctuary! Perhaps you can share a bite with someone that you love! Remember the message of this 8th saying from the mountain: **Instead of taking what doesn't belong to you, cheerfully give away what does belong to you!**

Examples of people stealing:

A 53 year old female employee of an antiques and collectibles store in Farmington (New Hampshire) is charged with stealing more than 100 thousand dollars from the store.

A 23-year-old Seattle man stole 136 cars over a six month period. He would simply pry the car's window, force the ignition with a screwdriver and take off. Police said the likable young man has a girlfriend and a meth habit, lacks a job and a car -- and really likes to drive.

A 62 year old man who was president of his mobile home park association was charged with stealing thousands of dollars from his neighbors.

A 46 year old former NYPD narcotics detective was charged with stealing more than \$740,000 in drugs and money from drug dealers. He said that he was driven by greed and arrogance.

A former repair technician at an electrical engineering company was charged with stealing trade secrets worth more than \$1.4. He stole circuit chip boards and the directions for repairing them. Not just one or two boards. He stole 1522 of them over a 4 year period before quitting his job. Maybe he was afraid he might get caught.

A home health nurse was charged with stealing from one of her patients.

A man was arrested for stealing his neighbors air-conditioner. Police were suspicious when they saw the stolen air-conditioner installed in the next door neighbor's home! Dah!

And then there was the man who stole a garbage truck. That's right. A garbage truck. He was drunk, and called his wife to come and pick him up. When she arrived, he got angry with her because she refused to let him drive their car. She was a wise woman. But her husband wasn't so wise. He looked around for a vehicle to steal because he didn't want to walk home and has was too proud to be a passenger with his wife driving. The closest vehicle he could find was a city garbage truck. He jumped in the cab of the garbage truck while the city employee was loading trash in the back of the truck and drove off. Police didn't have too much trouble catching him. It's hard to look inconspicuous in a garbage truck.

We laugh! But it's sad, isn't it? Our society needs to hear the word of blessing from our loving God—you shall not steal!

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS - PART 10

Lifesaver

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Exodus 20:16
Subject:	what you should not do
Complement:	bear false witness against your neighbor
Exegetical idea:	You should not bear false witness against your neighbor
Homiletical idea:	God wants you to be a lifesaver!
Purpose:	To encourage my hearers to be faithful witnesses who save lives rather than false witness who bring only hurt and pain.

Introduction

Some of you may remember the country version of the 10 commandments that I found in the little store in Mount Dora. I quoted one of those country 10 commandments when we studied the 3rd commandment. “No cussin’”. There was more to the 3rd commandment than that. But that was a start: No cussin’! You can watch that entire message online at www.forestlakechurch.org.

Well, the country version of the 9th commandment also caught my attention. We are studying the 9th commandment today. The country version of the 9th commandment was: No Fibbin’. Do we have any country folk here who know what “No fibbin’” means? That’s right! No lying. I looked up the word “fibbing” in an online dictionary and here’s the definition I found: fibbing - lying or being deliberately unclear. No fibbin’.

Is that an accurate summary of the 9th commandment? Well, let’s look for ourselves, in Exodus 20:16. The NIV translates the 9th commandment with these words: “You shall not give a false testimony against your neighbor.” The KJV reads, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.” The Hebrew adjective translated “false” literally means lying or untrue. Literally, you shall not give a lying testimony, a lying witness.

Deuteronomy 5:20 also says “You shall not give false testimony” but the Hebrew adjective also translated “false” is a different word from the one used in Exodus 20:16. This word means “empty” or “frivolous.” You shall not give an empty or frivolous witness.

I think that the country version was quite accurate! No fibbin’. Don’t lie or be deliberately unclear in your witness against your neighbor. Did you know that giving a false witness is something that the LORD hates? In Proverbs 6:16, we read that there are 6 things the LORD hates. Yes, seven are an abomination to Him. And one of those things that the LORD hates is found in Proverbs 6:19a: “a false witness who pours out lies..” While the setting for this commandment is a court of law, it is certainly true that God hates lying of every kind. In fact, in the restatement of the commandment in Lev 19:11, it simply states “Do not lie. Do not deceive one another.”

Why does the LORD our God feel so strongly about giving a false witness against your neighbor? Why does He hate that behavior? Let me suggest at least two reasons why God hates false testimony. Firstly, God is truth, and God loves truth. Jesus, the Son of God, declared, “I am the Truth!” And John the Baptist described the Son of God as “full of ...truth.” So God who is Truth hates falsehood of every kind. That’s one reason why God hates false testimony.

But there is at least one more reason why God hates it when someone gives false testimony against his neighbor. God loves that neighbor. God loves all of His children, including you. And a false testimony hurts a person....unjustly. And God hates that. Because God loves all of His children.

That’s why God hates giving a false testimony. Did you know that giving a false testimony not only includes speaking falsehood against your neighbor but also failing to speak

truth in your neighbor's defense? Failing to speak truth in your neighbor's defense is also a transgression of the 9th commandment. Listen to these words of Scripture, recorded in Leviticus 5:1. "If a person sins because he does not speak up when he hears a public charge to testify regarding something he has seen or learned about, he will be held responsible." The sin of silence is just as much a transgression as the sin of false speech.

