

Cities Church

Organizer

Kenneth Ortiz

Art Direction

Gabriel Leake

Article Contributors

Brett Toney

Josiah Bennett

Dawson Brown

Caitey Bennett

Matt Sundquist

Hank Andre

Austin Felber

Max Kozak

Nick Aufenkamp

Will McKenzie

Zach Krych

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All Scripture quotations are in ESV unless otherwise noted.

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The Ten Commandments

Exodus 20:1–20

And God spoke all these words, saying,

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

“You shall have no other gods before me.

II. “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

- III. “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.
- IV. “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.
- V. “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.
- VI. “You shall not murder.
- VII. “You shall not commit adultery.

VIII. “You shall not steal.

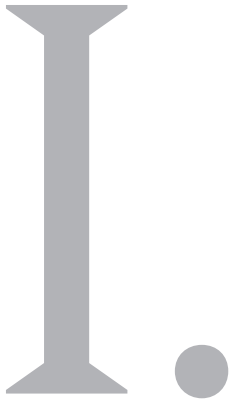
IX. “You shall not bear false witness
against your neighbor.

X. “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you
shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male
servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his
donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.

Now when all the people saw the thunder and the
flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and
the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and
trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses,
“You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God
speak to us, lest we die.” Moses said to the people, “Do
not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear
of him may be before you, that you may not sin.”

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Week One



The First Commandment

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

You shall have no other gods before me.

EXODUS 20:2-3

Beware the Idol of Family

Josiah and Caitey Bennett

An idol is anything that takes the place of God in our hearts. An idol becomes the gravitational center of our lives, and everything important to us orbits around that center. The truth is, as author John Piper asserts, God must be the “blazing center” of our solar system. Anything else is wholly unacceptable.

If you’ve spent time in Christian communities, you’ve probably been exposed to the idea that we are our own worst enemies. In the 16th century, John Calvin described the nature of humanity as being a “perpetual factory of idols.” It is almost as if our hearts are continually looking for things to wrongly idolize. It is said that the face that stares back at us in the mirror is often our greatest enemy. Our culture expects us to make much of ourselves and encourages this sort of self-centered behavior. Still, there are many other things that can also become idols.

Much of the time when we talk about idols, we talk about obviously wicked rival gods like pornography and

drugs. We don’t tend to talk about the good things in our lives that can become rivals when they are valued in the wrong order. One of the most common examples of this is the idol of family.

I know that in my own life, there have been times when my Christian faithfulness has been challenged because I worried about the effects my faith could have on my family. There have been times when I’ve been fearful to be faithful due to the responses I expected my family to have. This tendency to value family above all else is reinforced in conversations with friends, family, and coworkers. From a boss that

a couple movies or tv shows and you’ll see this confirmed over and over. Everyone seems to be saying that family is the most important... everyone except for Jesus.

No doubt, we’ve all had to struggle with the passages of Scripture where Jesus calls people to leave behind their families, or view them as enemies, or even “hate” them (Matthew 10:34, Mark 10:28, Luke 14:26-27). Make no mistake, families are important and biblical Christianity values families highly. Yet sometimes, Christians tend to subvert their loyalty to Christ for their loyalty to their families. Sometimes they fail to

When we place family togetherness as the most important value, we neglect speaking the truth in love.

said, “Family first, work second,” to the coworkers who say, “but, we’re family so...” everyone seems to agree that family is most important. Watch just

confront a rebellious sibling, or parent living in habitual sin, because “it could create some family drama” or worse yet, break apart relationships completely. It

is obvious that our families sometimes become the center of how we view our homes and bank accounts. When we do this, we are worshiping family and not God. We are letting our gravitational center be the family, rather than God. Families are extremely important, but not more important than God.

There are five conflicting worldviews regarding families: the false god of families, the false god of fathers, the false god of mothers, the false god of children, and finally the gospel of God. Each of these worldviews sets up a different god, but only one stands as correct.

The false god of families says that family is for family, no matter what. It preaches that families exist to “be there for each other and accept each other.” This false god says that that the thing at the center of our lives should not be God, but instead should be our families. This idol causes us to neglect confronting sin and keeps us from setting the boundaries required for maintaining healthy relationships. Instead, this idol

tells us that regardless of how a family member treats us or others, or even if a family member is walking in sin, that family is still family. Sometimes this leads to patterns of abuse or harm going unaddressed, just to maintain the peace. The false god of family promises joy and life, but delivers evil and destruction. Although family is a good gift given by God, our families in and of themselves cannot satisfy our need to belong. We must not sacrifice truth on the altar of togetherness. Are you more concerned about maintaining a façade of togetherness than about where your family truly is before God? Are you willing to have the hard conversations God is calling you to have with your family members, even if it costs you the relationship?

