

The Ten Commandments

Exodus 20:1-17

The Ten Commandments: *Exodus 20:1-17*

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Little Johnny went to his mother demanding a new bicycle. His mother decided that he should take a look at himself and the way he acts. She said, "Well Johnny, it isn't Christmas and we don't have the money to just go out and buy you anything you want. So why don't you write a letter to Jesus and pray for one instead." After his temper tantrum his mother sent him to his room. He finally sat down to write a letter to Jesus.

Dear Jesus,

I've been a good boy this year and would appreciate a new bicycle.

Your Friend,
Little Johnny

Now Little Johnny knew that Jesus really knew what kind of boy he was (Brat).

So, he ripped up the letter and decided to give it another try.

Dear Jesus,

I've been an OK boy this year and I want a new bicycle.

Yours Truly,
Little Johnny

Well, Little Johnny knew this wasn't totally honest so he tore it up and tried again.

Dear Jesus,

I've thought about being a good boy this year and can I have a new bicycle?

Signed,
Little Johnny

Well, Little Johnny looked deep down in his heart, which by the way was what his mother was really wanting. He crumpled up the letter and threw it in the trash can and went running outside.

He aimlessly wandered about; depressed because of the way he treated his parents and really considering his actions. He finally found himself in front of a Catholic Church.

Little Johnny went inside and knelt down, looking around not knowing what he should really do. Little Johnny finally got up and began to walk out the door and was looking at all the statues. All of a sudden he grabbed a small one and ran out the door. He went home hid it under his bed and wrote this letter.

Jesus,

I've broken most of the Ten Commandments; shot spit wads in school, tore up my sister's Barbie doll and lots more. I'm desperate. I've got your mama. If you ever want to see her again, give me a bike.

Signed,
You know who

Chapter 1. Introduction

Many of us can probably identify with Johnny, in that we have a hard time in keeping the Ten Commandments. As we begin a new series today, I want us to consider these ten laws of God.

Note: Before beginning the study, and before reading the scripture, ask the class to name as many of the 10 Commandments as they can. List on the whiteboard.

Most of us have heard of the Ten Commandments since we were small children. It's one of the subjects taught early and often in most Sunday Schools. And yet, as I considered it during my reading this week, I could not remember a time when I have taught it to adults. And so, for the next few weeks I would like us to consider the Decalogue, the "Ten Words," as Moses referred to them, or the "Ten Commandments" as we most commonly hear them called.

And so, let's begin with the history of the Ten Commandments, or how they came to be. Let's read *Exodus 19*. As we do, consider the scene carefully in your mind, for it was an awful scene, indeed.

DISCUSSION - What stands out in your mind as you read *Exodus 19*?

The scene was one of tremendous power and authority. God's presence was felt by all in attendance, as the powerful aspects of the worst thunderstorms (*vs. 16*), powerful volcanos (*vs. 18*), and earthquakes (*vs. 18*) all occurred at the same time and in the same place. Add to that the ear splitting sound of heavenly trumpets which started out loud and got louder and louder and louder, and you have some idea of the terrifying presence God imposed on that mountain.

But, in addition to the magnificence of the scene, let's ensure we realize that the most significant truth about this scene is this - God was doing the speaking. The Ten Commandments were not patterned after other cultures (as some would teach today). The Ten Commandments were not conjured up by Moses (as some would teach today). The Ten Commandments were spoken by God and written on tables of stone by the very finger of God. May we never forget that truth as we study these laws.

Let's continue reading in *Exodus 20:1-17*.

Here we have the most perfect set of laws ever given. One man said, "Man is an able creature, but he has made 32,600,000 laws, and has yet to improve on the Ten Commandments." (Anonymous) (I don't know where he came up with the number, nor how accurate it is, but the thought is sound. No law or set of laws has ever been given that improved on this simple set of Ten Commandments.

Down through history, people have come up with all kinds of unique ways to restate the Ten Commandments. John Bunyan, the author of "Pilgrim's Progress," put them into a poem:

Thou shalt not have another God but me,
Thou shalt not to an image bow the knee,
Thou shalt not take the name of God in vain,
See that the Sabbath thou do not profane,
Honor thy father and thy mother too,
In act, or thought, see thou no murder do,
From fornication keep thy body clean,
Thou shalt not steal, though thou be very mean,
Bear no false witness; keep thee without spot,
What is thy neighbor's see thou covet not.
-- John Bunyan

And so, let's consider these Ten Commandments.

DISCUSSION - As we read the Ten Commandments, did you notice anything interesting about the structure of the set of 10? How were they organized?

Although there are different ways in which various groups have numbered the commandments, we generally consider that:

- Commandments 1-4 are VERTICAL in nature
- Commandments 5-10 are HORIZONTAL in nature

QUESTION - Anybody want to take a shot at what you think I mean by that?

Commandments 1-4 deal with our relationship with God. The remaining commandments deal with our relationships with mankind. There is nothing that is left out of either subgrouping. Everything that is needed to regulate our worship of and relationship to God is in the first four commandments, and everything that is needed to regulate our treatment of one another is in the last six commandments. Let's test that.

DISCUSSION - Brainstorm with me. I'll list on the whiteboard as you shout out answers to this question, "What are the problems in the world today?" (Think of problems the world faces, as well as problems individuals in the world face today. Think of sins, evils, issues, paradoxes, etc.)

Note: Once a list is compiled, determine which are addressed in the ten commandments. (All will be, for the Ten Commandments address all issues!)

One source I studied this past week concluded that in the Ten Commandments we have ten rules for human conduct, regulating 1.) Religion, 2.) Worship, 3.) Reverence, 4.) Time, 5.) Authority, 6.) Life, 7.) Purity, 8.) Property, 9.) Tongue (I would more likely say honesty for this one), and 10.) contentment. There's just not much left out of that list.

The ORDER is important. We cannot address our relationships with one another (commandments 5-10) until we address our relationship with God (commandments 1-4). (This reminds me of the cross illustration regarding relationships. The vertical spar of the cross represents our relationship to God, and the horizontal piece represents our relationships with mankind. The vertical holds up the horizontal. You cannot have right relationships with mankind until you have a right relationship with God. This is seen in the order of the commandments, as well.) And once we get into the individual commandments, we'll see that the order within these two divisions is also somewhat significant. For example, what use is there in hallowing the sabbath day (commandment 4), if we don't love God supremely (commandment 1) anyway? And isn't it interesting that the second subdivision, which deals with our relationships to mankind, starts with the home (commandment 5)?

QUOTE (Unger's Bible Dictionary) - "Our duties to God come first - his being, his worship, his name, and his day. Then come our duties to our fellow-men. They have their beginning in the home. Then they reach out beyond the home circle to all mankind, having regard, first, for our neighbor's life; second, to his wife; third, to his property; fourth, to his position. Finally, the tenth commandment touches the spring of all moral completeness, the desire of the heart."

Jesus restated the Ten Commandments in summary form, and in that restatement we see these two important divisions (vertical and horizontal). Notice *Matthew 22:34-40* *But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."*

DISCUSSION - For the remainder of our class time this morning, let's discuss one final question about the ten commandments - Are they important to Christians in the 21st century? Are they binding on us today? What role do they play in our lives today?

Some key points to draw out of this discussion:

The Ten Commandments were never meant to be a MEANS of salvation. Salvation has always been by grace through faith. cf. *Ephesians 2:8-9* There is copious evidence in the Bible that the Ten Commandments were not a means of salvation. For example:

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:20, KJV)

But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. (Galatians 3:11, KJV)

For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. (Romans 4:3, KJV)

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: (Romans 5:1, KJV)

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. (Galatians 2:16, KJV)

I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in (Galatians 2:21, KJV)

Clearly, the law was not given as a MEANS of salvation. We understand that we are saved today by believing in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."* (Acts 16:31)

It is a good thing that we are not saved by keeping the ten commandments, for it is not possible to keep them. Nobody can keep them all, all the time, and James made it clear that one tiny infraction of any part breaks the entirety. *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. (James 2:10-11)*

DISCUSSION - What, then, was the purpose of the Ten Commandments, and what is it's purpose for us today?

1. The law points out our need for a Savior. The law ILLUSTRATES our sinful condition and points at our need for salvation.

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:19-20)

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. (Romans 7:7, KJV)

2. The ten commandments give us a model for living our lives.

Nobody is saved by keeping the ten commandments. But everybody who is saved should keep the ten commandments to the best of their ability. They show us how God wants us to live! We SHOULD, therefore, strive to live them.

It is interesting that all but one of the commandments are repeated in the New Testament. We will provide those references as we study the individual commandments. Only the need to hallow the sabbath day is left out, and we will discuss that more fully when we get to commandment number four. The fact that all but one of the commandments were taught in the New Testament indicates that they continue to illustrate God's desired behavior in Christians.

The Ten Commandments are definitely still relevant to you and I today. We need to pattern our lives after them. Sadly, much of our culture has abandoned them.

According to the book *THE DAY AMERICA TOLD THE TRUTH* Americans are making up their own rules and laws. The book says that there is absolutely no moral consensus in this as there was in the 1950s and 1960s.

The results of the survey conducted by the book reveal that only 13 percent of the population still believes in all the Ten Commandments. Nine out of ten lie regularly. Nearly one-third of married Americans have had an affair. One-fifth of the nation's children have lost their virginity by age 13. One in five women says she has been raped by a date. For \$10 million, 7 percent of the American people will kill a stranger, 23 percent would be willing to become a prostitute, and 25 percent would be willing to abandon their family. (From Preacher's Illustrations and Jokes web site - <http://www.timshen.truepath.com/preach/frames.htm>)

Over the next few weeks, we will examine the Ten Commandments in more detail, and discuss them individually. Let me encourage you to pray about this study, and ask God to teach us from His Word. And let me encourage you also to read Exodus 20:1-17 several times throughout this week in preparation for our next meeting.

Chapter 2. Thou Shalt Love God

When Jesus restated the The Commandments for us in *Matthew 22*, He gave us a wonderful summarization. He summarized the first four commands as *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."* (*Matthew 22:37*). In other words, "THOU SHALT LOVE GOD SUPREMEELY." And He summarized the last six of the commandments as *"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."* (*Matthew 22:39*) In other words, "THOU SHALT LOVE EACH OTHER." Everything that we will see in the original Ten Commandments delivered by God on Mount Sinai fits into these two divisions.

Recently, I've become highly interested in southern gospel music again, and have been enamored with the Gaither Vocal Band, and the Gaither Homecoming music in general. Bill Gaither has a simple little chorus that he often uses in his concerts. It goes like this:

Loving God, loving each other,
Making music with my friends;
Loving God, loving each other,
And the music never ends.

They pushed back from the table
To listen to His words,
His secret plan before He had to go.
It's not complicated;
Don't need a lot of rules,
This is all you'll need to know.

Loving God, loving each other,
Making music with my friends;
Loving God, loving each other,
And the music never ends.

We tend to make it harder,
Build steeples out of stone,
Fill with explanations of The Way,
But if we'd stop and listen
And break a little bread,
We would hear the Master say

Loving God, loving each other,
Making music with my friends;
Loving God, loving each other,
And the music never ends.

If we could just get those two thoughts down, and if we would just model everything we say and do and think after those two thoughts - LOVING GOD and LOVING EACH OTHER, imagine the impact on this world. What would be left out? Every issue of life would be covered.

And so, as we study God's Ten Commandments, we will constantly be reminded of how they can so easily be summarized into these two thoughts - THOU SHALT LOVE GOD, and THOU SHALT LOVE EACH OTHER. Let's notice the commandments that make up that first category.

Thou shalt have no other Gods before Me.

I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. (Exodus 20:2-3)

Every parent has experienced the frustration of instructing your child in a thing, only to have that child respond with "Why?" Sometimes we can come up with a simple

reason, and sometimes the answer is simply (and rightly) "Because I said so." (Too many parents today believe they need to explain every command to their children. The AUTHORITY of the parent is a concept every child must learn, and it is only learned when a child learns to obey WHETHER OR NOT they understand why. Similarly, we should obey God absolutely, whether or not we understand why.

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, (Hebrews 11:7) - Noah did not understand why, or even WHAT, but he obeyed, because "God said so."

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. (Hebrews 11:8) - Abraham did not know why or even WHERE, but still he obeyed, because "God said so."

However, God must have anticipated our childlike "why," for before He commanded, He listed two very clear reasons why obedience is expected and reasonable.

QUESTION - What are those two reasons?

Because of Who I Am to you

QUESTION - God told the Israelites who were clustered around the base of the mountain, "I am the Lord, Thy God." What do you suppose this meant to them? What does it mean to you and I today?

Clearly, we often forget just who we are talking about, and allow our view of God to become something far less than what it should be.

Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. (Isaiah 43:10, KJV)

Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. (Isaiah 44:6, KJV)

For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else. (Isaiah 45:18, KJV)

And so, God indicates that we should obey His commandments because of who He is. Let's think about that for a minute.

BRAINSTORM - List (on whiteboard) every adjective you can think of that defines Who God is? If you can think of scripture verses, share those, as well.

QUESTION - Does this knowledge of who and what God is provide motivation toward obedience? If you know these things, and truly believe them, will you be more or less likely to obey God's commandments? Why?

Because of what I have done for you

QUESTION - God told the Israelites, "I brought you out of Egypt." What do you suppose this meant to them? How does it apply to you and I today? Do God's actions toward us provide motivation for our obedience to His commands? Give examples.

God saved Israel from slavery in Egypt. He has, just as dramatically and miraculously, saved you and I from the slavery of sin.

Paul could testify, *Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us; (2 Corinthians 1:10, KJV)*

And how about this great description of what He has done for you and I - *But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our*

Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 1:4-7)

And how about this one - For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. (Romans 5:6-9)

Or this one - *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; (Ephesians 2*

We could go on and on and on. God has done great things for us. Words fail us when trying to describe the great deliverance He has worked in our lives.

Well, God gave these two great reasons for our obedience. He did not need to provide such a reminder, as we should obey God regardless of whether we understand why. But it is a good reminder, isn't it?

THEREFORE, you shall have NO OTHER GODS

QUESTION - Can somebody paraphrase this for me? What does this mean?

This seems a simple enough commandment. There is only one God, and He first and foremost wants our love and devotion. And He is unwilling to share it with any other "gods."

"Before me. Lit., "in my sight;" i.e., either in addition to Me or in opposition to Me. God will not share His worship with another." (Ryrie Study Bible)

"In any event, no deity, real or imagined, is to rival the one true God in Israel's heart and life." (NIV Study Bible)

It is important to realize that you worship something. Whether you think you do or not, you worship something because mankind was made in the image of God, and made to worship God. "It is in the very character of man's nature (that which distinguishes him from and elevates him above the beasts) which has made his fall his ruin. It has been rather vulgarly said that 'Man is a religious animal,' by which is meant that man, by nature, is essentially a religious creature, i.e., made, originally, to pay homage to his Creator. It is this religious nature of man's which, strange as it may sound, lies at the root of all idolatry. Being alienated from God, and therefore ignorant of Him, he falls the ready dupe of Satan." (A. W. Pink, *Gleanings In Exodus*, P. 320.) Rev. Davis Huckabee puts it like this, "Man worships because he was originally created for this purpose. He worships erroneously because his nature has become sinful through the fall, and while the compulsion to worship is still in his nature, it is now a perverted compulsion. This creates an internal conflict that he cannot resolve except by being converted and submitting to God." (Rev. Davis Huckabee, *The Ten Commandments*, <http://www.pbministries.org>)

ILLUS - I was reading an interesting sermon last night. The author got my attention with this thought, "The Bible does not waste any ink on atheism." I thought about that for a minute, and realized that he was probably correct. The only mention that I could think of where somebody said, "There is no God" was in the context of a fool. (*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. (Psalm 14:1)*) His point was this - atheism, or the belief that there is no God, is not only ridiculous, it is NOT NATURAL. Men and women were created with a knowledge of God. We have to worship something.

Sin makes us want to worship anything and everything but God. God, in His first commandment points out that anything other than complete devotion to Him and Him alone is sin.

DISCUSSION - How do we live this? What does the lifestyle of a Christian look like when they are NOT fully living up to this commandment? What does it look like when they ARE obeying this commandment to the best of their ability?

Paul made it clear that there ARE other "gods" that people worship - *For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. (1 Corinthians 8:5-6)*

"... whatever claims our allegiance more than the Lord does, becomes a god to us. It may not even have a religious significance about it, yet if it has a higher place in our affections than we give the Lord, then we become guilty of the transgression of this first commandment." (Huckabee)

DISCUSSION - So, what are some other gods that we, as Christians, sometimes worship?

Note: Here are some answers to the question. They may be discussed in class, or provided as a homework assignment, for they provide a good lead in to the next commandment.

- Some worship family - *Matthew 10:37-38*
- Some worship prestige and the honor of men - *John 12:43*
- Some worship money - *1 Timothy 6:6-10;17*
- Some worship comfort and ease - *Philippians 3:19*

"But worshipping the god of pleasure is not a new thing, nor was it new in the first century, for we read that the ancient Israelites were guilty of this same sin, and it is denominated idolatry. *"Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them: as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play," (1 Cor. 10:7).* Note there that their sin of idolatry lay in their concern for the pleasures of life, which held a higher place in their affections than God did. On any given Sunday how many professing Christians are absent from worship as a result of the pursuit of personal pleasure? That is idolatry!" (Huckabee)

And so, let's summarize our discussion of this first commandment. We are to worship God, and only God. Nothing else should vie for our worship, and nothing else, religious or otherwise, should take His place of prominence. We are to have *"no other gods before Him."* Why? Because of Who He is, and because of what He has done for us.

ILLUS - In 1715 King Louis XIV of France died after a reign of 72 years. He had called himself "the Great," and was the monarch who made the famous statement, "I am the state!" His court was the most magnificent in Europe, and his funeral was equally spectacular. As his body lay in state in a golden coffin, orders were given that the cathedral should be very dimly lit with only a special candle set above his coffin, to dramatize his greatness. At the memorial, thousands waited in hushed silence. Then Bishop Massillon began to speak; slowly reaching down, he snuffed out the candle and said, "Only God is great." (Today in the Word, April, 1989, p. 24.)

May we remember that today. Only God is great. Only God is worthy of our worship. Only God is worthy of our love and adoration. May we therefore, with His help, put Him first in our lives always.

Remember how Jesus summarized it? He said, *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."* (Matthew 22:37)

Thou shalt make no graven images

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou

shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20:4-6)

Two servicemen returned to base on Saturday night after a week's leave. They had lived it up wildly during the week and had done everything a serviceman could do on leave. On Sunday morning they went to chapel only to discover the chaplain was preaching on the Ten Commandments. As they were slinking out the door after the service, one was heard to say to the other, "Well, at least I ain't made no graven images lately!"

In our modern world, we are often like that soldier. Few of us think we are guilty of violating this particular commandment. After all, I doubt anybody in this class has an actual image of a false god in your home. However, this commandment speaks loudly to us today, and we need to consider its implications.

DISCUSSION - At first glance, it seems like this commandment is very similar to the first commandment. However, it is not. What is the difference between these first two commandments?

ANSWER - The first commandment deals with the OBJECT of our worship. We are to worship God, and God alone. The second commandment deals with the METHOD of our worship.

Rev. Davis Huckabee, in his study of the Ten Commandments, explains the difference this way - "It is not enough that a man worships God; he must worship Him in the right way, for Scriptures says, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth," (John 4:24). "

And so:

1. The first commandment instructs us to worship God, and God alone.
2. The second commandment tells us how to worship God.

QUESTION - Why do you think it was important for the children of Israel to hear this commandment? Why was it particularly applicable to them?

ANSWER - For one thing, in Egypt, from which they had so recently been freed, idolatry was rampant. The Egyptians worshipped nearly everything you can imagine.

All who have even the slightest acquaintance with the ancient history of Egypt, know that Osiris and his wife Isis were supreme divinities among that people. (These were idols with human form)

Among the Egyptians the ox was not only sacred but adored, because they supposed that in one of these animals Osiris took up his residence: hence they always had a living ox, which they supposed to be the habitation of this deity; and they imagined that on the death of one he entered into the body of another, and so on successively. This famous ox-god they called Apis and Mnevis. (These were idols in the form of animals)

The ibis, or stork, or crane, and hawk, were all objects of Egyptian idolatry. (Idols in the form of birds)

The crocodile, serpents, the scarabeus or beetle, were all objects of their adoration; and some say it is probable that even the frog itself was a sacred animal. (These were idols in the form of things "that creep.")

All fish were esteemed sacred animals among the Egyptians. One called Oxurunchus had its own temple, and divine honours paid to it. Another fish, called Phagrus, was worshipped at Syene, according to Clemens Alexandrinus in his Cohortatio. Even eels were objects of their adoration. (Idols in the form of things "under the sea")

In short, oxen, heifers, sheep, goats, lions, dogs, monkeys, and cats; the ibis, the crane, and the hawk; the crocodile, serpents, frogs, flies, and the scarabeus or beetle; the Nile and its fish; the sun, moon, planets, and stars; fire, light, air, darkness, and night, were all objects of Egyptian idolatry, and all included in the prohibition of the second commandment. The reason of this becomes self-evident, when the various objects of Egyptian idolatry are considered.

(From Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible)

And so, one reason this commandment was important for the children of Israel was because they were so used to idol worship, and it was so normal to them. The worship of the one true God, in spirit and in truth, was a concept they were not as familiar with.

QUESTION - Does this commandment prohibit the making of any and all images? Read *vs. 4* carefully before answering.

There are those who say that the making of an image, or picture, or "likeness" is, in itself, a violation of this commandment. And, on the surface, that appears to be true as we read the words of the text. However, we must let scripture interpret scripture. When we examine other parts of the Bible we realize that that cannot be the correct interpretation, for there were times when God COMMANDED the creation of images.

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown's Commentary puts it like this. "Under the auspices of Moses himself, figures of cherubim, brazen serpents, oxen, and many other things in the earth beneath, were made and never condemned. The mere making was no sin - it was the making with the intent to give idolatrous worship."

QUESTION - What are some examples of images that were made based on God's instruction?

ANSWER - Some might include - The serpent that Moses made in the wilderness, the tabernacle, the mercy seat with its cherubim overshadowing the ark of the covenant.

So, it is important to note that this commandment does not prohibit the mere making of images, but rather the making with the intent to worship. However, I think there is some interesting application to us in twenty first century America, when we consider how we have become so visual. Most people today would far rather watch a video than read their Bible. Does the second commandment speak to this issue? Note the following thoughts from a sermon I found on the internet.

Does the second commandment have anything to say to our time?

Probably it has a lot to say, but let's restrict our musings to just one thing for this morning. It has been claimed that moving pictures utilize our human senses better than printed words on a page. There is one obvious way in which that is true. When you read a book, you are not using your ears and your eyes the same way as when you watch some fast-paced video. But it may well be that the use of the human imagination in reading by which we "see" the faces and "hear" the voices of a book's characters is a more wondrous activity than the passive intake of sensory perceptions from a video.

A canary can see and hear a music video on MTV. The bird probably cannot make sense out of what he sees, but then who can!? But what that bird, and all other non-human creatures on this planet, cannot do is read a book and so utilize the wonders of the mind to create worlds and receive new insights as a result of the process of imagination.

That process, of course, takes time. It takes more work than passively soaking up a video. But it pays high dividends. So maybe what the second commandment has to say to our generation is that we need to be cautious about the impatience which now leads many to prefer the quickness of video to the more imaginative exercise of learning through words.

God wants us to learn about him through his Word. We dare not let an image-driven culture shrivel up the patient use of our imaginations. Because in the wise way by which God created us it may well be that it is through the faculty of our minds that God builds his relationship with us. For now we will not see God the way we can see a video. We encounter him instead through his Word and by the Spirit. A fast-forward culture of rapid-fire images which is impatient with anything that is not flashed before them may well be at risk of doing exactly what we've said this morning we must never do: namely, try to make God quick, convenient, local, simple, obvious, and under our control.

(From a sermon by Scott Hoezee, Calvin Christian Reformed Church, <http://www.calvinrc.org>)

DISCUSSION - What do you think of this? Is the emphasis on visual aids, videos, overhead projectors, and the like, a problem today? How do we as Christians in the

21st century balance these things in our lives?

Well, even if it is true that some of our modern usage of video and imagery is questionable, it is still true that this commandment does not prohibit images, themselves, but rather the worship of images - the worship of idols.

Later in his life, Moses gave a good explanation of one of the reasons why creating images of God was prohibited. *And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice. Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth: And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them (Deuteronomy 4:12,15-19)*

We have no idea what God looks like. What image could we therefore make which would be a valid representation? Anything we can conceive with our finite minds is orders of magnitude below Him in magnificence. And so, we are commanded to make no such images.