Someone might say, "It specifically says, "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor." "Don't give an untrue testimony, don't testify in an insincere way against your neighbor." Who is my neighbor? Is it just the person who lives right next door to me? Is that my only neighbor. Does this 9th commandment relate only to my interaction with that person? What about the person who lives across the street, or on the other side of town? Is that person my neighbor too? Who is my neighbor?

What the answer to that question? Who is your neighbor? Someone asked Jesus that question. Who is my neighbor? Luke 10:29 He answered not with a definition but with a story. We call that story "The Good Samaritan." You might want to read that story later today. It's found in Luke 10:29-37. The answer to the question "who is my neighbor?" is this: Anyone who is in need. And how many of us on this planet called earth have needs? All of us. So we are all neighbors to each other! And if we are going to live in harmony with this 9th word of blessing from our loving God, we will not give a lying testimony against anyone!

Jesus faced many false witnesses during his life on earth. When He performed many marvelous miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit, lying witnesses testified against Him. On one occasion, when Jesus healed a man who was blind and mute, and under the control of an evil spirit, lying witnesses said, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives

out demons.” Matthew 12:24 They called the work of God the work of the devil. That was a lying testimony, a false witness. And Jesus said, “That is an unforgivable sin!” Listen to the words of Jesus in Matthew 12:31. “I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.”

Jesus encountered lying witnesses at His mockery of a trial. We read in Matthew 26:59-61, “The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward and declared, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’”

That was an empty testimony. A lying witness. Jesus never said that. Jesus never said, “I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.” What did Jesus say? Does anyone remember? It was right after He cleansed the Temple at the beginning of His ministry. He was asked by what authority He did those things. And Jesus responded, recorded in John 2:19, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” He wasn’t even referring to the Temple in Jerusalem. He was referring to His own body! But lying witnesses testified against Him.

And the priests, including the High Priest, they were also giving a false witness by their silence. They were also lying witnesses. They knew the truth about Jesus. After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the religious leaders had this to say about Jesus: “Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him...” John 11:47-48a. They knew the truth about Jesus. But they remained silent at His trial. They were also lying witnesses.

And these religious leaders treated the followers of Jesus the same way. Stephen the deacon was so full of power and so full of the Holy Spirit that no one could refute the power of his testimony about Jesus! And so, Acts 6:11-14 records, Acts 6:11-14, “Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, ‘We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God.’” That was a lying testimony. Notice that the religious leaders had to secretly persuade some men to say that. The record continues in Acts 6:12-14, “So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. They produced false witnesses, who testified, ‘This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.’” That was a false testimony. A lying witness. But based on that lying testimony and Stephen’s bold response to it, those religious leaders stoned Stephen to death.

Those individuals who gave a lying testimony against Jesus and a lying testimony against the deacon Stephen will have to answer before the LORD our God in the day of judgment. And so will any person who bears false witness and does not repent and turn from his or her sin. The wise man Solomon declared that “A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who pours out lies will not go free.” Proverbs 19:5 And again in Proverbs 21:28, “A false witness will perish...”

If the message ended here, we would have heard truth, but we wouldn’t leave very encouraged. And we would also be left wondering why the sermon title was Lifesaver and what this lifesaver, this life preserver was doing up here at the platform. Well, the reason for the lifesaver, and the word of encouragement is found in Proverbs 14:25. “A truthful witness saves

lives...” (A true witness delivereth souls) A lying witness wounds. A lying witness damages. A lying witness can bring death. But a truthful witness saves lives!

I want to be a Lifesaver! What about you? I want to save lives by giving a truthful witness. That means that I will refuse to compromise. I will speak the truth even if it means sacrifice. I will speak the truth even if it means loss. I will refuse to remain silent when there is truth that must be heard. And that commitment must go beyond a court of law. That commitment to be a truthful witness must extend to every area of life, every moment of life.

God wants you to be a truthful witness! That’s what Jesus asked us to do when He said, “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel. Preach the good news about Jesus.” Be a truthful witness. Tell the truth about Jesus and His saving grace. Tell the truth about our loving Heavenly Father. Tell the truth about the events soon to come upon the earth. God wants you to be a truthful witness. A truthful witness saves lives. God wants you to be a lifesaver.

Stephen the deacon was a lifesaver. He was a truthful witness. Even when lying witnesses were testifying against him, Stephen continued to give a truthful witness. Even when his enemies were grinding their teeth in anger and hatred against him, Luke records in Acts 7:55-56 that Stephen, “full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ‘Look,’ he said, ‘I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’ The religious leaders killed Stephen for that truthful witness. But that truthful witness saved at least one life. At least one person was saved as a result of Stephen’s truthful testimony. Who was that? Saul of Tarsus.

The truthful witness of Stephen was so powerful, so blessed by the Holy Spirit, that Saul of Tarsus had no rest until he had accepted Jesus Christ as Messiah and had surrendered his life

fully to Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord. Stephen's truthful witness saved a life. He was a lifesaver!

And that's what God wants for each one of us. He not only wants us not to be lying witnesses, people who give false testimonies. God wants us to be truthful witnesses. Lifesavers. Because truthful witnesses save lives.

