

## **The Ten Commandments: Ethics For The Twenty-First Century**

### **Lesson #1 – Introduction**

1) Scriptures To Read:

- a) Genesis 12:1-2
- b) Exodus 20:1-21 & 31:18
- c) Ephesians 2:8
- d) Matthew 5:17 & 28:19-20
- e) Galatians 3:23-26
- f) Romans 6:15

2) Questions To Consider:

- a) List the Ten Commandments (without opening your Bible if possible ;-)
- b) Which two passages of Scripture include the list of the Ten Commandments?
- c) Who were the original recipients of the Ten Commandments?
- d) Looking at God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12, had this promise been realized by the time of the Exodus? If not, what was lacking?
- e) Who was the author of the Ten Commandments? What is the significance of this?
- f) What was the original purpose of the Ten Commandments?
- g) Where do we see evidence of God's grace in Exodus 20? How might this change the way we view the Old Testament law?
- h) How might one divide the Ten Commandments? What is the focus of each division?
- i) Do the Ten Commandments still apply to Christians today?

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**Lesson #2 – You Shall Have No Other Gods Before Me**

1) Scriptures To Read:

- a) Exodus 20:3
- b) Deut. 6:4
- c) Hosea 4:12
- d) Jeremiah 3:6-8
- e) Isaiah 46:9
- f) 1 Tim. 2:5
- g) Matthew 4:8-10
- h) 1 Cor. 8:4-6

2) Questions To Consider:

- a) What is the first commandment?
- b) Why do you think this commandment was necessary?
- c) What is “polytheism”?
- d) What, specifically, does this commandment mean? What is being forbidden?
- e) What other sin (which is also forbidden in the Ten Commandments) is often compared to the sin of breaking the first commandment?
- f) Does the first commandment imply the existence of other gods?
- g) Did the Israelites believe in the existence of other gods?
- h) Is this command still relevant today? How does it apply to us?
- i) How do we reconcile this command with the New Testament teaching of the Trinity?
- j) How does this commandment practically apply to us today?
- k) What are some things we might be tempted to become “gods” in our life?

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**Lesson #3 – You Shall Not Make For Yourself A Carved Image...**

1) Scripture To Read:

- a) Exodus 20:4-6
- b) 1 John 4:12
- c) Exodus 33:20
- d) Ezekiel 18:20
- e) John 4:24
- f) 1 Corinthians 8:4

2) Questions To Consider:

- a) What is the second commandment?
- b) If idol worship breaks the first commandment, why is the second commandment necessary? Isn't this redundant?
- c) Would it be possible to break the second commandment while claiming you are NOT breaking the first commandment? If so, how?
- d) While it might be obvious that we can't create images of false gods, why are we not allowed to create an image of the one true God for worship?
- e) According to Exodus 20:5, why specifically is idolatry forbidden?
- f) What does it mean that God is a "jealous God"?
- g) What is the punishment for breaking this commandment?
- h) How do we reconcile this punishment with Ezekiel 18:20?
- i) Is the commandment still applicable today?
- j) How do we apply this commandment to our lives?
- k) In what way is idolatry similar to greed?
- l) What about portrayals of Jesus in art or film? Is this a second commandment violation?

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**Lesson #4 – You Shall Not Take the Name of the LORD your God in vain...**

1) Scripture To Read:

- a) Exodus 20:7
- b) Proverbs 22:1
- c) Matthew 5:33-37

2) Questions To Consider:

- a) What is the third commandment?
- b) What does this commandment prohibit?
- c) What is the significance of naming someone or something? Why are names important?
- d) In Proverbs 22:1, what is meant by “a good name”? What makes a name, a “good name”?
- e) Why did ancient societies utilize the name of a deity to legitimize their oaths? What about using the name of your god ensured you would keep an oath?
- f) What specifically does it mean to “take the name of the Lord your God in vain”?
- g) Does this commandment still apply to us today? How so?
- h) Based on the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:34, are Christians forbidden from taking any oaths whatsoever? What about in court? Or signing contracts?

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**Lesson #5 – Remember The Sabbath**

1) Scriptures To Read:

- a) Exodus 20:8-11
- b) Genesis 2:2
- c) Romans 10:4
- d) Colossians 2:16-17
- e) Romans 14:5-6
- f) Hebrews 10:24-25

2) Questions To Consider:

- a) What is the fourth commandment?
- b) What is your first impression of this commandment? What does it mean and how does it apply?
- c) What is the “Sabbath Day”?
- d) What does the word *Sabbath* mean?
- e) What specifically were the Israelites NOT to do on the Sabbath?
- f) What was the purpose of this prohibition?
- g) What does it mean to “Remember” the Sabbath? What is the appropriate response to remembering the Sabbath?
- h) Does this commandment still apply to us today? Why or why not?
- i) Why does the church gather on Sunday instead of Saturday?