Since they saw no visible representation of God, how could they hope to make an image that would adequately represent to them what God was? The fact is, that nothing can adequately represent God except God, and any attempt to represent Him must necessarily fail, and with the failure there will certainly come false impressions and ideas about God that will lead into false worship. (Huckabee)

Images dishonor God. They dishonor Him by obscuring His glory. Any image we would make of God will always misrepresent Him and make Him to be something other than He really is. The use of an image in worship can only lower our view of God and His glory. God says, "I WILL NOT SHARE MY GLORY WITH ANOTHER." (J.I. Packer, Knowing God)

DISCUSSION - Let's draw our attention now to what this commandment DOES prohibit - the worship of idols, or the worship of images. Is this a problem today? What examples can you think of?

Certainly Catholicism comes to mind. Although there are saved Catholics, it cannot be denied that Catholicism has a serious problem with idol worship. I have visited the Vatican, and it is filled with idols. One source I read this past week put it like this:

You may ask, "How is the Catholic Church guilty of this commandment?" They make images of God the Father, painting Him on their windows as an old man. They break the commandment by portraying Christ up on a crucifix, and by bowing to it and praying to it. They make statues of Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the saints and angels and use these in their worship. The Catholic Church uses superstitious items such as the Rosary and ancient relics. They believe that some of these relics and other items have special healing power in them. They bow down to these items and even kiss them! They pray to Mary and to Saints. They pray to and for people who have already died.

One other way in which the Catholic Church violates this command, is in the observance of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. After the bread is consecrated in the Catholic mass, it is held up and adored by the priest and people. Sometimes the "host", as it is called, is carried about in a procession, so that it may be "seen, worshiped and called upon." Of course this practice is not warranted by Scripture in any place.

Idolatry is so much a part of Catholic culture that they remove the second commandment from the list completely! If you see a listing of the commandments in a Catholic publication, you will find that there is no mention of graven images, and that in order to make up for the removed commandment, they divide the tenth commandment into two separate commandments, keeping the number at ten! Yet, there is no question that the second commandment in our Bibles is absolutely accurate. All textual evidence points to it being there. To remove it from the Bible is to tamper with God's Word.

QUESTION - It would be easy to end our discussion by just pointing the finger at the Catholics, and nodding sagely at their idolatry. I suggest, though, that we independent, fundamental, Bible believing Baptists are often guilty of idolatry, too. Can you think of examples of our idolatry?

One man said, "What is your most prized possession? Would you be willing to give it up if Jesus asked you? If your answer is no then your possession has taken God's place in your heart and has become an idol."

Note: Leave time here for a discussion of idolatrous practices we face today.

A review of the list of items given at the conclusion of the First Commandment may be helpful.

One final sobering thought about this commandment. Notice how God points out that it has ramifications for future generations. In our recent Couples' Retreat, we discussed the topic of Leaving a Legacy of Faith. Here we see that HOW we worship God impacts future generations. If our children learn (by our example and teaching) to worship God in Spirit and in truth, then they will teach that to their children. Conversely, children who learn to worship idols (again through our example and teaching), will pass that along as well, to the detriment of future generations.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain

Names. When I think of the subject of names, I think of a joke I heard a while back:

The 200-year-old church was being readied for an anniversary celebration when calamity struck: the bell ringer was called out of town. The pastor immediately advertised for another.

When the replacement arrived, the pastor took him to the steps leading to the bell tower, some 150 feet above them. Round and round they went, huffing and puffing all the way. Just as they reached the landing, the bell ringer tripped and fell face-first into the biggest bell of all. Bo-o-o-ong!

Dazed by the blow, the bell ringer stumbled backward onto the landing. The railing broke loose and he fell to the ground. Miraculously, he was unhurt - only stunned - but the pastor thought it best to call an ambulance.

"Do you know this man's name?" asked the doctor when he arrived.

"No," the pastor replied, "but his face sure rings a bell." (Jerry Zenk, quoted by Alex Thien in Milwaukee Sentinel)

Or how about this one?

When the 1960s ended, San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district reverted to high rent, and many hippies moved down the coast to Santa Cruz. They had children and got married, too, though in no particular sequence. But they didn't name their children Melissa or Brett. People in the mountains around Santa Cruz grew accustomed to their children playing Frisbee with little Time Warp or Spring Fever. And eventually Moonbeam, Earth, Love and Precious Promise all ended up in public school.

That's when the kindergarten teachers first met Fruit Stand. Every fall, according to tradition, parents bravely apply name tags to their children, kiss them good-bye and send them off to school on the bus. So it was for Fruit Stand. The teachers thought the boy's name was odd, but they tried to make the best of it.

"Would you like to play with the blocks, Fruit Stand?" they offered. And later, "Fruit Stand, how about a snack?" He accepted hesitantly. By the end of the day, his name didn't seem much odder than Heather's or Sun Ray's. At dismissal time, the teachers led the children out to the buses. "Fruit Stand, do you know which one is your bus?" He didn't answer. That wasn't strange. He hadn't answered them all day. Lots of children are shy on the first day of school. It didn't matter. The teachers had instructed the parents to write the names of their children's bus stops on the reverse side of their name tags. The teacher

simply turned over the tag. There, neatly printed, was the word "Anthony." (Luanne Oleas in Salinas, Calif., Reader's Digest)

Names are interesting. We all have at least one, and we all take some level of pride in our name. We do not want to see our name tarnished. We want our name to be respected and held in high esteem. Our names are important to us. In this 3rd commandment, we learn that God's name is important to Him, too.

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. (Exodus 20:7)

DISCUSSION / BRAINSTORM - Since I was first introduced to this in Sunday School many many years ago, I have understood it to mean something very specific. Let's see if that is true for the class as well. What does this mean? What does it mean to "take the name of the Lord thy God IN VAIN?" (Record results on the whiteboard.)

For most of my life, I have read this commandment, and thought it meant, "Thou shalt not cuss." And, while profanity and cursing are certainly proscribed in scripture, I think this commandment goes far beyond that simple concept. One only needs to consider the actual words God used - "in vain." That little phrase occurs throughout our Bibles, and a quick study will shed some light.

BIBLE STUDY - (As we read each of these verses, discuss how it helps to clarify the meaning of "in vain.")

- *I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. (Leviticus 26:16, see also vs. 20)*
- *Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this [fellow] hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that [pertained] unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good. (1 Samuel 25:21)*
- *How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood? (Job 21:34)*
- *Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh [but] in vain. (Psalm 127:1)*
- *Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird. (Proverbs 1:17)*
- *Truly in vain [is salvation hoped for] from the hills, [and from] the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God [is] the salvation of Israel. (Jeremiah 3:23)*
- *But in vain they do worship me, teaching [for] doctrines the commandments of men. (Matthew 15:9)*
- *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:58)*

Clearly, the phrase "in vain" goes far beyond just "thou shalt not cuss!"

In our King James Bibles, the Hebrew word SHAV (here translated "in vain") is translated "vain" 22 times, "vanity" 22 times, "false" 5 times, "lying" 2 times, "falsely" once, and "lies" once. It is used a total of 53 times. The word means "emptiness, vanity, falsehood, nothingness, emptiness of speech, lying, and / or worthlessness of conduct."

In the New Testament, the phrase "in vain" is a translation of the Greek word KENOS, and it has a similar meaning to the Hebrew SHAV. Look it up in a Greek dictionary, and you find general meanings like "empty, vain, devoid of truth." You find it used of places and vessels "which contain nothing". You find it used of people who are "empty handed," or "destitute of spiritual wealth - one who boasts of his faith as a transcendent possession, yet is without the fruits of faith". You find it used of endeavors, labors, and acts "which result in nothing, that are vain, fruitless, and without effect."

DISCUSSION - And so, let's talk about it some more - what does the commandment "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" mean? (Revisit the previous list on the whiteboard, as needed.)

Rev. Davis Huckabee, in his excellent study of the Ten Commandments, says, "this commandment is a warning against over familiarity and careless use of the Lord's name in our walk and worship."

And so, it seems that this commandment is a much more general commandment than is usually taught. It goes far beyond simple profanity (although I think that is contained within it) and refers more to the idea of using God's name in any empty, meaningless or worthless manner. Additionally, it seems to include not just words, but actions as well. Anything, whether speech or action, that reflects negatively on "God's name" falls within the prohibition of the 3rd commandment. As a matter of fact, some say that we could translate this verse as "Do not MISUSE the name of the LORD your God," and I imagine that many things we say and do could be considered misuse of God's name.

Jesus restated this commandment, by the way, in a positive form. Here it is stated negatively - "*thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain*", but Jesus, in His model prayer included the words, "*Our Father, which art in heaven, HALLOWED BE THY NAME.*" Everything in the life of the Christian should reflect positively on the name of God. We are called by His name, and we must actively seek to PROMOTE that name with our words, and with our every action.

ILLUS - "Don't let anybody know you are a Johnson." (BUILD THIS - use to illustrate that God is saying something similar about His name.)

DISCUSSION - Let's spend some time, then, in applying this thought. What are some speech patterns that we should avoid, because they reflect negatively on God, or because they are empty, meaningless, and careless forms of speech?

One man said it this way, "We can break the third commandment through profanity (using the name of God in blasphemy and cursing), frivolity (using the name of God in a superficial, stupid way), and hypocrisy (claiming the name of God but acting in a way that disgraces Him)." (Study Guide for Exodus 20, by David Guzik)

Matthew Henry lists five ways in which we can violate this commandment:

1. By hypocrisy, making a profession of God's name, but not living up to that profession.

"Those that name the name of Christ, but do not depart from iniquity, as that name binds them to do, name it in vain; their worship is vain (*Matthew 15:7-9*)"

2. By covenant-breaking

"If we make promises to God, binding our souls with those bonds to that which is good, and yet perform not to the Lord our vows, we take his name in vain (*Matthew 5:33*)."

3. "By rash swearing, mentioning the name of God, or any of his attributes, in the form of an oath, without any just occasion for it, or due application of mind to it, but as a by-word, to no purpose at all, or to no good purpose."
4. "By using the name of God lightly and carelessly, and without any regard to its awful significance."

DISCUSSION - What are some examples of this?

ILLUS - "Oh my God" used continuously throughout our society today. "Jesus H. Christ" uttered as an expletive.

DISCUSSION - What positive speech patterns can we adopt to replace those that violate this 3rd commandment? What forms of speech which "hallow" God should we cultivate to avoid speech that takes His name "in vain?"

DISCUSSION - What about actions, or activities? Are there activities that, rather than "hallowing" the name of God, do just the opposite?

One of the most powerful passages in the Bible on the subject of hypocrisy points out that it dishonors God's name when we are such:

Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? FOR THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES THROUGH YOU, as it is written. (Romans 2:21-24)

DISCUSSION - What positive activities can we adopt and cultivate to help us obey this commandment?

The chorus says it well, "Our God is an awesome God. He reigns in heaven above with wisdom and with love - OUR GOD IS AN AWESOME GOD." Why then would we want to do anything to diminish or tarnish the glory of His name? Many have tried to describe the awesome glory of God (and His name), but nothing describes it as powerfully as that part of creation which He says was specifically designed to demonstrate His power and glory. *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. (Psalm 19:1) The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory. (Psalm 97:6)* Consider this little illustration I found which tries to describe the limits of that glory.

"The universe is so vast that it's difficult to establish a scale of reference, but this freight-train analogy might help put it into perspective. Imagine each star in the known universe is represented by a grain of sand. A thimble would hold all the stars visible on a clear, dark summer night. A dump truck would contain the Milky Way, the galaxy in which the sun resides. To demonstrate all the stars in the universe, we need a freight train with hopper cars filled with sand. The train begins to pass us at a level crossing. We count the cars as they roar by at one per second. The minutes pass, then hours, then days. We would have to keep count 24 hours a day for three years before the universe train would complete its pass. The universe train would use all the sand on all the beaches on Earth and would be long enough to stretch around the planet 25 times!"

Of course the above assumes that what is currently known or theorized about the universe accurately describes its limits. If it is truly infinite, as one might believe it is if it truly shows the glory of God, then the train would NEVER end, would it? Even so, what a description of the awesome glory of our God, and of HIS NAME!

If you think back to our introductory thoughts about the commandments, we learned that the first 4 commandments describe our relationship to and responsibilities to God, while the last 6 commandments regulate our relationship and responsibilities to each other. Jesus summed up the first 4 commandments as *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."* (Matthew 22:37). LOVE GOD SUPREME. If we so love our God, we will not allow His name to be tarnished. We will "hallow" His name, always. May He help us to do that with our words and with our lives.

Thou shalt remember the sabbath day

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. (Exodus 20:8-11)

We come now to the final commandment in the first group of commandments. Remember that the first four commandments describe our relationship to God, and the last six commandments describe our relationship to each other. Remember also that Jesus summarized these first four commandments as *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."* (Matthew 22:37), or, "THOU SHALT LOVE GOD SUPREME."