The false god of fathers is the belief that families exist for the father. The father has absolute authority. Fathers are free to flit in and out of their families, without consequence. These lies produce an environment that revolves around the selfish desires of fathers,

leading to fathers that are often abusive, absent, or uninvolved as long as they want to be, and then later expect to be welcomed back with open arms because “they are the father.” When fathers neglect their God-given callings and roles, the world suffers. The church suffers. Given the plight of fatherlessness in our generation, it is clear that this is an idol for many. Fathers, in leading your families, what drives you? Are you more concerned about what authority your headship gives you, rather than what your own submission means before God? Are you more concerned with what liberties you have than what responsibilities you must shoulder? Are you willing to lay down your life, your dreams, your free time, in order to lead your family towards God?

The false god of mothers is the belief that families exist for the mother. This false god can often be subtle, but destructive. With the mother at the center of the family, her selfish desires and motives can wreak havoc on the balance of family that God intended.

Many have heard the phrase, “If mama ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy.” But sadly, for many, this is not a lighthearted jest, but brokenhearted reality. This mother-centric environment is not determined by whether the mother serves her family, but whether her pursuits are in line with her God-given callings and roles, and whether she is willing to have the Lord rule her life and her family. Mothers, who are you worshipping? Are you more concerned about an immaculate house and your own peace and quiet? Or are you willing to put aside your plans for the day, when your children need you to stop and listen? Are you willing to sacrifice your free time, your energy, and your dreams to nurture your family towards God?

The false god of children is the belief that the family exists for the children. Everything revolves around ensuring that the children get the best of everything. Thousands of dollars are spent on the best schools, sports, equipment, and technology... everything to ensure that the children have the best

life available. Are you more concerned about the reputation you have as a parent, or are you willing to let your children miss out on good things to focus on the best things? Are you more concerned with how your child’s disobedience reflects on your parenting or on their heart before God?

The only good news for a family is when God is God and families, fathers, mothers, and children, are not. When we place family togetherness as the most important value, we neglect speaking the truth in love. Although the world tells us that this kind of acceptance is loving, when we look at Scripture, we see a starkly different picture of what God intended the family to be: not acceptance of everything, but discipleship and discernment. God gives the family and its members appointments: the father, helped by the wife, is to nurture, grow, and disciple the children, not for the sake of either one of them, but for the sake of God. Together, the family should seek to

make much of Christ, not the family themselves.

As we wrote this article, we were convicted of our own failings as family members; father, mother, parents, and children. We need the gospel every day. It is only through Jesus’s death and resurrection, where he bore our sin and gave us new life, that we live differently. Through Christ’s death, we can burn our rival gods and place family where it’s supposed to be: important, yet not final.

Day 1 – Matthew 19:16-22

- 1 Read the narrative about the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:16-22. The young man asks what good he must do to be saved. Jesus responds that there is only one who is good. What assumptions does the young man make in his original question? Are they correct?
- 2 How does Jesus answer his questions? Why does Jesus answer in the way that he does?
- 3 What does the young man's grieving over Jesus' command reveal about his heart? Why does it grieve him to give up his possessions?

Day 2 – Psalm 81:9-16

- 1 Read Psalm 81:9-16. Idolatry is one of the strongest inclinations in our fallen flesh. What are some common idols/false gods that we are tempted to cherish more than God?
- 2 God reminded Israel of the great grace that he had shown them by delivering them from Egypt. What are some evidences of grace in your life that point to a kind God who deserves your adoration and gratitude?
- 3 How does not listening to God's voice and obeying his commands show an idolatry problem in our hearts?

Day 3 – Deuteronomy 6:4-5

- 1 Read Deuteronomy 6:4-5. What does it mean to love the Lord with all your heart? How can we continue to delight in him more than anything else?
- 2 What does it mean to love the Lord with all your soul? He has given us all life and breath. What does it mean to use that life for his glory?
- 3 What does it mean to love the Lord with all your strength? We are called to love God in everything we do, even simple tasks like eating and drinking. In what ways do our actions glorify God?