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**Lesson #6 – Honor Your Father And Mother**

1) Scripture To Read:

- a) Exodus 20:12
- b) Psalm 86:9
- c) Proverbs 3:9
- d) Deuteronomy 21:18-21
- e) Ephesians 6:1-3

2) Questions To Consider:

- a) How do commandments 1-4 differ from commandments 5-10?
- b) What is the fifth commandment?
- c) What is the fifth commandment commanding?
- d) What does the word *honor* mean?
- e) How exactly does one *honor* their parents?
- f) Does the punishment laid out in Deut. 21:18-21 seem extreme? Why was this punishment so severe?
- g) Does this commandment expire at a certain age? When does a child no longer have to honor their parents?
- h) Why would the Israelites be interested in obeying this command? What promise is attached to it?
- i) Does this command still apply to us today?

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**Lesson #7 – You Shall Not Murder**

1) Scripture To Read:

- a) Exodus 20:13 & 21:12
- b) Numbers 35
- c) Genesis 4:1-16 & 9:1-6
- d) Matthew 5:21-22

2) Questions To Consider:

- a) What is the sixth commandment?
- b) What is murder? How would you define it?
- c) Is there a difference between murder and killing? Can you commit one act without committing the other?
- d) What is the difference between murder and manslaughter? Do we see such a distinction in Scripture?
- e) Why is murder wrong?
- f) What is the punishment for murder?
- g) Is the administration of the death penalty equivalent to murder?  
Why or Why not?
- h) Does this commandment still apply today?
- i) How does Jesus' teaching in Mathew 5:21-22 affect our understanding of this command?

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**Lesson #8 – You Shall Not Commit Adultery**

1) Scripture To Read:

- a) Exodus 20:14
- b) Exodus 22:16-17
- c) Deuteronomy 22:20-22
- d) 1 Timothy 3:2
- e) Matthew 5:27-32

2) Questions To Consider:

- a) What is the seventh commandment?
- b) What is adultery? How would you define it?
- c) If there a difference between how we define adultery now and how it was defined during the Old Testament?
- d) Was consensual sex between two single individuals (i.e. pre-marital sex) considered adultery?
- e) Looking at Exodus 22:16-17, how does this law protect women?
- f) Looking at Deuteronomy 22:20-21, why does Scripture only mention punishment for the guilty female?
- g) Why was polygamy (specifically polygyny) allowed in the Old Testament? Why was it not considered adultery?
- h) Why is marriage faithfulness so important?
- i) What was the Old Testament punishment for adultery?
- j) Does this commandment still apply today? How does the New Testament address adultery?

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**Lesson #9 – You Shall Not Steal**

1) Scriptures To Read:

- a) Exodus 20:15, 21:16, 22:1-7
- b) Malachi 3:8-10
- c) 1 Corinthians 6:9-10
- d) Acts 5:1-11

2) Questions To Consider:

- a) What is the eighth commandment? What does it mean?
- b) What does it mean to steal? How would you define it?
- c) Is stealing only stealing when done in secret? Or can stealing include the use of force?
- d) Is stealing limited to the taking of physical property? If not, what other things can be “stolen”?
- e) It is possible to be guilty of stealing from God?
- f) What was the punishment for stealing according to the Old Testament law?
- g) Does the New Testament add anything new to our understanding of this commandment?
- h) What motivation do you think leads to stealing? Is this motivation addressed in Scripture?
- i) Is this commandment still applicable today? How might we practically apply this commandment to our lives?
- j) How might this commandment inform our understanding of private property and personal wealth?

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**Lesson #10 – You Shall Not Bear False Witness...**

1) Scripture To Read:

- a) Exodus 20:16, 23:1
- b) Deuteronomy 17:6-7
- c) 1 Kings 21
- d) Leviticus 19:33-34
- e) Proverbs 6:16-17
- f) Hosea 4:2
- g) Matthew 5:33-37

2) Questions To Consider:

- a) What does the ninth commandment say? What does it mean? What is being forbidden?
- b) In the legal system of the Old Testament, justice depending very heavily on witness testimony, much more so than it does today. Why was that the case?
- c) Why did ancient societies take perjury so seriously?
- d) How many witnesses were required to administer the death penalty? If found guilty, who administered the death penalty? Why was this the case?
- e) Who qualifies as your “neighbor”? Can you lie about someone who is not your neighbor?
- f) Was lying outside of a legal context allowed?
- g) Does this command still apply to us? If so, how so?
- h) What are some practical ways we should apply this commandment today?

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**Lesson #11 – You Shall Not Covet**

1) Scriptures To Read:

- a) Exodus 20:17
- b) Genesis 6:5
- c) Proverbs 21:2
- d) Mark 7:20-23
- e) Ephesians 5:1-3
- f) Philippians 4:11
- g) 1 Timothy 6:6-10
- h) Hebrews 13:5

2) Questions --To Consider

- a) What does the final commandment say? What does it mean?
- b) What makes this commandment unique?
- c) How do you enforce a command which addresses an intention and not an action?
- d) How do you distinguish between sinful coveting and an innocent desire? Is simply wanting something a violation of the tenth commandment?
- e) Does this commandment still apply to us today?
- f) What does God's Word have to say about contentment? How does Godly contentment guard against the temptation to covet?