In the first commandment, we learned WHO we are to worship - the Lord God, and Him only. In the second commandment, we learned HOW we are to worship - in spirit and in truth, rather than using images or representations of any kind. In the third commandment, we learned something more of the MANNER of our worship when we learned to respect and reverence the name of God. Now, in this last commandment we learn WHEN we are to worship.

DISCUSSION - Before we get into this study today, what are your thoughts about this commandment? What does the fourth commandment say to you?

QUESTION - We can begin with a simple definition of the term. What does the word "sabbath" mean?

DEFINITION - Hebrew SHABATH - TO REST, TO KEEP AS A DAY OF REST; The primary idea appears to be that of to sit down, to sit still; (2) to cease, to desist, leave off; (3) to celebrate the sabbath. (William Gesenius, Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures)

For some reason, in my ignorance, I had always thought that "sabbath" meant "seven." However, there is no such meaning to the word. It simply means cessation from activity, or rest. And so, by definition, this commandment tells us that we are to cease from our activity one day out of seven. We are to REST one day out of seven.

DISCUSSION - We always emphasize the REST part of the commandment, but what of the "six days shalt thou labor" part? Does this commandment, in addition to teaching the importance of resting, also teach the importance of working? What other Bible verses come to mind to support that idea?

For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. (2 Thessalonians 3:10)

Although the emphasis of the verse is certainly on resting one day out of seven, there is also a secondary teaching about the necessity of labor. Laziness and sloth are always condemned in scripture, and labor and industry are expected. Work was not a result of the curse, remember, but something God gave to Adam BEFORE the fall. Work is good, and something we should all strive to be diligent in.

DISCUSSION - We are often told that this commandment does not apply to Christians today, having never been repeated in the New Testament. Is this true? Is the fourth commandment applicable to Christians in the church age?

- It is true that there is an aspect of the sabbath which is uniquely Hebrew. It was a sign to the Jews.

Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it [is] a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that [ye] may know that I [am] the LORD that doth sanctify you. (Exodus 31:13)

DISCUSSION - Looking at the text of the commandment, though, is there anything there that seems to extend BEYOND the Jews?

QUOTE - The mention of a stranger being to observe a Sabbath is proof that the command of a Sabbath is not merely Jewish, as has frequently been asserted. No stranger could join in eating the passover without being circumcised, and thereby initiated into Judaism: but a stranger might, nay, was obligated, as the commandment runs, to keep the Sabbath, though he had not been circumcised. The reason of this remarkable distinction is, that circumcision was a national, and the Sabbath a universal institution: the former was given in command to Abraham, and obligatory only on his descendents; while the latter was given to Adam, the father of all

mankind. (Robert Jamieson, in Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary, Vol. I, p. 358.)

- It is also true that the commandment does not seem to be repeated in the New Testament, and actually seems to be abolished.

In the MacArthur Study Bible, there is an interesting chart showing the New Testament restatement of each commandment:

No other gods

Acts 14:15

No idols

1 John 5:21

No taking the Lord's name in vain

James 5:12

Remember the sabbath

Colossians 2:16 NULLIFIES

Obedience to parents

Ephesians 6:1

No murder

1 John 3:15

No adultery

1 Corinthians 6:9,10

No theft

Ephesians 4:28

No false witness

Colossians 3:9-10

No coveting

Ephesians 5:3

DISCUSSION - Notice the reference that seemingly does away with the sabbath law, *Colossians 2:16*. Others also point to *Galatians 4:9-11*. After reading these verses, do you think the sabbath is for Christians or not? Why?

- The principle of rest was one day out of seven was never abolished in the New Testament.

The distortions of the commandment, and the various nonsensical regulations that had grown around it were soundly condemned, but not the principle itself. Jesus, even in condemning the abuses, explained the principle when He said, "*The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath*" (*Mark 2:27*)

God instituted the sabbath for our own good! And our need to come apart and rest for a while has not changed in the church age.

QUOTE (Huckabee) - Man is commanded to "Remember" the sabbath because it is for his own best interests to do so, for "the sabbath was made for men, and not man

for the sabbath," as the Rabbis thought. This law was God's merciful provision for the physical need of rest for man and animal, and it was given that no master could work either his servants or his animals unmercifully. And even the poor man, who had no servants or animals would be greatly benefited by the keeping of this law, for his own health would be preserved by it.

It is a fact, recognized even by the world, that we perform better and live healthier lives when we take time to rest.

ILLUS - One man challenged another to an all-day wood chopping contest. The challenger worked very hard, stopping only for a brief lunch break. The other man had a leisurely lunch and took several breaks during the day. At the end of the day, the challenger was surprised and annoyed to find that the other fellow had chopped substantially more wood than he had.

"I don't get it," he said. "Every time I checked, you were taking a rest, yet you chopped more wood than I did." "But you didn't notice," said the winning woodsman, "that I was sharpening my ax when I sat down to rest." -- L. S. Chafer, Grace

ILLUS - According to a Greek legend, in ancient Athens a man noticed the great storyteller Aesop playing childish games with some little boys. He laughed and jeered at Aesop, asking him why he wasted his time in such frivolous activity.

Aesop responded by picking up a bow, loosening its string, and placing it on the ground. Then he said to the critical Athenian, "Now, answer the riddle, if you can. Tell us what the unstrung bows implies."

The man looked at it for several moments but had no idea what point Aesop was trying to make. Aesop explained, "If you keep a bow always bent, it will break eventually; but if you let it go slack, it will be more fit for use when you want it."

QUOTE (Leonardo Da Vinci) - Every now and then go away - even briefly, for when you come back to your work your judgment will be surer; since to remain constantly at work will cause you to lose power.

DISCUSSION - The church has historically worshipped on the Lord's Day, or the first day of the week, rather than on Saturday, the seventh day of the week - the Jewish sabbath day. However, other than the numerical day of the week, what is different about the New Testament Lord's Day and the sabbath day referenced in the fourth commandment? Do you agree with the following quote? (QUOTE (Huckabee) - "... we will be brought to realize that the principle is the same in both instances, and only the day of the week is different."

QUOTE (Huckabee) - The day of the week is not so important as is the principle itself. This sabbath principle therefore sets forth the fact that six days are given to man, but God has set apart one out of every seven days for Himself, so that man will be constantly kept mindful of his responsibility to God.

DISCUSSION - In addition to REST, what else should characterize the sabbath day?

REST is one thing that sets this day apart, but HOLINESS is the other. Not only are we to cease concentrating on our daily tasks and vocations, but we are to actively direct our attention and concentration toward God. The sabbath is a day of rest, and a day of worship. It is NOT just a day to rest, but rather a day to rest IN GOD.

Jesus is, again, our best example. As we have seen, He told us that the sabbath was instituted for our own good (*Mark 2:27*). He also, however, modeled obedience to the fourth commandment. *And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. (Luke 4:16)* Both Jesus' words and His example lead us to conclude we should honor one day out of seven and set it apart for God.

QUOTE - (R. Brokoff) "If ever a man could have felt the church to be unnecessary, he was Jesus. Yet he did not stay away from the church of his day. It was his custom to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath, and he made many trips to the temple."

QUOTE (Warren Weirsbe) - The ability to calm your soul and wait before God is one of the most difficult things in the Christian life. Our old nature is restless...the world around us is frantically in a hurry. But a restless heart usually leads to a reckless life.

QUOTE (Joseph Addison) - "Sunday clears away the rust of the whole week."

DISCUSSION - Let's conclude by trying to apply this principle in a practical way. Assuming we accept that this commandment is still applicable to us today, in that it teaches we are to rest in God one day out of seven, and assuming that we accept the church custom of observing that day on Sunday, what should Sunday look like for a Christian? What should be done on Sunday, and what should not be done?

DISCUSSION - What things hinder believers from observing the fourth commandment?

1. Pleasure is the main one - almost every other "thing" really falls into this category.

"If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," (Isaiah 58:13-14).

2. Work is certainly another reason many ignore the sabbath.

DISCUSSION - Consider the following quotes. What do they say about those who choose to work on the sabbath?

QUOTE (Huckabee) - The sabbath principle is still a test of men even in our day. For like the tithe, it tests whether we are willing to take what is allotted to us, and to trust the Lord to make that sufficient by His blessings, for our needs. Or whether we will steal that which God has reserved for Himself, and think that we can live better by our own wits and ways without God's blessings. We have often heard professing Christians excuse their working on Sunday by saying, "Well, I've got to live," as if the Lord had made it impossible to make a living without violating His Law. Still others, who in the ordinary course of events keep this commandment but who will, in the time of harvest, or some other pressing circumstances, compromise and work on the sabbath.

DISCUSSION - Consider that the Lord makes no exception to this law in harvest time. What does this verse say to those who cite a "need" to ignore the sabbath due to the demands of work? *"Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest," (Exodus 34:21)*

In summary, I believe the fourth commandment is still applicable to the lives of believers today, at least in principle. We are to set aside one day in seven for God... one day in seven to rest... one day in seven to worship... one day in seven to turn our attentions from the cares of this world and toward the God who cares for us. As with all the commandments, may God help us to be obedient to this one.

Chapter 2. Thou Shalt Love God

Chapter 3. Thou Shalt Love Each Other

Let's pause for a few minutes and review what we learned in the last few weeks. Some questions:

1. QUESTION - True or False - the Ten Commandments were a system of laws developed by Moses.

ANSWER - FALSE! *And God spake all these words... (Exodus 20:1)*

2. QUESTION - The Ten Commandments can be divided into two major groupings. Which commandments belong in the first grouping? The second?

(ANSWER - Commands 1-4 are in the first grouping, and commandments 5-10 are in the second.)

3. QUESTION - What does the first grouping of the Ten Commandments (1-4) describe?

ANSWER - Our relationship with God.

4. QUESTION - What does the second grouping of the Ten Commandments (5-10) describe?

ANSWER - Our relationship with mankind; with each other.

5. QUESTION - Jesus summarized the Ten Commandments in the New Testament. Where is that scripture reference, and how did Jesus summarize the commandments?

ANSWER - *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second [is] like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matthew 22:37-40)*

The first group of commandments (1-4) can be summarized as "Thou shalt love God supremely." The second group of commandments (5-10) can be summarized as "Thou shalt thy neighbor as thyself," or "Thou shalt love each other unselfishly."

In our studies of the first four commandments we learned what God expects regarding our relationship with Him, and regarding our worship of Him. Now we turn our attention to the second group, where we will learn how we are to treat each other. Remember, as we discussed in earlier studies, if we don't have our relationship with God right FIRST, there is little sense in worrying about how we treat each other. The relationship with God is the foundation upon which all else rests.

Notice, now, the first commandment describing how we are to treat one another. Interestingly, and appropriately, it starts with family.

Thou Shalt Honor Thy Father And Thy Mother

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. (Exodus 20:12)

Let's begin this morning by looking at some verses related to the fifth commandment, as well as some verses that provide examples of how Bible characters treated their parents.

There are many verses in our Bibles that reiterate and expand upon this commandment. Here are a few to consider:

Note: (Have various class members read these verses. Pause periodically to discuss the question - "What does it mean to honor your father and your mother?")

Exodus 21:15,17; Leviticus 19:3; Proverbs 1:8,9; 15:5; 20:20; 23:22-25; Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:20

And, there are some excellent examples to consider:

Note: (As class members read these verses, pause periodically to discuss - What can we learn from these Bible characters, and their attitude and behavior toward their parents? How do their examples help us understand the fifth commandment?)

- Joseph - *Genesis 47:12*
- David - *1 Samuel 22:3-4*
- Solomon - *1 Kings 2:19-25*
- Elisha - *1 Kings 19:19-21*
- Jesus - *Luke 2:51; John 19:25-27*

DISCUSSION - In *Ephesians 6:1-3*, this commandment is restated, and described as "the first commandment with promise." Is that significant? Why or why not?

I found a couple of interesting quotes concerning that promise:

"Here's the point: a young person who is smart enough to realize that the Lord had placed mom and dad in their life for a reason, will escape many of life's trials and hardships!"¹

"If we would only listen, when we are young, and learn from mom and dad's mistakes, we would not have to make them ourselves!"²

For the remainder of our class period I would like to make three general observations concerning this fifth commandment. You see, I think the Bible is clear that we are to respect and honor our parents. It says nothing about only respecting and honoring them when they are nice to us, or when they treat us as we expect they should. This is the first commandment in the second grouping of commandments - that grouping which deals with how we treat one another. God is saying to us that our family relationships are critical - if we can't get past that, there's not much hope for other relationships either. How we treat one another within the context of our homes is extremely important. So notice three applications I think we can make from scripture:

We honor one way when we are children

I would suggest to you that the Bible makes a clear distinction between the responsibilities of children toward their parents, and the responsibilities of adults toward their parents.