Day 4 – Insight from Church History

Before God said, “Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal,” this law was one of the commands of his universe; for this was binding upon the angels when man was not created. It was not necessary for God to say to the angels, “Thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not steal;” for such things to them were very probably impossible; but he did doubtless say to them, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;” and when first Gabriel sprang out of his native nothingness at the fiat of God, this command was binding on him. This command, which deals with God the Almighty must ever take precedence of every other. Other commandments deal with man and man, but this with man and his Creator. Other commands of

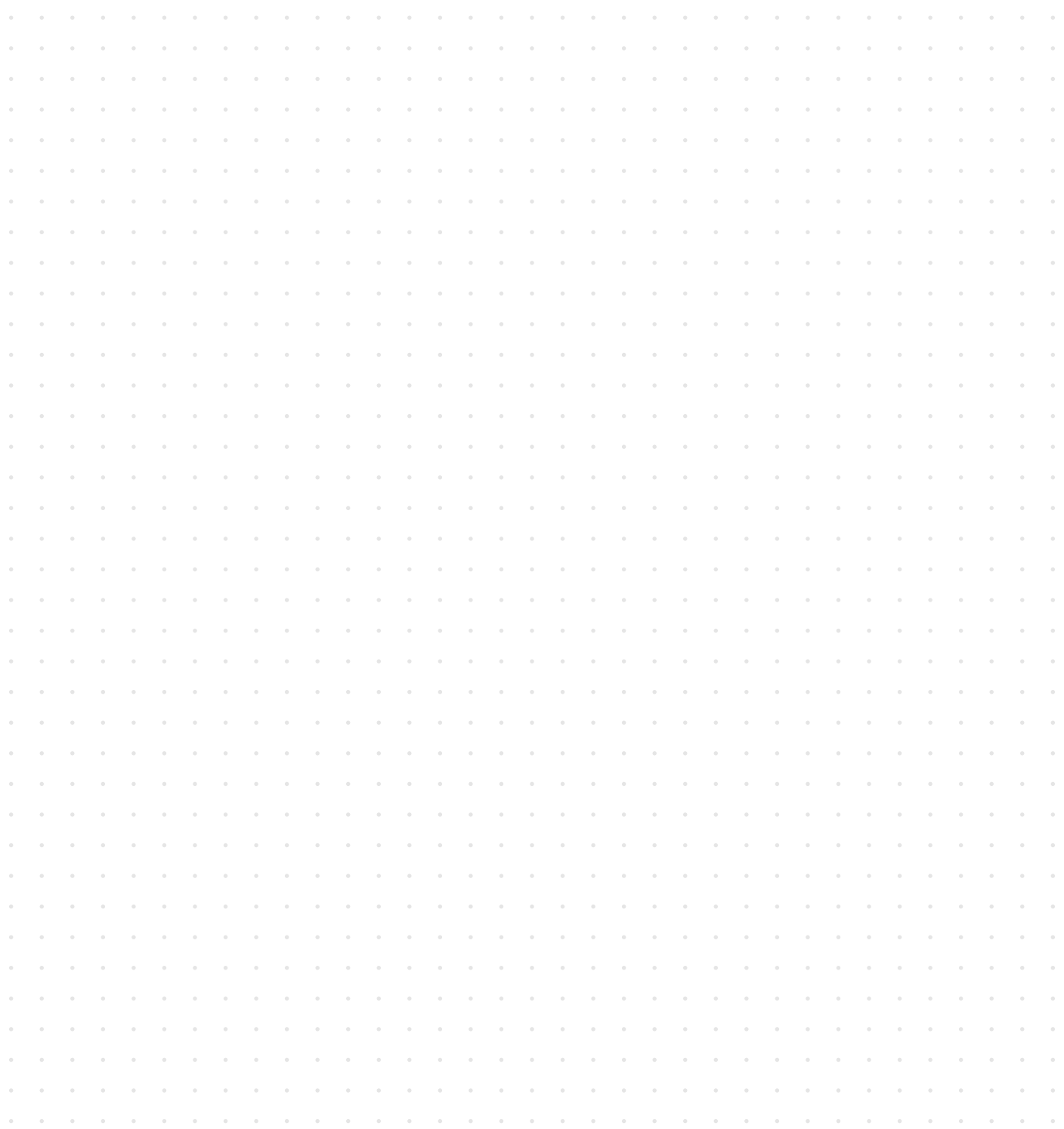
a ceremonial kind, when disobeyed, may involve but slight consequences upon the person who may happen to offend, but this disobeyed provokes the wrath of God, and brings his ire at once upon the sinner’s head. He that stealeth committeth a gross offense, inasmuch as he hath also violated this command; but if it were possible for us to separate the two, and to suppose an offense of one command without an offence of this, then we must put the violation of this commandment in the first rank of offences. This is the king of commandments; this is the emperor of the law; it must take precedence of all those princely commands that God afterwards gave to men.