Nathan was heading down the road to destruction. Many times he would open the throttle on his powerful German motorcycle and drive at death-defying speeds. One day, a former girlfriend gave a truthful testimony to Nathan. She had recently recommitted her life to Jesus Christ as her personal Savior and Lord. And she gave a truthful witness to her former boyfriend. He didn't have much choice but to listen. She was cutting his hair at the time, so he was something of a captive audience!

Nathan listened to that truthful witness. I met Nathan a few weeks later when he showed up in church. He came up to me after the church service and told me that he wanted to commit his life to Jesus as His Lord and Savior. Today, Nathan is a pastor, a preacher of the good news about Jesus. Nathan is a lifesaver. And all because a former girlfriend cared enough to be a truthful witness. If Nathan could be here today, he would testify that the words of Solomon are true: a truthful witness saves lives.

And we need more truthful witnesses who save lives, don't we. There are so many people all around who are about to perish and don't even know it! I read a remarkable story this past week about a man in Houston, Texas, who was driving his SUV along the side of Brays Bayou. Now for those of us who aren't from the south of the US, a bayou is a slow moving river that meanders through the lowlands and marshlands. This gentleman was driving his SUV on a

road that ran alongside the river. All seemed normal until the man made an abrupt left turn. That's when things got complicated. You see, there was no left turn. Only a grass shoulder and then the river. The man drove his SUV across the grass and straight into the river. His SUV ended up 30-40 feet from shore, submerged in about 10 feet of water. Fortunately, someone witnessed this strange occurrence and called for help. When the rescue squad arrived, what they found was stranger than fiction. When the divers went down to assess the situation, they noticed that the driver was still sitting calmly in his SUV. He seemed totally oblivious to the fact that he was under 10 feet of water!

The rescue divers were able to get into the SUV, tie a life preserver around the driver and bring him to safety. When I read that story, I thought to myself, "What a startling illustration of so many in our world today!" People are in a perilous situation and they don't even know it. They are totally oblivious to the danger all around them.

Someone needs to tell them the truth before it's too late. Remember, a truthful witness saves lives. Someone needs to be a lifesaver to them. I want to be a lifesaver, don't you?

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS - PART 11

Godly Contentment

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Exodus 20:17
Subject:	what you should not covet
Complement:	your neighbor's spouse, servants or property.
Exegetical idea:	You should not covet your neighbor's spouse, servants or property.
Homiletical idea:	You are a child of the King!
Purpose:	To encourage my hearers to be content no matter what their condition in this life because they are children of the King!

Introduction

Do you remember those IQ test questions where you had a list of items or numbers and you had to choose the one that didn't match the others? Here's an example: Dog, Cat, Lamb, Horse. Which one doesn't match? The answer is... Lamb. To match, it would need to be dog, cat, sheep, horse. Here's another IQ test question: 4 numbers. Which one doesn't match the rest? 6,9,15, 20. That's a little more difficult. 6,9,15, 20. The answer is 20. The other 3 numbers are divisible by 3.

Now try this IQ test question based on the 10 commandments. Which one of these commandments doesn't match the others? Do not kill. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Do not covet. The correct answer is: Do not covet. If you aren't sure why that's the correct answer, listen carefully. You should find the answer to that question sometime during the sermon!

Let's examine the 10th commandment, the 10th word of blessing from our loving God, recorded in Exodus 20:17. Remember that all of these sayings are prefaced by the words, "I am the LORD your God who brought you out..." I am the LORD your God who delivered you! Let's look at the 10th commandment. Exodus 20:17. "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.”

You may be surprised to discover that the Hebrew word in Exodus 20:17, translated “covet” in most English translations, is not an inherently negative word. The Hebrew verb *chamad* simply means “to desire” or “to have delight in.” This same Hebrew verb *chamad* is used in Isaiah 53:2 in reference to the coming Messiah. We read in Isaiah 53:2, that there was “nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.” KJV–“there is no beauty that we should desire him.”

So the Hebrew verb *chamad*, in itself is not inherently positive or negative. It simply means “to desire,” “to delight in.” It is the context that tells us whether this is an appropriate desire or an inappropriate desire. Let’s look again at Exodus 20:17.

“.....” What is it about the context here in the 10th commandment that makes this an inappropriate desire? Exactly! This is your neighbor’s wife. Your neighbor’s house. Your neighbor’s servants.

The 10th commandment tells us, “Do not have an inappropriate desire for someone or something that belongs to someone else.” Let’s look at 3 references where this Hebrew verb conveys the meaning of an inappropriate desire for someone or something. Two statements and one story. The first statement is found in Proverbs 6:25. “Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes.” KJV–“Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids.”

What is the context here? An inappropriate desire for another man’s wife. The translators try to capture the negative connotation by translating this same verb *chamad* “do not

lust in your heart” rather than simply “do not desire.” Clearly, in this context, *chamad* is an inappropriate desire for someone.

A second statement: Micah 2:2. “They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them. They defraud a man of his home, a fellowman of his inheritance.” Again, the context is negative. The text literally reads, “They desire fields and seize them.” But because this is an inappropriate desire for something that belongs to someone else, the translators use the word “covet.”