To the child, *Honor thy father and thy mother*" means obey them; submit to them.

DISCUSSION - Did any of the verses we read earlier teach this? Which ones?

Children are to OBEY their parents.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. (Ephesians 6:1-2)

Jesus is the supreme example, *And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. (Luke 2:51)*

Parents, let me encourage you to teach your children obedience. We could spend the entire lesson on this topic. So many parents today believe it is healthy for children to push back and be disobedient. They see no problem in their children saying "No" to instructions. However, I think that is a grave error in parenting. This is the Home-Builders Class, where we stress family relationships, marriage, parenting skills, etc. And may I encourage you to hear the Word of God on this matter - your children must obey. When you allow them to say "No" and do not stop that tendency, you are teaching them to disobey the fifth commandment of God.

We honor our parents differently when we are adults

DISCUSSION - Are we, as adults, to obey our parents?

DISCUSSION - Did any of the verses we read earlier help us with this? How did the adult examples treat their parents? Did they obey them, or did they interpret the fifth commandment differently?

When we are adults, we are to be adults. Parents shift from being authority figures in our lives to being responsibilities in our lives. Parents become honored and beloved family members, but the AUTHORITY is lessened.

Jesus is again the best example. When a child, he honored his parents by OBEYING them (cf. *Luke 2:51*). But on the cross, as He was dying, He demonstrated the adult interpretation of the fifth commandment. *Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, "Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, "Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. (John 19:25-27)*

DISCUSSION - What is the proper interpretation of the fifth commandment for adults? What did Jesus demonstrate on the cross?

He demonstrated honor, love, respect, PROVISION, and PROTECTION. In our previous Bible study, we saw Joseph providing for his aged father, and David protecting his parents and family. We read about Solomon honoring and revering his mother, even though he plainly could not obey her in that instance. And we read about the call of Elisha, learning that sometimes adult responsibilities cause us to go in a direction that takes us away from our parents - Elisha was called of God, and that took precedence.

Do not underestimate the importance of this, class. If you and I as adults wish to please God, we must obey this fifth commandment. And that means we place our parents in a position of honor and respect - such that others, including our children, can see that fact. We protect and provide for them. If our parents are in need, and we do nothing, we violate this commandment. If our parents are in danger, and we do nothing, we violate this commandment. If our parents are pushed aside and marginalized before others, and we do nothing, we violate this commandment.

And just as there is the reward of long life for obedience to this commandment, there are consequences for disobedience, as well.

ILLUS - One of Grimm's fairy tales makes the point pretty well:

Once there was a little old man. His eyes blinked and his hands trembled; when he ate he clattered the silverware distressingly, missed his mouth with the spoon as often as not, and dribbled a bit of his food on the tablecloth. Now he lived with his married son, having nowhere else to live, and his son's wife didn't like the arrangement.

"I can't have this," she said. "It interferes with my right to happiness." So she and her husband took the old man gently but firmly by the arm and led him to the corner of the kitchen. There they set him on a stool and gave him his food in an earthenware bowl. From then on he always ate in the corner, blinking at the table with wistful eyes. One day

his hands trembled rather more than usual, and the earthenware bowl fell and broke. "If you are a pig," said the daughter-in-law, "you must eat out of a trough." So they made him a little wooden trough and he got his meals in that.

These people had a four-year-old son of whom they were very fond. One evening the young man noticed his boy playing intently with some bits of wood and asked what he was doing. "I'm making a trough," he said, smiling up for approval, "to feed you and Mamma out of when I get big."

The man and his wife looked at each other for a while and didn't say anything. Then they cried a little. They then went to the corner and took the old man by the arm and led him back to the table. They sat him in a comfortable chair and gave him his food on a plate, and from then on nobody ever scolded when he clattered or spilled or broke things.³

ILLUS - Another, more recent illustration, told by Marsha Drake in "Homemade", hits home:

I talked to a husband and wife who have deliberately moved south so they don't have to be around their aging parents. In this case, both husband and wife agree that they can no longer stand being around their parents. They are both career people with extremely busy schedules. When the old parents call on the phone, they cut them off because the time is never right. Both young parents are in poor health and two of their three children are experimenting with drugs. They fail to see the connection between their attitudes toward their parents and what is happening in their own lives.⁴

We honor our parents, within limitations.

DISCUSSION - What is the limit of our obedience? When is it correct for us to not obey or not honor our parents?

This point needs to be stressed, but not overstressed. It applies to ALL human relationships, not just home relationships. In ALL relationships, in ALL human interaction, we are to put GOD first. If a situation arises where a human authority, or a human mentor, takes us in a direction that violates the law of God, we are not to obey, and we are not to respect in that case.

Children obey... IN THE LORD. (Ephesians 6:1)

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. (Ephesians 5:22)

And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. (Acts 5:27-29)

In all of these examples there is clear teaching about the limitations of obedience to mankind. When any human authority, whether it be parents, husbands, government, pastors, employers, or any other, tries to push us into an action that violates the law of God, we are to obey God rather than that human authority.

This is a very simple rule - PUT GOD FIRST. Remember the order of the ten commandments? The first four deal with putting God first. That is primary. We ought to obey God, rather than men. GOD FIRST. GOD FIRST. Say it with me - GOD FIRST, in everything.

HOWEVER, (and this is very important - please don't miss this), this is a very narrow limitation. You cannot use this Biblical limitation as an excuse for disobeying and dishonoring your parents except for where it applies. Notice that the limitation is for those times when we are led toward an activity that is AGAINST THE LAW OF GOD. There is no limitation that allows us to disobey or dishonor just because our parents are unkind, selfish, nasty, or in some other way make our lives difficult. Notice the following verse directed at servants. I think it applies here, as well.

Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, BUT ALSO TO THE FROWARD.

For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: (1 Peter 2:17-21)

And consider Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount, "But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. (Luke 6:27-35)

I wanted to emphasize this last point because some have asked questions about parental relationships that are problematic. I hope we can see that there are limitations placed on the fifth commandment, but they are narrow. We are to respect them even when we don't understand them. We are to honor them even when they dishonor us. We are to treat them highly, even when they abuse us in front of others. It is not easy, but then Jesus didn't say it would be. Nothing about Christianity is easy. We are called to treat others, including our parents, just as Christ treats others. That is the true measure of relationships.

And maybe, when we commit to obey this fifth commandment even when it is hard, we will find even difficult relationships improved.

In his men's seminar, David Simmons, a former cornerback for the Dallas Cowboys, tells about his childhood home. His father, a military man, was extremely demanding, rarely saying a kind word, always pushing him with harsh criticism to do better. The father had decided that he would never permit his son to feel any satisfaction from his accomplishments, reminding him there were always new goals ahead. When Dave was a little boy, his dad gave him a bicycle, unassembled, with the command that he put it together. After Dave struggled to the point of tears with the difficult instructions and many parts, his father said, "I knew you couldn't do it." Then he assembled it for him. When Dave played football in high school, his father was unrelenting in his criticisms. In the backyard of his home, after every game, his dad would go over every play and point out Dave's errors. "Most boys got butterflies in the stomach before the game; I got them afterwards. Facing my father was more stressful than facing any opposing team."

By the time he entered college, Dave hated his father and his harsh discipline. He chose to play football at the University of Georgia because its campus was further from home than any school that offered him a scholarship. After college, he became the second round draft pick of the St. Louis Cardinal's professional football club. Joe Namath (who later signed with the New York Jets), was the club's first round pick that year. "Excited, I telephoned my father to tell him the good news. He said, 'How does it feel to be second?'"

Despite the hateful feelings he had for his father, Dave began to build a bridge to his dad. Christ had come into his life during college years, and it was God's love that made him turn to his father. During visits home he stimulated conversation with him and listened with interest to what his father had to say. He learned for the first time what his grandfather had been like - a tough lumberjack known for his quick temper. Once he destroyed a pickup truck with a sledgehammer because it wouldn't start, and he often beat his son. This new awareness affected Dave dramatically. "Knowing about my father's upbringing not only made me more sympathetic for him, but it helped me see that, under the circumstances, he might have done much worse. By the time he died, I can honestly say we were friends."⁵

Thou shalt not kill

(Exodus 20:13)

QUESTION - What is the scope of this commandment? Certainly we know what it means to kill, but what specifically is meant when God says "Thou shalt not kill?"

QUESTION - Does this comment prohibit capital punishment? How about killing in self defense? Killing in war? Killing of animals?

Actually, the restriction is pretty narrow. This commandment prohibits murder, which is a very specific type killing. However, Jesus expanded our understanding of the topic when He taught about it in the Sermon on the Mount. Let's first understand the narrow meaning of the commandment, and then learn what Jesus had to say about it.

This does not prohibit capital punishment

DISCUSSION - Do you believe the Bible teaches capital punishment for murderers? Why or why not?

Capital punishment has been God's expectation from the beginning, long before He gave the Ten Commandments. God told Noah in *Genesis 9:5-6*, "*And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.*"

Many verses in scripture tell us that God demanded capital punishment:

But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die. (Exodus 21:14)

And he that killeth a beast, he shall restore it: and he that killeth a man, he shall be put to death. (Leviticus 24:21)

And if he smite him with an instrument of iron, so that he die, he [is] a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. (Numbers 35:16)

But if any man hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally that he die, and fleeth into one of these cities: Then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. Thine eye shall not pity him, but thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee. (Deuteronomy 19:11-13)

DISCUSSION - Consider the following quote. Although this woman demonstrates amazing forgiveness and compassion, I submit there is something faulty in her reasoning. Do you agree? What do you find wrong in her thinking?

On March 23, 1995, my 17-year-old daughter, Nicole, opened the door of her father's house to a 16-year-old young man named LeVaughn whom she knew. LeVaughn came into the house and they began to argue over drugs.

LeVaughn picked up the butcher knife from the kitchen counter and stabbed Nicole to death. My only child lay dying on the floor of the living room, her eyes still open. The last sight she saw that day was the face of the young man who was killing her. This young man whom I had never met in my life, came into my life that day and changed my life forever.

I buried my daughter, and one week later the District Attorney informed us he was asking for the death penalty for LeVaughn. He began telling us how he wanted to try the case, and then he proceeded to ask us if we believed in the death penalty. Everyone said, "yes," except for me. I said "no."

I don't believe in murder. Murder is murder, no matter how you look at it. It was no more right for me to take LeVaughn's life than it was for him to take Nicole's life. I did not need revenge.⁶

Although I greatly admire this person's forgiveness, and pray I could have a similar heart, I must note that her understanding of murder is flawed. Capital punishment is

commanded by God in the Bible, as we have seen. There is a vast difference between the punishment of murder, and murder itself.

Good Christians disagree on the issue of capital punishment, but it's hard to deny that it was the expectation of God in the Old Testament, and there is no evidence that His expectation changed in the New Testament. It is also impossible to state that commandment six disallows capital punishment since capital punishment was the prescribed punishment for violation of the commandment in the first place!

"To hold this view is again to make God guilty, for no less than twenty-eight times God decrees the death penalty for at least seven different crimes."⁷

This does not prohibit killing in war

DISCUSSION - What does the following verse teach us about war?

For there fell down many slain, because the war was of God. (1 Chronicles 5:22)

Considering the fact that God authorized this war, and the associated killing of many, it would be ridiculous to say that killing in war is prohibited by the sixth commandment. If that were so, God would be guilty of murder.

DISCUSSION - Can you think of other examples from scripture where God authorized war, and the killing that goes with it?

This does not prohibit the killing of animals.

Given the fact that the word translated "kill" in our text is more accurately translated "murder," we only need to review some definitions of the word "murder" to understand that animals are not in scope here. Noticed the following definitions:

MURDER - "The unlawful killing of one human by another, especially with premeditated malice."⁸

MURDER - "the crime of unlawfully and unjustifiably killing another under circumstances defined by statute (as with premeditation); especially : such a crime committed purposely, knowingly, and recklessly with extreme indifference to human life or during the course of a serious felony (as robbery or rape)"⁹

MURDER - "unlawful premeditated killing of a human being by a human being"¹⁰

God also required a lesser penalty from the one who killed someone's animal. The penalty for murder was death, but the penalty for killing an animal was simply economic remuneration.

And he that killeth a beast, he shall restore it: and he that killeth a man, he shall be put to death. (Leviticus 24:21)

As you can see, murder refers to the killing of one human being by another human being. Killing of animals is not murder and never has been. As such, it is not addressed by the sixth commandment.

This does not prohibit killing in self defense.

