

The Ten Commandments: Posted on our Hearts and in our Homes

Only God is God

Exodus 20:1-3

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Introduction to Text: Today, we are beginning a new series that will take us through the summer. We are going to take a look at each of the 10 commandments. Now, it goes without saying, I think, that this text is perhaps among the most familiar places of Scripture. At least, by the term “10 Commandments” we are familiar with them. As I read this week, “We know at least how many there are. What they are is a different question.”

There are a couple of reasons that we should look again at these commandments. The commandments provide for us an ethical framework for all of life. Though part of the Old Testament Law, the commandments give us an ethical framework for any orderly society.

Beyond that, we ought to consider what the Bible tells us in Romans 15:4: “For whatever was written before was written for our instruction, so that through our endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we have our hope.”

Here is the particular reason that I want us to consider these 10 commandments. This year we have isolated the theme of family as one of our central talking points. Precisely, we have learned from Deuteronomy 6 that God assigned the family the primary role of teaching the next generation to follow God. In Deuteronomy 6, God tells Israel that they are to teach these commands to their children. What commands? God gave these commands as overarching commands lay the groundwork for the other commands.

Text: ¹ Then God spoke all these words:

² I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery.

³ Do not have other gods besides Me.

⁴ Do not make an idol for yourself, whether in the shape of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. ⁵ You must not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the fathers' sin, to the third and fourth [generations] of those who hate Me, ⁶ but showing faithful love to a thousand [generations] of those who love Me and keep My commands.

⁷ Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God, because the LORD will punish anyone who misuses His name.

⁸ Remember to dedicate the Sabbath day: ⁹ You are to labor six days and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. You must not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the foreigner who is within your gates. ¹¹ For the LORD

made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything in them in six days; then He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and declared it holy.

¹² Honor your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³ Do not murder.

¹⁴ Do not commit adultery.

¹⁵ Do not steal.

¹⁶ Do not give false testimony against your neighbor.

¹⁷ Do not covet your neighbor's house. Do not covet your neighbor's wife, his male or female slave, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Introduction: The Gospels tell us that on one occasion a scribe asked Jesus, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy 6 by saying, "Listen, Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord in One. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." Then Jesus continued, "The second is: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these."

Do you see what Jesus did? He gave the whole list of commandments in these words. First, the relationship with God; then the relationship with others. That is exactly the way that the 10 commandments appear.

I don't have to tell you that there is a big debate in our country about the posting of the ten commandments in schools, in court rooms, and other governmental buildings. I want you to know that I will stand with you in your conviction of a Constitutional right to post these 10 commandments anywhere. However, there should be something that concerns us more: The posting of these commandments on our hearts and in our homes.

What should we post on our hearts and in our homes about this first commandment?

The Preamble to all other Commands

Somebody might say, "What gives God the right to give us these commands?"

- **Position of God**--He is the LORD God. We first encounter the designation of God in Genesis 1:1—God created. Beyond that God is our personal God—He is the Lord, our God.
- **Provision of God**—He brought Israel out of Egypt—out of slavery. For us, He gave us a way out of our own slavery to sin.

As a result, God is authority. We all must learn to follow authority. If we don't get this first command right, we will not get the other commands.

The Problem of the Human Heart

Why do we need this command? We need this command because we all have this tendency to worship other things.

Kay Warren, wife of Rick Warren tells this story about her first trip to the country of Rwanda.

The first time I visited Rwanda, I went looking for monsters...I had heard about the 1994 genocide that had left one million people dead—tortured, raped, viciously murdered—and somehow I thought it would be easy to spot the perpetrators. I naïvely assumed I would be able to look men and women in the eyes and tell if they had been involved. I was full of self-righteous judgment.

What I found left me puzzled, confused, and ultimately frightened. Instead of finding leering, menacing creatures, I met men and women who looked and behaved a lot like me. They took care of their families, went to work, chatted with their neighbors, laughed, cried, prayed, and worshiped. Where were the monsters? Where were the evildoers capable of heinous acts? Slowly, with a deepening sense of dread, I understood the truth: There were no monsters in Rwanda, just people like you and me. ...

Before that trip, I can't tell you the number of times I reacted to evil I read about or witnessed by saying, "I would *never* do that!" But thousands of years of bloody human history prove differently. Fifty-four years of my own history prove differently. We are all proficient in our ability to conceive, plan, and execute evil. Of course, we don't call it evil when we're the ones involved. But it is....You might as well face the shameful truth: You and I, put in the right situation, will do absolutely anything. Given the right circumstances, I am capable of any sin. I've grown more afraid of the monster lurking in the dark corners of my soul than of any monster lurking in the dark corners of my house.

Kay Warren, "The Only Hope for Monsters," Christianity Today magazine (October 2008), p. 98 posted 10/13/2008 Preachingtoday.com.

Herein is evidence of one of the reasons for us to study again the 10 commandments. We all recognize our need for a Savior. We are not through the first command and we have to admit that we fall short of the glory of God—the holiness of God.

Whether it be power, possessions, popularity, or pleasure, there are gods in our lives that vie for the throne of our heart. Often I have said, "If you want to know the god of your life—check two places. Check your calendar and check your checkbook—for where you spend your time and where you spend your money will reveal your god."

The Pattern that this command sets for life

The final thing that I want you to see in this first command is that this command sets forth a pattern that will be followed in your life. Notice these two Scriptures.

Psalm 115 ¹ Not to us, LORD, not to us,
but to Your name give glory
because of Your faithful love, because of Your truth.

² Why should the nations say,
"Where is their God?"

³ Our God is in heaven
and does whatever He pleases.

⁴ Their idols are silver and gold,
made by human hands.

⁵ They have mouths, but cannot speak,
eyes, but cannot see.

⁶ They have ears, but cannot hear,
noses, but cannot smell.

⁷ They have hands, but cannot feel,
feet, but cannot walk.
They cannot make a sound with their throats.

⁸ ***Those who make them are just like them,
as are all who trust in them.***

1 John 3:2-3 ² Dear friends, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself just as He is pure.

You will become like the one you worship!