And now a third reference, but this time a story where the same Hebrew verb *chamad* is used in a negative context. Joshua 7:21. “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.” “I coveted them—there’s the Hebrew verb *chamad*. The same verb found in the 10th commandment. “I desired them.”

What is the context of this story? Who is speaking? Achan. Who was Achan? One of the children of Israel? What had he done? Taken some gold, silver, and a beautiful Babylonian robe when Jericho was conquered. You say, “What’s wrong with that? That is the plunder of war!” Why was it an inappropriate desire for Achan to want to take gold, silver and a garment from Jericho? Does anyone know the answer to that question? Listen to the instructions that Joshua had given to the Israelites prior to the fall of Jericho. Joshua 6:17-18. “The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent. But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise

you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it.”

Achan ignored that instruction. He allowed an inappropriate desire to gain a stronghold in his mind, and that inappropriate desire led to inappropriate action. And that inappropriate action resulted in the death of 36 men at the battle of Ai. And eventually, that inappropriate desire resulted in Achan’s own death and the death of his family. You can read the story in Joshua chapters 6 and 7.

So the Hebrew verb *chamad* in a negative context means to have an inappropriate desire, and that inappropriate desire, if left unchecked, will lead to an inappropriate action. That’s why the 10th commandment is actually a word of blessing from our loving God: do not have an inappropriate desire for your neighbor’s wife or anything that is your neighbor’s. Why? Because inappropriate desire will lead to inappropriate action.

Did you notice the difference between the 10th commandment and all of the other 9 commandments? The first nine commandments deal with outward action. The 10th commandment deals with an inner attitude. Do not have an inappropriate desire towards your neighbor’s spouse or anything that is your neighbor’s.

According to the apostle Paul, the 10th commandment is the most challenging of all! Listen to Paul’s words to the Romans, recorded in Romans 7:7-8. “I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire.”

Paul might have thought that he was doing quite well outwardly. He was remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy. He wasn’t stealing. He wasn’t committing adultery. But when he came to the 10th commandment, he realized that his inappropriate desires brought him under

condemnation. No matter how good he looked on the outside, God saw the thoughts and intents of his heart. Paul knew the truth of Psalmist David's words, recorded in Psalm 139:1-3: "O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways."

We may fool people most of the time. We might even fool ourselves some of the time. But we can't fool God. People look at the outside, but God looks at the heart. God notices not only our outward actions but also our inner attitudes.

Paul recognized that the 10th commandment presented him with the greatest challenge of all. Listen to his struggle, recorded in that same chapter of Romans. Romans 7:14-20, 24-25.

"....."

How are we set free from the tyranny of inappropriate desires? Only through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Paul joyfully declared in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" And the apostle John testified that "to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12

When we have received Jesus as our Savior and Lord, we are children of the King! We are a new creation. We walk in newness of life. I'm not saying that a Christian will never be tempted to yield to inappropriate desires. But I am saying that you do not need to be tyrannized by them. Sin will not be your master. Sin will not have dominion over you. Romans 6:14 You can choose by the power of God's indwelling Spirit to live differently. Not to earn God's love and favor, but because you are a redeemed child of God!

You are a child of the King. Hallelujah! You can pray with new enthusiasm, “Your kingdom come!” Because you are a child of the King. Whether you have a lot of material wealth, or a little, whether you live in a mansion or a cottage, whether you have many people who serve you or whether you occupy a humble position in this life....you are a child of the King! No one can take your new identity away from you.

And that joyful realization that you are a child of the King leads to godly contentment. Listen to the testimony of the apostle Paul to the Christians in Philippi. Philippians 4:10-12. “I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.”

And what is the secret for being content in any and every situation? Read on, Philippians 4:13. “I can do everything through him who gives me strength.” Paul was a child of the King! Jesus gave Paul contentment no matter what situation he found himself in. Paul was a child of the King.

Listen to the words of the apostle Paul to young Timothy: 1 Timothy 6:6-10. “godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. 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.”

Paul had probably lived in a fairly affluent family as a child. He received an excellent education. He was well respected by the religious leaders of his community. But he gladly gave up everything to follow Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord. Paul knew that while he might not have much in this world, that this world was not his home. He was just passing through. His treasures were laid up somewhere beyond the blue. Paul knew that “the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.” 1 Thess 4:16-17

What a glorious day that will be! Jesus will return as King of kings and Lord of lords. He will return in all of His glory, surrounded by the holy angels. What a glorious day that will be because we are children of the King! Hallelujah. You are a child of the King. I am a child of the King.

We will look up with joy and say, “Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.” Isaiah 25:9 And we will rejoice together, because we are children of the King.

So don't be consumed with inappropriate desires. I know that you are bombarded by all kinds of advertizing. I know that you are bombarded by Hollywood hype. But remember who you are. You are a child of the King! This world is not your home. You're just passing through. This is not your final resting place. You are a child of the King.

The day is coming, and I believe that is will be soon, when we will hear these words: “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and

God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!”

Let that blessed hope fill you with godly contentment today! No matter what your circumstances. You are a child of the King!