The sixth commandment refers to the cold blooded, even pre-meditated murder of a fellow human being. This is never permitted and always a punishable offense. There are times, though, when a person is forced to kill somebody else in self-defense, or in protecting their family and home. It was for situations such as this that the cities of refuge were established in the Old Testament. These cities were designated places where one could flee if guilty of killing another human being. The killer would be protected in this city and allowed to live in safety there. They could not leave the city until the death of the high priest who was in office at the time of their crime.

If you take the time to study the cities of refuge and how God instituted this arrangement, you will learn that murderers could not seek safety there. Those guilty of premeditation and cold blooded murder were turned over to the authorities and executed. These cities were for those who had killed without malice and without premeditation.

There was, therefore, a penalty for killing another person, whether it be in self-defense or not. The person who was forced to live out their days incarcerated in a city of refuge still paid a price for their crime. Consider what A.W. Pink has to say about this:

"In this sixth Commandment, God emphasizes the sacredness of human life and His own sovereignty over it - He alone has the right to say when it shall end. The force of this is taught Israel in connection with the cities of refuge. These provided an asylum from the avenger of blood. But they were not to shelter murderers, but only those who had killed "unwittingly" (R. V.). It was only those who had unintentionally taken the life of a fellow-creature who could take refuge therein! And this, be it observed, was not regarded as a light affair: even the man who had taken the life "unawares" was deprived of his liberty till the death of the high priest. ¹¹

This DOES prohibit cold blooded murder.

In addition to the verses we have seen that proscribe killing via capital punishment and war, we can also just look at the words themselves.

"Some have wondered how God can approve both capital punishment (*Exodus 19:12*) and this prohibition of murder. The simple answer is that in Hebrew as well as English, there is a distinction between to kill and to murder. Murder is the taking of life without legal justification (execution after due process) or moral justification (killing in defense)."¹²

DISCUSSION - can you think of any explicit restatements of this commandment in the New Testament?

ANSWER - There are several, but here is one to demonstrate the point, "*Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters,*" (1 Peter 4:15)

And so, it would seem to be a no-brainer. Who among us would consider this commandment to be anything but binding on Christians today? Who would consider murder an acceptable practice? It almost seems like a waste of time to study it, for it is so intuitively obvious.

But consider Jesus' words on the subject

Matthew 5:21-24

QUESTION - Did Jesus' teaching here strengthen or weaken the sixth commandment? How?

QUESTION - What did Jesus say was the real heart of the matter?

QUESTION - Did Jesus equate murder with hatred? Are they the same thing? How about anger? Is there any difference, according to Jesus, between angry thoughts and murder?

Anger is a problem today. We read about road rage, roid rage, and every other kind of rage. A few years back I remember an incident in Akron where a man was upset over another driver's provoking gestures as they drove down the road. One driver ran the other off the road, jumped out of his car, yanked the other out of his car and threw him into oncoming traffic, causing his death!

Anger has always been a problem for people:

In the spring of 1894, the Baltimore Orioles came to Boston to play a routine baseball game. But what happened that day was anything but routine. The Orioles' John McGraw got into a fight with the Boston third baseman. Within minutes all the players from both teams had joined in the brawl. The warfare quickly spread to the grandstands. Among the fans the conflict went from bad to worse. Someone set fire to the stands and the entire ballpark burned to the ground. Not only that, but the fire spread to 107 other Boston buildings as well.¹³

If we were to go around this classroom this morning, we could probably fill a book with personal illustrations of anger. Ask my lovely wife about the time I got angry at our great dane and kicked him. Or ask either of my kids to tell the story of Mira Mains. I have had my share of shameful failures to control my anger.

QUESTION - I doubt that anybody in this class will be running out and murdering anybody this afternoon. However, anger and hatred are very real problems for all of us. In light of this reality, how do we live this sixth commandment?

Here are a couple of ideas. The list is by no means exhaustive, but rather just a thought starter. See if you can think of some more.

- Learn to see the good in those who anger you.

Many years ago a senior executive of the then Standard Oil Company made a wrong decision that cost the company more than \$2 million. John D. Rockefeller was then running the firm. On the day the news leaked out most of the executives of the company were finding various ingenious ways of avoiding Mr. Rockefeller, lest his wrath descend on their heads.

There was one exception, however; he was Edward T. Bedford, a partner in the company. Bedford was scheduled to see Rockefeller that day and he kept the appointment, even though he was prepared to listen to a long harangue against the man who made the error in judgment.

When he entered the office the powerful head of the gigantic Standard Oil empire was bent over his desk busily writing with a pencil on a pad of paper. Bedford stood silently, not wishing to interrupt. After a few minutes Rockefeller looked up.

"Oh, it's you, Bedford," he said calmly. "I suppose you've heard about our loss?"

Bedford said that he had.

"I've been thinking it over," Rockefeller said, "and before I ask the man in to discuss the matter, I've been making some notes."

Bedford later told the story this way:

"Across the top of the page was written, 'Points in favor of Mr. _____.' There followed a long list of the man's virtues, including a brief description of how he had helped the company make the right decision on three separate occasions that had earned many times the cost of his recent error."

"I never forgot that lesson. In later years, whenever I was tempted to rip into anyone, I forced myself first to sit down and thoughtfully compile as long a list of good points as I possibly could. Invariably, by the time I finished my inventory, I would see the matter in its true perspective and keep my temper under control. There is no telling how many times this habit has prevented me from committing one of the costliest mistakes any executive can make -- losing his temper."

"I commend it to anyone who must deal with people."¹⁴

- Think before reacting.

Abraham Lincoln's secretary of war, Edwin Stanton, was angered by an army officer who accused him of favoritism. Stanton complained to Lincoln, who suggested that Stanton write the officer a sharp letter. Stanton did, and showed the strongly worded missive to the president. "What are you going to do with it?" Lincoln inquired. Surprised, Stanton replied, "Send it."

Lincoln shook his head. "You don't want to send that letter," he said. "Put it in the stove. That's what I do when I have written a letter while I am angry. It's a good letter and you had a good time writing it and feel better. Now burn it, and write another."¹⁵

- Speak rightly.

How we speak determines, to a large degree, how others react.

"90% of the friction of daily life is caused by the wrong tone of voice."¹⁶

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. (Ephesians 4:29, KJV)

A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. (Proverbs 15:1)

- Learn to count to ten.

In other words, deal with anger, don't just let it simmer. Left alone, anger becomes a formidable force for destruction. It hurts those toward whom it is directed, and it also hurts the one who is angry.

Hate is like acid. It can damage the vessel in which it is stored as well as destroy the object on which it is poured.¹⁷

"Anger like fire, finally dies out - but only after leaving a path of destruction." - Unknown

The Bible says it like this:

Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: (Ephesians 4:26)

QUESTION - Can you think of some practical ways to implement this verse in our daily relationships?

QUESTION - This is the HomeBuilders Class - how do we teach our children to obey the sixth commandment? How do we help them learn to not hate, and to not be angry with their brother?

Teach your children the techniques that you use to curb anger. Teach your children what Jesus said about anger. Teach your children that anger is dangerous and something to be avoided. Teach your children that anger is contagious. They should stay away from angry people, and recognize that their anger can influence others toward even more anger. *Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul. (Proverbs 22:24-25)*

In his autobiography, Billy Martin told about hunting in Texas with Mickey Mantle. Mickey had a friend who would let them hunt on his ranch. When they reached the ranch, Mickey told Billy to wait in the car while he checked in with his friend. Mantle's friend quickly gave them permission to hunt, but he asked Mickey a favor. He had a pet mule in the barn who was going blind, and he didn't have the heart to put him out of his misery. He asked Mickey to shoot the mule for him.

When Mickey came back to the car, he pretended to be angry. He scowled and slammed the door. Billy asked him what was wrong, and Mickey said his friend wouldn't let them hunt. "I'm so mad at that guy," Mantle said, "I'm going out to his barn and shoot one of his mules!" Mantle drove like a maniac to the barn. Martin protested, "We can't do that!" But Mickey was adamant. "Just watch me," he shouted. When they got to the barn, Mantle jumped out of the car with his rifle, ran inside, and shot the mule.

As he was leaving, though, he heard two shots, and he ran back to the car. He saw that Martin had taken out his rifle, too. "What are you doing, Martin?" he yelled. Martin yelled back, face red with anger, "We'll show that son of a gun! I just killed two of his cows!"¹⁸

Anger is contagious. Teach your children that.

Summary

In studying the sixth commandment, we learned that murder is prohibited. We knew that, of course.

However, we also learned that Jesus expanded our understanding of this topic when he equated anger and hatred with murder. It is from anger and hatred that murder springs. So we, as Christians, must deal with anger and hatred. Neither should have place in our lives. We should be a people of peace and kindness, not of anger and hate.

May God help us to live the sixth commandment.

Thou shalt not commit adultery

(Exodus 20:14)

First, some definitions

"ADULTERY - conjugal infidelity. An adulterer was a man who had illicit intercourse with a married or a betrothed woman, and such a woman was an adulteress. Intercourse between a married man and an unmarried woman was fornication. Adultery was regarded as a great social wrong, as well as a great sin." ¹⁹

"ADULTERER (-ESS) - denotes one who has unlawful intercourse with the spouse of another" ²⁰

Moreover thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbour's wife, to defile thyself with her. (Leviticus 18:20)

"FORNICATION - illicit sexual intercourse in general." ²¹

"FORNICATION - illicit sexual intercourse, a) adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, intercourse with animals etc. b) sexual intercourse with close relatives; Lev. 18, c) sexual intercourse with a divorced man or woman; Mk. 10:11,12²²

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: (1 Thessalonians 4:3)

QUESTION - Which of these words has a more focused, restrictive meaning, and which is a more general word?

ANSWER - Adultery refers specifically to a violation of the marriage bond, whereas fornication is a general word covering all forms of sexual sin. "Fornication" is derived from the Greek word "PORNEA" from which we get our word pornography.

Both adultery and fornication are condemned

QUESTION - Are there any exceptions? Is there ever a time when God says it's ok to have sexual relations with another's spouse? (i.e. to commit adultery) Is there ever a time when God says it's ok for people to have sexual relations outside of marriage? (i.e. to commit fornication)

QUESTION - How about some of the familiar excuses people give? Such as "my partner doesn't understand me"; "we are in love"; "God led us to be with each other"... Do any of these provide valid justification for adultery or fornication?

In his notes on this passage, David Guzik points out that "Michael English, who lost his recording contract and marriage over adultery with another Christian music singer, says of his adultery and its aftermath: 'Maybe God allowed this to happen to make me see I needed some freedom.'" Brother Gozik's response to this is an emphatic, "No!"²³

It is condemned in the Old Testament:

And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. (Leviticus 20:10)

It is condemned in the New Testament:

READ - Galatians 5:19-21

But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; (Ephesians 5:3)

Again, Jesus expanded these definitions

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. (Matthew 5:27-28)

DISCUSSION - According to Jesus, what does "thou shalt not commit adultery" mean? How did He expand the definition?

DISCUSSION - What implications does Jesus' comment have for us in 21st century America?

ILLUS - "Americans now spend more money at strip clubs than at Broadway, off-Broadway, regional and nonprofit theaters; at the opera, the ballet, and jazz and classical music performances combined." (U.S. News & World Report, 2-10-97)

DISCUSSION - What does all this mean to men, specifically?

DISCUSSION - What does all this mean to women, specifically?

DISCUSSION - In my studies of this passage, I came across one individual who stated that when Jesus used the phrase "committed adultery WITH HER," He was saying the woman was guilty as well. What do you think of that interpretation?

ANSWER - I cannot find evidence from the language in *Matthew 5:27-28* to support this interpretation. The words just don't seem to say that, either in English or in Greek. Without question, once the sin graduates from thought to action, the woman is just as guilty as the man. When a man is simply looking in a lustful manner at a woman, though, the matter becomes less clear. I suggest that sometimes the woman is just as guilty, and sometimes she is not. Perhaps this illustration will help clarify the situation:

ILLUS - I was watching the television program "Seventh Heaven" once. Now if you've ever viewed this program, you know it is about a preacher and his large family. It was a family oriented program, and was widely hailed in the Christian community as a welcome change from the sex and trash that makes up most of prime time television these days. In this episode, one of the daughters had suffered unwelcome sexual advances from a boy, and was discussing it with her mother. She asked mom if she might have done anything to cause these advances. I'll paraphrase what I remember of the conversation. Mom answered, "Honey, there are a lot of people who will tell you that if you dress or act a certain way, you will invite men to think or act sexually toward you, but don't you listen to them. God gave you a beautiful body, and you can dress anyway you want to. Don't let anybody tell you differently."²⁴

DISCUSSION - Your thoughts on mom's train of thought?

Hey Dan Brown, there is nothing wrong with sex!