Harriet Buell expressed godly contentment in these words:

I once was an outcast stranger on earth,
A sinner by choice and an alien by birth;
But I’ve been adopted; my name’s written down
An heir to a mansion, a robe, and a crown.

A tent or a cottage, why should I care”
They’re building a palace for me over there!
Though exiled from home, yet still I may sing:
All glory to God, I’m a child of the King.

I’m a child of the King, a child of the King
With Jesus my Savior, I’m a child of the King!

When you’re tempted to yield to inappropriate desires, thinking that you need more things so you can be somebody, or more power so you can be somebody, or someone else’s treasure so that you can be somebody, remember that contentment is found in knowing who you

really are. You are a child of the King.

I have something to give you today, whether you're here on campus, or watching via our web church or via TV...I have something to give you today to remind you of who you are! You are a child of the King. So we've made a Forest Lake Church business card for you. Like this one! Well, actually, it's not this big, but it looks just like this one. It has a place for you to write your name, and it says "Child of the King!" Whether you are 5 years old or 105 years old, I want you to have one of these Forest Lake Church business cards. You can write your name on it, right next to "Child of the King." Then you can put it in your Bible. Put it in your wallet. Put it in your purse. Put it on your bulletin board.

And when you feel like you're being bombarded by the advertizing of our culture, when you feel like you're being seduced by Madison Avenue, take out that Forest Lake Church business card and remind yourself—I'm a child of the King!

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen. 1 Tim. 1:17

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS - PART 12

The Two Great Commandments

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Matthew 22:34-40
Subject:	How Jesus responded when a Scribe asked Jesus which was the greatest of the commandments?
Complement:	He summarized the commandments in two great principles: love God and love your neighbor.
Exegetical idea:	When Jesus was asked by a Scribe which was the greatest of the commandments, He summarized the commandments in two great principles: love God and love your neighbor.
Homiletical idea:	Love the LORD our God with all that is within you and love your neighbor too.
Purpose:	To emphasize to my hearers that the heart of the commandments is love with God's love and to encourage them to actively love God and love their neighbors.

Introduction

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! I will bless the LORD at all times! His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the LORD! How many times I have prayed the words of the Psalmist, "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law." And now, O LORD my God, you have opened my eyes, and I have seen wonderful things in Your law. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! (Cover head) I will praise You, O LORD, with my whole heart. I will tell of all Your marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in You. I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High!

Permit me to introduce myself. I am Eleazar Ben Shammua. Perhaps you have heard of me. I am a well known Scribe here in Jerusalem. I do more than write the law, like the ancient scribes. I am an interpreter of the Law. A teacher of the Law. I was educated at the feet of the great teacher Gamaliel. All of my life I have studied the Torah. I have studied the sacred writings of the prophets. I have studied the Halachah and the Haggadah.

But today the LORD our God has opened my eyes and I have seen wonderful things in His law! Hallelujah. I just talked with Yeshua of Nazareth. Perhaps you are surprised that I spoke with Him. Have you heard that we Scribes are opposed to Yeshua? Well, it's true that most of the Scribes are opposed to Yeshua. They accuse Him of trying to destroy the Law and the Prophets. But there are some of us, some of the leaders of the Jews who sense that there is something special about this Teacher. Did not Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin, testify that Yeshua was a teacher sent from God?

So I determined that I should try to meet Yeshua personally. Nicodemus had met with Yeshua secretly, at night. I heard the amazing account of that meeting! I did not know when or where I would meet Yeshua. But I was determined that I would meet Him. Then I heard that some Sadducees were planning to challenge Yeshua publically, and so I followed them through the streets to where Yeshua was teaching the people. I am not one of them number. I am not a Sadducee. I am a Pharisee! So I followed from a distance, and some of my colleagues who are also Pharisees came with me.

We listened carefully from the edge of the crowd as Yeshua responded to the questions that the Sadducees hurled at Him. He spoke with such authority, an authority that startled me. Yeshua rebuked the Sadducees for not knowing the Scriptures or the power of God! It was clear that Yeshua was not like them! He knew the Scriptures and the power of God. I had heard the reports of the sick who were healed, demon-possessed who were set free, and even the dead who were raised to life again! Yeshua not only spoke with authority. He lived with authority. He knew the Scriptures and the power of God.

The Sadducees were silenced! Muzzled, like a disobedient ox that refused to listen to its

master! For a moment, all was quiet. None of the Sadducees dared to ask Yeshua any more questions. That's when I saw my opportunity. Actually, some of my Pharisee friends gathered around me and urged me to test Yeshua. Maybe the crowd thought that I was just trying to be clever, or difficult, but the LORD our God knows my heart. I was seeking to know the truth. And so I said to Yeshua, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

I had carefully studied the Law of God. I had studied the ten sayings that the LORD our God spoke from Mount Sinai, and wrote with His finger on tables of precious stone. And I had studied the hundreds of other commandments that had been written by the teachers of the Law to put a hedge about those ten sayings. And I had studied the thousands of legal interpretations. But which was the greatest commandment in the Law?

Perhaps some people gathered around expected Yeshua to name one of the 10 sayings written by the LORD our God on tables of precious stone. "I am the LORD your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me." Or "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Each one of the ten sayings is important.

But Yeshua did not quote one of the ten sayings. Rather, He said, "Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. This is the first and the greatest commandment!" As He spoke, He smiled. And I knew that He loved the LORD our God with all His heart and soul and mind and strength.

As Yeshua spoke, I could see that He loved the LORD our God with all His heart, and with all His soul, and with all His mind, and with all His strength. Yeshua had told Nicodemus, that God so loved the world! And now Yeshua was telling us that the greatest commandment of

all is to love the LORD our God in return, with all that is within us!

His words made so much sense to me. For years I had been preoccupied with hundreds of laws, thousands of legal interpretations. So much information. So many opinions. But Yeshua identified that which was most important: Love the LORD our God, and to love Him with all that is within us! Did not King David himself declare, “Love the LORD, all His saints!” (Psalm 31:23) Oh, bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name!

Yeshua was still smiling and I smiled in return. I sensed that He understood the joy that was in my heart. Had not the prophet Isaiah declared that the word of the LORD would not return to Him void, but it would accomplish what He purposed. And that we would go out with joy and be led forth with peace. The mountains and the fields would break forth in singing and all the trees of the fields would clap their hands? Hallelujah! My heart was filled with joy as the word of the LORD accomplished what He purposed: Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, and with all your strength.

I was deep in thought when Yeshua spoke again: “And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” What did Yeshua mean? The second is like it? In what way was this second commandment like the first? Simple. Clear. Love. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. Love your neighbor as yourself. Both speak of the love of the LORD our God flowing through us. We are to love the LORD our God with all that is within us and we are to love our neighbors too.

Yeshua had taught on many occasions about loving our neighbors. I had heard the reports. Yeshua had told His disciples to love one another as He had loved them. He even told them to love their enemies. On one occasion, Yeshua told about showing love to a neighbor. A

certain traveler was on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho. That traveler was attacked by robbers. Now that was no big surprise to anyone. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho is a dangerous road! So it was no surprise to hear that a man had been attacked by robbers. But the rest of the story was shocking to some. According to Yeshua, a priest came down the road, saw the man who had been robbed and beaten, but showed no compassion toward him. The priest passed by on the other side of the road. Then a Levite came. He also saw the man who had been robbed and beaten. But he also showed no compassion toward him. The Levite also passed by on the other side of the road. I don't know if that was a true story or not. But it certainly could have been. I know many priests and many Levites who would not have stopped. In fact, when I heard the story, I asked myself the question "Would I have stopped to help the wounded traveler?" "Would I have shown compassion toward him?" Do I love my neighbor?

That wounded traveler might have died there on the side of the road from Jerusalem to Jericho were it not for another traveler who passed by. This traveler was a Samaritan. Now we Jews have nothing to do with Samaritans. We are very unloving toward them. But unlike the priest and the Levite, this Samaritan had compassion on the wounded traveler. He stopped, bound the man's wounds, put the wounded traveler on his own donkey, and carefully brought him to a place of safety. He even paid the Innkeeper to care for this wounded traveler. Now that was a living example of loving a neighbor as yourself!

Yes, Yeshua had much to say about love. Loving God with all of your heart and with all of your soul and with all of your mind and with all your strength and loving your neighbor as yourself. I looked up again and Yeshua was still looking at me, and smiling. When I looked into His eyes, the words of the Psalmist flashed into my mind: "O LORD, you have searched me and

known me, You know my sitting down and my rising up. You understand my thoughts afar off. You comprehend my paths, and my lying down. And are acquainted with all my ways.”

I was startled. It was as if I heard the word of the LORD speaking directly to my own heart. Then Yeshua said these words: “All of the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments!” I had to think about that comment for a moment. I had never heard anyone use that expression before! Like hanging something on a hook! All of the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments! Love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. All of the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments! These two great commandments don’t do away with all of the other sayings in the Word of God. These two great commandments are a summary of all the Law and the Prophets.

I thought about the 10 sayings that the LORD our God spoke on Mount Sinai and wrote with His finger on tables of precious stone. If you love the LORD your God with all that is within you, you will shall have no other gods before Him. If you love the LORD your God with all that is within you, you will not make any craved images and bow down to them and serve them. If you love the LORD your God with all that is within you, you will not take His name in vain. If you love the LORD your God with all that is within you, you will remember His Sabbath day to keep it holy. All of those sayings hang on the great commandment—love the LORD your God with all that is within you.

And the second is like it. If you love your neighbor as yourself, you will honor your father and your mother. If you love your neighbor as yourself, you will not murder. If you love your neighbor as yourself, you will not commit adultery. If you love your neighbor as yourself,

you will not steal. If you love your neighbor as yourself, you will not give a lying witness against your neighbor. If you love your neighbor as yourself, you will not covet anything that is your neighbor's. On that second great commandment hang all of those sayings.

Love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. "All of the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments!" Not just the 10 sayings which the LORD our God wrote with His finger on tables of precious stone. But all of the Law and all of the Prophets. All of it!

It was so simple and so clear. Love the LORD your God with all that is within you and love your neighbor too! So simple and so clear. Love the LORD your God with all that is within you and love your neighbor too! Why do we try to make truth so complicated?