The DaVinci Code, which we will study in a few weeks, has a lot to say about sex:

"The natural sexual union between man and woman through which each became spiritually whole ... had been recast as a shameful act." (Page 125)

"Holy men... now feared natural sexual urges as the work of the devil." (Page 125)

Without spending much time on it, let's just state that the Bible does not in any way condemn sex within marriage, but actually calls it "honourable."

Marriage [is] honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. (Hebrews 13:4)

The Bible condemns sex outside of marriage (fornication), and especially condemns sex which violates existing marriage bonds (adultery), but sex within marriage is never condemned.

READ - 1 Corinthians 7:1-5

DISCUSSION - What does Paul's message to the Corinthians teach us about sex within marriage?

How do we live it?

DISCUSSION - As HomeBuilders, how do we safeguard our homes? How do we live together as man and wife so as to protect each other from violating this commandment?

The Bible does give some help in obeying this commandment. For example, Paul points out in 1 Corinthians 7 that healthy sexual relationships WITHIN marriage greatly safeguard against sinful sexual relationships OUTSIDE of marriage. So, the Bible teaches us to keep the home fires burning.

DISCUSSION - Here is an interesting thought along those lines. What do you think about it?

"Dr. Tom McGuiness, a counseling psychologist in New Jersey, gives this explanation of why many affairs take place:

'Married people seek out or succumb to affairs when they feel devalued or less than fully alive. They are bored. Overburdened. People who have affairs have a child's deep longing to be touched, caressed, held, hugged and kissed, whether they admit it or not. They want happy surprises. That might mean a sentimental unexpected gift every once in a while. More important, it is the dependable gift of time and caring. The present of shared ideas, experiences, stories, nonsense and games, including sexual games. They want the world to butt out. They want a loving friend, a pal who isn't judgmental. They want someone to convince them they're still loved, lovable and very special. For a little while, now and then, they want out from under the grown-up responsibilities that have become predictable, dreary and difficult.'

If these are the reasons extra-marital affairs occur, couldn't we guard against them by seeking to meet our mates' deepest needs for affection, security, friendship, and sexual fulfillment? Maybe the best prevention for an affair outside marriage is to plan one with the man or woman we're married to!"²⁵

The Bible also helps us with the matter of our thought lives, which are key to this commandment. Besides simply warning us (*Matthew 5:27-28*) of the danger of wrong thoughts, Jesus told us to remove the source of the temptation (*vs. 29*). So, if this sort of temptation is a problem for you, REMOVE THE SOURCE OF THE TEMPTATION.

Philippians 4:8 teaches us how we SHOULD think. By patterning our thought lives after this verse, we have positive protection against the evil thought life that leads to a violation of the 7th commandment.

If all else fails, the Bible says to just run from it. *Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. (1 Corinthians 6:18)* Joseph is a great illustration of this principle.

May God help us to obey the seventh commandment.

Thou shalt not steal, bear false witness or covet!

(Exodus 20:15-17)

We're going to spend less time on these last three commandments, not because they are less important, but because considered together, they convey a common truth. Also, they build upon things we've already discussed. For example, *thou shalt not steal* and *thou shalt not bear false witness* each condemn particular activities, which we will discuss shortly. However, just as Jesus taught that murder and adultery were basically sins of the heart, sins that take place in our thoughts before they actually become sins of action, so with these two. We will see that they also have much to do with our hearts and minds. And the last commandment *thou shalt not covet* is very much an attitude sin - a sin of the heart. So, let's consider them together.

DISCUSSION - Let's talk about all three for a minute - can someone give me a definition of each?

DEFINITION - Steal - "carry away, X indeed, secretly bring, steal (away), get by stealth." (Strong's)

DEFINITION - Steal - "To take (the property of another) without right or permission."²⁶

DEFINITION - Bear false witness - "a person who deliberately gives false testimony [syn: perjurer]"²⁷

DEFINITION - Covet - "To feel blameworthy desire for (that which is another's)." ²⁸

There is no magic in any of those definitions, is there? These are not difficult words, and we have all known what they mean from our youth. "Covet" is not a word we use often in 21st century America, but the concept is very real and common. And yet, if we think about these three final commandments, do we not see three areas of life where we all struggle mightily?

DISCUSSION - Do we struggle with these things today? How? What are some ways we sometimes violate these commandments today? What are some reasons why we are tempted to violate these last 3 commandments? Why do we steal, lie and covet?

Unfortunately, stealing is a common thing in our world today. Consider these statistics:

"Lying, cheating, and stealing are becoming an 'acceptable norm' among high-school and college students, says Ralph Wexler, speaking for the Joseph and Edna Josephson Institute of Ethics. In a recent survey, the Institute reported that 61 percent of the high-school and 32 percent of the college students polled admitted to having cheated on an exam during the past year; 33 percent of the high-school and 16 percent of college students said they'd stolen something in the last year; and 16 percent of the high-school and 32 percent of the college students said they'd lied on a resume or job application."²⁹

Rev. Davis Huckabee, in his excellent series on the Ten Commandments, makes this observation about WHY people steal. "From the human standpoint, stealing may be for several reasons. It may be because of desperate need, which is relatively rare. Because of laziness or an unwillingness to work for what one desires. Because of love of display that one might be admired for one's possessions. Because of greed for gain, which is simply the root of all evil, (*1 Timothy 6:10*). Because of love of luxury coupled with an unwillingness to work for it and wait for it until it can be honestly obtained, It may be because of ambition to 'keep up with the Jones,' which springs

from carnal pride. And there are others. However, basically, stealing is based upon two things: lack of consideration for others, and utter selfishness. No one could ever steal from someone else if he 'loved his neighbor as himself,' nor would he ever steal except that he held his own welfare as supreme above all others, and felt that all other people's rights should be subservient to his own pleasure."³⁰

Bearing false witness is a serious thing, and yet one we often laugh about. I was able to find a good supply of jokes about the subject, for apparently many think it a source of amusement. One source listed a bunch of tongue-in-cheek "fibs" that we hear in America today:

- * The check is in the mail.
- * I'll start my diet tomorrow.
- * We service what we sell.
- * Give me your number and the doctor will call you right back.
- * Money cheerfully refunded.
- * One size fits all.
- * This offer limited to the first 100 people who call in.
- * Your luggage isn't lost, it's only misplaced.
- * Leave your resume and we'll keep it on file.
- * This hurts me more than it hurts you.
- * I just need five minutes of your time.
- * Your table will be ready in a few minutes.
- * Open wide, it won't hurt a bit.
- * Let's have lunch sometime.
- * It's not the money, it's the principle.

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And yet lying is serious business. It's one of those vices we need to teach our children about, and seldom do sufficiently. It's one of those seemingly acceptable sins that we give little weight too. As Rev. Davis Huckabee says, "An expression that used to be used quite frequently in the last century was that 'A man's word was his bond.' But in this degenerate age in which we now live, most people feel free to lie any time they think it will be to their advantage, and only feel compelled to tell the truth when they are actually under a legal compulsion to do so, if even then." ³²

God takes this matter seriously - He commands that we avoid dishonesty, lying, and false witness of all kinds:

A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape. (Proverbs 19:5, KJV)

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. (Revelation of John 21:8, KJV)

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it," (John 8:44).

DISCUSSION - Is there a word that you can think of that sums up both commandments 8 and 9? What general subject area do they both deal with?

ANSWER - I'm thinking of the word "honesty." Both commandments deal with honesty. The eighth commandment describes the importance of honesty concerning other peoples' property, and the ninth commandment discusses honesty with other peoples' reputations and character. We are to be honest - squeaky honest, in all our dealings. Notice what the following verses teach about the importance of honesty.

BIBLE STUDY - *Leviticus 19:35,36; Deuteronomy 25:15; Proverbs 11:1; Romans 12:17; 2 Corinthians 8:21; Philippians 4:8*

DISCUSSION - Finally, we come to the last commandment. Let's talk about this one for a bit, for I think it sums up so many of the others. Earlier, we noted that "covet"

means "To feel blameworthy desire for (that which is another's)." What are some ways we are guilty of that today? Why do we struggle so with this?

Just as we said "honesty" was a word that sums up commandments eight and nine, I suggest that the word "contentment" explains this last commandment. We covet because we are not content with what God has given us. When we are content with that which we have, we do not covet the possessions or blessings of others.

BIBLE STUDY - Briefly, let's notice some more scripture: *Proverbs 15:16; Luke 3:14; Philippians 4:11; 1 Timothy 6:6,8; Hebrews 13:5*

One of the signs that Christ's return is near is related to the sin of covetousness - *For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, (2 Timothy 3:2, KJV)*

Conclusion

What is the conclusion of the whole matter? Now that we've discussed the ten commandments, what does it mean to us? Well, I would like to share two thoughts in closing out this study, both of which are vitally important to consider in light of these ten commandments.

First of all, consider the sobering words of James, "*For whosoever shall keep the whole law & yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*" (*James 2:10*) Perhaps as we went through this study, and you considered the words God spoke from the mount, and applied them to your life, you decided that you were in pretty good shape. Perhaps you came away somewhat smug, feeling like you were doing pretty good when measured against this list. "I don't steal," you think, or "I have never murdered," or "I don't commit adultery." Yet James makes it clear that a single transgression against any part of the law is the same as violating all of the law and every part of the law. And so the one who loves God with anything less than complete devotion, is just as guilty as the one who violently murders a fellow human being.

This could be terrifying news, but remember the purpose of the law. It was not given to give us a means of obtaining righteousness. Rather it was given to point us to our total inability to live righteously, and lead us to our need for a Savior. When I consider the ten commandments, I am inevitably reminded of how desperately I need Christ. You do, too. Look honestly into the ten commandments, and you, too, will see the hopelessness of living them on your own, and the desperate need you have for the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have not done so yet, may I encourage you to call upon Him today. "*For whosoever shall call upon the Lord shall be saved.*"

Secondly, let me share an illustration that the Lord laid on my heart recently. I was thinking about how often we read and study scriptural truths, such as these ten commandments, and then put the Bible down and go about our lives completely unchanged by what we've learned. How many of us have listened to God's words here, and continued unchanged? When I see this happen in my life, I am concerned, and was talking to the Lord about this recently. He reminded me of the story of the rich man and Lazarus in *Luke 16*. At the end of that story, the rich man, suffering the torments of hell, asked that somebody go to his five brothers and tell them how to avoid hell. He was told that "they have Moses and the prophets" and that was enough. He disagreed and said that if somebody rose from the dead and appeared to them, they would respond. He was told again, "If they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they hear if someone rose from the dead."

Here is what the Lord spoke to me about. If we are not changed by the Word of God, there is nothing else that we can fall back on. No miracle would seem greater than one rising from the dead, and yet Jesus taught that such a miracle pales in comparison to the life-changing power of the Word of God.

And so, as we conclude the series on these Ten Commandments, have they changed you? Are you different because of the Word of God? If not, what do you think is going to change you?

May God help us to listen to His Word, and may we be changed. May we, as we consider these Ten Commandments, learn to love Him with all our hearts, and may we learn to love our neighbors as ourselves - always.

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Appendix A. The Ten Witnesses

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law & yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." (James 2:10)

A man by the name of Frank was driving home one Friday after work when he noticed a blue light flashing behind him. He quickly did a mental check: "My seat belt is on, I'm not driving too fast, my tag has not expired, why would a cop be stopping me?"

He pulled over to the side of the road and fumbled for his drivers license, registration, and proof of insurance that he knew the officer was going to ask for.

"Are you Frank Logan?", the police officer asked when he walked up to the side of the car. "Yes, sir, that's me. What's wrong officer? I wasn't speeding! How do you know my name?" "No, you were not speeding. I stopped you to deliver this summons to appear in court Monday morning at 8:00 A.M."

As the officer walked away, Frank's mind began to race back to try and remember why he would be getting a summons to appear in court. All the way home he tried to come up with a reason as to why he was in trouble, but could think of no reason.

When he got home, he confided in his wife, but neither of them had a clue about the summons. Frank began to worry, and continued to do so all weekend long.

After a sleepless night Sunday, Frank got up, dressed and headed down town to the courthouse. He didn't want to be late. He glanced at the summons to verify what floor the courtroom was on and stepped on the elevator and pushed the button for the fourth floor. His stomach was beginning to feel a little queasy, but he guessed a sleepless night and no breakfast was to blame.

He found the huge doors to the courtroom, pushed them open and walked inside. The bailiff grabbed him by the arm as the huge doors slammed shut behind him, and he was escorted to a long table down front with nothing on it but a yellow legal pad. He wondered why the courtroom was so full at 8:00 in the morning, and why they were all looking at him.

A serious looking man, sitting at the other table, was flipping through a large book and jotting down notes. Every once in a while, he would look at Frank, shake his head, and write some more information down.