I looked at Yeshua with great respect and love. I wanted Him to know that I had listened attentively to His teaching. "Well said, teacher," I said to Him. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." After I said those words, I realized that I didn't repeat His teaching exactly. But He knew my heart. He knew that I had not only heard His teaching, but I had received it with an open mind and with an open heart. Love the LORD our God with all that is within us and love our neighbors too.

Then Yeshua had a word especially for me! Yes. Especially for me. He looked directly at me and He said, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." Those words flooded my soul like a river of joy. Not far from the kingdom of God! Yeshua had begun His teaching ministry

by declaring that the Kingdom of God is at hand! He had traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. But Yeshua also said that whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. Nicodemus testified that Yeshua had told him that unless we are born again, we cannot not enter the kingdom of God.

I must ask Nicodemus what Yeshua meant by that. “You must be born again!” If a person must be born again to enter the kingdom of God, I need to know what that means. I don’t want to just be “not far from the kingdom of God.” I want to be part of the kingdom of God. Don’t you? It’s not enough to just be “not far from the kingdom of God.” I want to be part of the kingdom of God!

Perhaps being born again means a whole new life, a whole new way of thinking, a whole new way of living. Where I trust in the LORD to save me because He is my Rock and my Salvation! And my greatest desire will be to love the LORD our God with all my heart and soul and mind and strength, and to love my neighbor too.

(Cover my head) Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name! I will praise you, O LORD, with my whole heart. I will tell of all Your marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in You. I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High. You have opened my eyes and I have seen wonderful things in Your Law. I will bless the LORD at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the LORD. The humble shall hear of it and be glad. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together!

Narrative:

Scribe: Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?

Yeshua: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. [30] Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. 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.

Scribe: Well said, teacher.

You are right in saying that God is one
and there is no other but him.

To love him with all your heart,

with all your understanding

and with all your strength,

and to love your neighbor as yourself

is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.

Yeshua: You are not far from the kingdom of God.

Matthew 22:34-40

Hearing that Yeshua had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. [35] One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: [36] "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

[37] Yeshua replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' [38] This is the first and greatest commandment. [39] And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' [40] All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Mark 12:28-34

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Yeshua had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

[29] "The most important one," answered Yeshua, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. [30] Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' [31] The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

[32] "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. [33] To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

[34] When Yeshua saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

10 COMMANDMENTS - PART 13

Disposable

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Revelation 14:12
Subject:	How are the saints who endure described
Complement:	those who obey God's commandments and are faithful to Jesus.
Exegetical idea:	The saints who endure obey the commandments of God and are faithful to Jesus
Homiletical idea:	God will have a people in these last days who obey His commandments and are faithful to Jesus.
Purpose:	To prove to my hearers that the 10 commandments are not done away with and to challenge them to be part of the people of God who obey His commandments and are faithful to Jesus

Introduction

Have you noticed that things are becoming more disposable in recent years? When I was a baby, living in England, mothers used nappies for their babies. We call them diapers in America. These nappies were made of cloth. And the nappy was attached with big safety pins! Not attached to the baby! Attached around the baby's bottom.

When the baby made a mess in its nappy, mother would clean whatever was in it...that's a mother's love for you...then she would wash it and use it again! Today, in many parts of the world we have disposable nappies, disposable diapers. And perhaps that's a good thing! Especially for those who used to have to clean them.

We also have disposable syringes. And that's probably a good thing too. It limits the spread of disease. We also have disposable razors and disposable milk cartons and disposable containers. Unfortunately, we take this disposable mentality into other areas of our lives. We now have disposable marriages. And disposable morals.

Today many are suggesting that we should also dispose of the 10 commandments. We have been on an amazing journey over the past 12 weeks taking a fresh look at the 10

commandments. We have discovered that they are not rigid regulations from a demanding Deity but words of blessing from our loving God. But many today are suggesting...or even insisting that we should dispose of the 10 commandments.

Some of those people who are demanding that we dispose of the 10 commandments are critics of Christianity. They view the 10 commandments as archaic regulations, unnecessary restrictions. They encourage us to break free and enjoy life.

Others who are telling us that we are to dispose of the 10 commandments are Christians. They are followers of Jesus, but they are teaching that the 10 commandments are done away with. And they quote some New Testament texts to support their position:

Romans 6:14 “We are no longer under law but under grace.

Romans 10:4 “ Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.”

Colossians 2:14 “having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.”

The 10 commandments, we are told by some Christians, were nailed to the cross. They are done away with, and no longer applicable for followers of Jesus.

Well, before we jump to any conclusions, let’s look at the life and teachings of Jesus. If we are followers of Jesus, then we ought to follow Him. What do you say?

As we read the Gospels, we discover that Jesus lived in harmony with the 10 commandments. When tempted to break the 1st commandment and have another god besides the One true God, Jesus said to Satan, “You shall worship the LORD your God and Him only you

shall serve.” Luke tells us that it was Jesus’ custom to remember the Sabbath day, in harmony with the 4th commandment. Luke 4:16. Jesus obeyed the 6th commandment. He did not murder. In fact, He said, “I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly. John 10:10. And Jesus obeyed that 7th commandment. He didn’t steal. He said, “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God. Matt 22:21. Those are just a few examples to illustrate that Jesus lived in harmony with the 10 commandments. It’s true that he stripped away the man-made laws that were burdens rather than blessings. But Jesus lived in harmony with the 10 commandments.

Not only did Jesus live in harmony with the 10 commandments, but He also amplified the 10 commandments. He showed the deeper meaning of the 10 words of blessing. For example, the 6th word of blessing says “Do not murder” but Jesus said, “Don’t even hate another person or be angry with them.” The 7th word of blessing says “Do not commit adultery” but Jesus said, “Don’t even have lustful thoughts.” Rather, love each other as I have loved you.

So Jesus not only lived in harmony with the 10 commandments but He even amplified them. Raised the standard even higher.

And Jesus says absolutely nothing about doing away with the 10 commandments before or after His death and resurrection. Listen to His words in Matthew 5:17. “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.” And during the 40 days that Jesus spent with His disciples after His resurrection from the dead, listen to the testimony of Luke in Acts 1:3. “After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.” There is no mention of doing away

with the 10 commandments. Not one word. If you are going to argue that the 10 commandments are done away with, I would like to hear a word of confirmation from the mouth of Jesus. But Jesus says nothing.

Well, you say, what about those texts in Romans and Colossians that seem to suggest that the 10 commandments are done away with? Let's look at those passages more carefully.

Paul's letter to the Romans is a powerful testimony about God's plan of salvation. In Romans chapter 3, Paul argues that there is no-one who is righteous, no not one. He states that point most succinctly in Romans 3:23 where he says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..." And later in Romans 6:23, Paul reminds us that "the wages of sin is death." So we are in trouble. We have all sinned, and we all have a death sentence passed against us.

But then comes the good news in Romans 3, beginning with verse 21. "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law."

Paul states that same idea in Ephesians 2:8-9. We are saved by God's grace, not by the

keeping the Law. And again in Galatians 2:21. “I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!” The Law cannot save us. Only Jesus can save us. We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior!

Does that mean that the law is done away with? Listen to Paul’s own words in Romans 3:31. “Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.”

Now come with me to Romans chapter 6:1-2. “What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?” And that is the context for Romans 6:14-15. “For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!”

What is Paul saying here? He is saying that we are not under the Law as a means of salvation. We are under grace! That Law can’t save us. Only Jesus can save us by His grace.

Now we can understand what Paul is saying in Romans 10:4. “Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.” Christ is the end of the law NKJV says “for righteousness”. We don’t look to the Law to save us. We look to Jesus. Does that mean that the 10 commandments are done away with? Not at all. Do we then make void the Law through faith? God forbid. We establish the Law.

What about the passage in Colossians chapter 2? Let’s look at that passage together. Colossians 2:13-14. “Col. 2:13-14

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the

cross.” What is this written code? The NKJV says “the handwriting of requirements? The literal translation is “the certificate of debt”. Eugene Peterson translates this phrase “the arrest warrant.” What is this certificate of debt? This arrest warrant? It’s not the 10 commandments? The certificate of debt, the arrest warrant, is issued because we have transgressed the 10 commandments. The certificate of debt is the record of our transgression of the 10 commandments. This is what was nailed to the cross. And how was this certificate of debt nailed to the cross? Paul gives us this testimony in 2 Cor 5:21. “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Jesus carried our sins to the cross. He carried our certificate of debt. That is what was nailed to the cross. Our sins. Our shame. Not the 10 commandments! How do I know that this conclusion is correct? That it was our certificate of debt that was nailed to the cross, our arrest warrant, and not the 10 commandments? Listen to the testimony of the apostle Peter. 1 Peter 2:23-24. “When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

Many things are viewed as disposable in our society. Some things should be disposed of, like dirty diapers or used syringes. But don’t dispose of marriages. Don’t dispose of morals. And most of all, don’t dispose of the 10 commandments.

Dispose of your opinions if they are based on human wisdom rather than the Word of God. Dispose of your traditions if they are contrary to the teachings of Jesus. But do not dispose of the 10 commandments.

I'm so thankful that in a changing world, some things do not change. God says, "I am the LORD. I do not change." Malachi 3:6. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. Hebrews 13:8. Heaven and earth may pass away, but "the Word of the Lord will stand forever. 1 Peter 1:25.

And in these last days, God will have a people, Revelation 14:12 tells us, who obey His commandments and are faithful to Jesus. By God's grace, I want to be a part of that number. Don't you?

I'm going to ask you to make a special commitment today. Do you want to be a part of God's people who are saved by His grace and who obey the commandments and are faithful to Jesus? If you do, then stand with me as we pray.

Some members of our worship and media team, led by Pastor Patty Hofer, along with some other loving volunteers, have made a special symbol to remind you of your commitment today. It will also remind you of this entire series of sermons. It's a miniature 10 commandments, and it says "Words of Blessing." If you made a commitment today that by God's grace you want to be part of that number that obeys His commandments and is faithful to Jesus, then I want you to come up after the service and get one of these gifts to remind you of your commitment today.