From a side door, ten men walked in and filed into the jury box. Each had the look of death on their faces. Frank was beginning to get a little worried that maybe they had summoned him by mistake. Maybe someone else was supposed to be sitting at this table with nothing on it but a yellow legal pad. Someone, maybe, that had done something terribly wrong. How could he convince them it wasn't him?

The noise of whispers and low talking was getting pretty loud when all of a sudden the bailiff cried, "All rise! The Honorable Word of God presiding."

From a door behind the large oak judge's bench, a man with a long flowing white beard, wearing a long black robe, and carrying what Frank thought was a Bible, entered the courtroom, sat down, slammed his gavel down on the desk and said, "This court will come to order! Let the trial begin!"

Frank began to stand to his feet, "Your Honor, I think there has been some mistake here..." But before he could finish his sentence, the man at the other table, who Frank has concluded was the Prosecutor, jumped to his feet and said, "Your Honor, there has been no mistake. This man, Frank Logan, has been charged with breaking the "Ten Commandments" and we plan to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that he is guilty and call for the maximum penalty of death and separation for eternity in a burning lake of fire!"

Frank fell back into his chair. He couldn't believe what he had just heard! The blood had drained from his face, his heart was pounding, his mind was racing. "There's got to be some mistake," he kept telling himself. "Surely they will see that I'm not guilty of what they are accusing me of!"

"Your Honor," the prosecuting attorney began, "I have arranged for ten witnesses to testify this morning. I have asked them to sit in the jury box so all can see and hear their testimony concerning Frank Logan."

"With your permission, I'd like to call witness #1 to his feet and ask him to give his name and then tell us what he knows about Frank Logan.

The first witness rises to his feet and says, "Your Honor, my name is 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me' and all of his life, Frank Logan has put other gods ahead of the Heavenly Father" Frank jumps up and says, "Wait just a minute! I can prove I'm not guilty of this! I'm not some Hindu! I don't worship cows!" Witness #1, still standing, points his finger toward Frank and says, "Your Honor, this man's god is his work. He puts it ahead of his wife, his kids, his church, and God! All he thinks about is getting higher up on the corporate ladder, no matter who he has to step on to do it!" Before Frank could raise his voice in protest, the judge slams his gavel down and cries, "GUILTY!"

The prosecutor jumps up and calls witness #2. "Your Honor, my name is 'Thou shalt not make thee any graven images' and Frank Logan is guilty as charged concerning this offense." Frank begins to feel a little confident because he knows he has not been into idol worship. He's heard about it, and read about it, but that's as far as it ever got! "Your Honor," Frank says, trying to sound legalistic in his terminology, "I object! On what grounds does this witness base his accusations?" "Your Honor," witness #2 continues, "when Frank Logan is not working, he is sitting at home in front of an image called the TV. It consumes all his time, and fills his mind with wicked and evil thoughts. Every year, Frank Logan buys a bigger and better TV so he can spend more and more time bowing down before it! "It has decayed his family life. His wife sits in front of this 'image' all day and watches her 'shows', and when his children come home from school their minds are being trashed by the garbage this "image" puts out!" Frank tries to come up with an objection but too soon he hears the judge's gavel fall... "GUILTY!"

Witness #3 stands up and says, "Your Honor, My name is 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain' and Frank Logan is guilty!" A hush settles over the crowd as all eyes are turned toward Frank to see if he's going to deny the accusation. With his head still down on the long table with nothing on it but a yellow legal pad, Frank makes no move to object because he suddenly remembers every curse word he had ever uttered in connection with God's name. He wishes he could take them all back. He wishes he could wipe the Bible verses, he had been taught in Sunday school as a boy, out of his memory but... try as he may he still could hear: (Ex. 20:7) "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. (Lev. 19:12) "And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord." (Matthew 5: 34) "But I say unto you, Swear not at all..." (James 5:12) "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation." Once again the Judge's gavel falls, and in a thundering voice cries, "GUILTY!" By this time, Frank begins to think that maybe it would have been a good idea to bring a lawyer along.

Witness #4 stands up and says, "Your Honor, my name is 'Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,' and to be quite honest, Frank Logan doesn't even know the meaning of the word 'Holy,' and the Lord's day to him is just another day." Frank sees a possible loop hole and says, "But Your Honor, the Sabbath is the only day I get to spend with my wife and kids!" "What kind of father would I be if I didn't spend time with them? That's our 'recreation' day as a family! You know, quality time together!" The prosecutor responds, "Let me say right here, Your Honor, there are many parents who are using their 'kids', their 'families' as an excuse not to worship God on the Lord's day. "Somehow, they feel justified in missing Sabbath school and church as long as they have the excuse of 'family.' People using this excuse need to be very careful. God may just take their 'excuse' out of the way so you can no longer use it!" "GUILTY!", the thundering voice of the judge is heard throughout the courtroom. Frank's palms are beginning to sweat, his mouth is dry and his head begins to throb.

"I must be dreaming," he tells himself, trying to think clearly.

There seems to be something very familiar about witness #5 as he stands to his feet. Something from a long time ago... "Your Honor, my name is 'Honor your father and mother and Frank Logan does not!'" "Your Honor, I object! What has my father and mother got to do with this? And I do so honor them! Why just last year I put out big bucks to get them into the most expensive nursing home money could buy!"

"They are well cared for and I take offense to this ridiculous charge that I don't 'honor' them!" The prosecutor slams the big book he has been holding in his hands down on the table and says, "Is that right? Well, Mr. Frank Logan, let me ask you, When was the last time you laid eyes on your father and mother?" "It was last year when you shipped them off to that nursing home to get them out of your way wasn't it Mr. Logan?" Frank just sat there, shocked by the fact that it had been a whole year since he had seen either one of them.

"Your Honor, it seems like it was only yesterday..." He stopped because he knew how feeble his excuse must sound. The prosecutor wasn't through with him concerning this witness from the past. "Your Honor, I submit to this court that Frank Logan hates his parents and wishes they were dead!" Frank jumps to his feet, "That's a lie! I'm not that kind of a person! Your Honor, I'm innocent of this charge! I love my parents, and nobody can tell me I don't!"

The prosecutor opens his big book and turns the pages to the year 1965. It was the year the Beatles came from London to America and Frank so desperately wanted to go and listen to them in concert. "Your Honor," the prosecutor says, looking over his thin wired bifocals at Frank, "On August 14th, 1965, Frank and his parents got into an argument. Frank was 17 at the time, and he thought he was old enough to travel out of state with some buddies of his to attend a Beatles concert. "Frank's parents, who were Godly people, didn't think it was right for Frank to go to this concert, even if it was right across the street.

"Your Honor, the argument ended when Frank's father said, 'your not going and that's that!'" Frank stormed out of the house, slamming the door behind him, and in a voice so low he thought only he could hear, he said, 'I hate them! I wish they were dead!'" The prosecutor slammed his big book shut. Tears were streaming down Frank's face. He had completely forgotten that argument with his parents. His mind races back and even though he doesn't want to admit it, he remembers all too well, that was exactly how he felt. He sits down and covers his face with his hands and begins to weep. The courtroom is silent except for that thundering voice and loud gavel... "GUILTY!"

Witness #6 stands to his feet. "Your Honor, my name is 'Thou shalt not kill' and Frank Logan is a murderer!" Frank could not believe his ears. He knows he has never taken the life of anyone! He wipes the tears away and stands to face his accuser. "Frank Logan," the prosecutor begins, "you had a brother once, and you killed him!" "You murdered him as sure as your standing here in this courtroom!" "Your Honor," Frank complains, "I do have a brother. I haven't seen him for over 10 years, but I know he's alive because we get Christmas cards from them every year. I don't like him, in fact I can't stand him, but your Honor, you've got to believe me when I say that I would never "kill" him!"

Witness #6 opens the Word of God, and in a voice that sent chills up Frank's spine he read, "(Matthew 5:21) Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. "(1 John 3:15) Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Before Frank could even begin to protest the judge cried, "GUILTY!"

Witness #7 stands to his feet and says, "Your Honor, my name is 'Thou shalt not commit adultery' and Frank Logan is guilty as charged." Frank thinks of his lovely wife and their 30 year marriage and remembers not one time when he ever cheated on her. "Your Honor, this is completely out of line! I've never been unfaithful to my

wife and this witness knows it! "This is a set up, and sir, I want you to know that, sure, I've looked at other women, I've even thought about other women, I've even lusted after other women, but your Honor, I've never actually done anything. "I mean, your Honor, you know the old saying, 'I might be on a diet, but that doesn't stop me from looking at the menu, right?"

The prosecutor opens his big book and says, "May I refer the court back to the book of Matthew chapter 5, verses 27 and 28? "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. "Let me say, Your Honor, the mentality of the world not too long ago was, 'It's O.K. to look as long as you don't touch!' But even that is a thing of the past! "Today's philosophy, though, seems to be 'It's O.K. to look--it's O.K. to touch, just as long as you protect yourself."

"Listen, the Bible says it's not O.K. to look! And you all the men out there know exactly I'm talking about: Those sweaters that are just a little bit too tight and those dresses that fit so tight they leave very little for the imagination. "It's not O.K. to look! "Now the ladies out there may be thinking, 'Amen, Brother, you tell them. Let those sorry perverts have it!' "Look at Matthew 5 verse 28 real closely. Do you see it? The little word 'with' is talking about you! 'With her!'

"Women who dress in such a way as to attract the stares, gawks, and lustful looks from men and boys, you are just as guilty as they are! "Some women have this idea that no preacher, no Sunday school teacher, or no one else is going to tell them what they can and cannot wear! 'This is MY body and if I want to show it off that's my business!' "Listen, ladies, the Bible says that if you claim to be a child of God, you are not your own because you have been bought with a price." (That price was the precious blood of Jesus!) Frank cannot remember all the times he has looked and lusted after other women. He hangs his head in shame as the Judge says, "GUILTY!" There is something that is starting to happen to Frank. A sense of awareness that he is indeed guilty. He remembers reading, or hearing a preacher say something like: "Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:20)

Frank's mind is trying to remember other verses of Scripture when Witness #8 stands to his feet. "Your Honor, my name is 'Thou shalt not steal.' Frank doesn't even hear him. He remembers a verse that said: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) The Judge says, "GUILTY!", and Witness #9 takes the stand.

"Your Honor, my name is 'Thou shalt not bear false witness', and on many occasions, Frank Logan has lied about his neighbors." Frank doesn't object. He doesn't jump up and try to justify himself. He is thinking about another passage of Scripture; "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." (Romans 3:28) Somewhere in the back of his mind he hears the Judge say, "GUILTY!"

The prosecuting attorney says, "Your Honor, I have one more witness to testify against Mr. Logan. With the court's permission I'd like to call Witness #10." As Witness #10 is standing, Frank is thinking real hard about the verses of Scripture in (Romans 5:6): "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." "Your Honor, my name is 'Thou shalt not covet,' and Frank Logan covets what other people have so bad that he robs God every week in order to buy a Florida Lottery Ticket! In fact, he has a wallet full of them right now hoping to win tonight's 50 million dollar drawing!" Frank knows he's guilty and the shame is overwhelming. He sees himself as a wretched, lost sinner who deserves to be given the maximum sentence allowed by law. The prosecuting attorney jumps to his feet and says, "Your Honor, I believe we have shown, beyond a reasonable doubt that Frank Logan is guilty as charged." "It is our recommendation that he be sentenced immediately to an eternity of death and separation in the Lake of Fire, where the 'worm dieth not and the fire is never quenched!" The Witnesses, all ten of them were on their feet crying "GUILTY!"

The people in the courtroom were all standing to their feet crying, "Guilty!" Frank

was slumped over in his chair, all life had drained out from him. He was about to give up hope when all of a sudden, he remembered one more Bible Scripture that his Sunday teacher had taught him years ago: (Romans 10:13) "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." The Judge asked him if he had anything to say before the sentence was passed down. Frank stood to his feet, and with all the strength he could muster, he cried, "Your Honor, I call on Jesus!" And at the sound of that name, the Judge stood to his feet, the prosecutor stood to his feet, the ten witnesses stood up, everybody in the courtroom that day stood to their feet as from a side door, Jesus, the Son of God walked into the courtroom! A hush fell over the courtroom as the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world, walked over to where Frank had slumped on the floor in utter desperation.

Jesus reached down, lovingly picked up Frank Logan and approached the Judge's bench and said, "Father, this is another sinner for whom I died!" And with that proclamation, The courtroom was instantly filled with cheers and shouts of joy for another lost sheep that now was found. (John 3:18) "He that believeth is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (Romans 3:20-31) (Author unknown)

Appendix A. The Ten Witnesses