CHARLES SPURGEON (1834-1892)

Notes

Day 5 – Sermon Notes

A large grid of small dots for taking notes, consisting of 20 columns and 30 rows of dots.



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Week Two

II.

The Second Commandment

You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

EXODUS 20:4-6

A Right Representation

Dawson Brown

Three points stand out to me when I consider the second commandment. The first is that the Lord wants to be represented as he truly is. No person or thing is worthy of being beheld the way God is worthy. He is categorically different than any person or thing in our lives. He deserves to be appropriately represented. Anything made in the “likeness” of him is simply not good enough. I think of the old adage, “Close is only good in horseshoes and hand grenades.” This rings true with the Lord. Things made in “likeness” or “close to” God are false idols that will not give the Lord the glory that is due. The Lord is for his glory in the second commandment, and this theme reoccurs throughout Exodus. One of the examples that sticks out to me the most is that of the Lord hardening Pharaoh’s heart:

AND I WILL HARDEN PHARAOH’S HEART, AND HE WILL PURSUE THEM AND I WILL GET GLORY OVER PHARAOH AND ALL HIS HOST; AND THE

EGYPTIANS SHALL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD ... AND THE EGYPTIANS SHALL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD, WHEN I HAVE GOTTEN GLORY OVER PHARAOH, HIS CHARIOTS, AND HIS HORSEMEN .

EXODUS 14:4, 18; CF. V. 17

Phrases like, “I will get glory” and “when I have gotten glory” clearly show us that the Lord is zealous for his own glory. If this is indeed true (and by looking at Exodus 14, we know that it is), then mere human speculation of God rooted in our own thoughts and feelings would be nothing but dishonoring. It would cause us to worship a false idol.

The second realization I had about the second commandment was how easily the Israelites created idols. In Exodus 32, we see just how quickly their sin caused them to worship false idols. Moses had been up on Mount Sinai receiving revelations from the Lord. The Israelites grew impatient with Moses and created an Idol of a golden calf that they worshiped and offered sacrifices.

Reading this story, I initially believed that upon witnessing the scene of the golden calf, I would have had a similar reaction as Moses did. Moses’ “anger burned hot” and he destroyed the idol and set things back in order. I mean, how could Israel be so blind to the fact that there is only one true God when he had just brought them out of the hand of the Egyptians? “Oh those Israelites of little faith,” I thought. However, after mulling it over, I was hit with conviction and a realization that I am often like the Israelites. My heart so often wants to exchange the truth of God for a lie. As John Calvin once said, “Our hearts are idol factories.” Not necessarily in the form of a golden calf, but perhaps I have put attributes to the Lord that are not based upon who he says he is. We consistently find things in our lives that we put above God. When I do this, my thoughts are no different than the thoughts of the Israelites. I have created a false god.

In any moment when I have misrepresented God (to myself or to others),

I have violated the second commandment. In addition, whenever I have misrepresented some other thing, making it more important than it ought to be, causing me to wrongly elevate that thing to a place in my heart where only God belongs, I have again potentially broken the second commandment. God deserves to be appropriately repre-

most amazing parts of the story of the golden calf is that the Lord was right in front of them, upon Mount Sinai! He was in their presence giving the truth about himself to Moses, yet in their impatience and pride they decided that they knew better than the Lord. Just as the Israelites had Christ in their very midst explaining his truth, we have

influences. We must hold this second commandment high because it tells us that we can so easily misrepresent Christ. Don't continue to speculate about who God is based upon your feelings, but let God's own words inform you about himself.

When you feel your faith will fail, go to his word and not the world.

When you feel that Christ cannot possibly forgive you for this sin, go to his word and not the world.

When you feel the weight of how a good God could allow for suffering in this world, go to the word and not the world.

I pray that we would continually go to the Lord for our truth and that it would be his word that reminds us of our need for him.

Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32).

Our natural view of God is marred by our own sin, by cultural normalities, and by family influences.

sented and worshipped. Therefore, God demands that we never represent any other thing as if it deserves to be the top priority in our lives.

God wants to be represented truthfully. Tragically, we often misrepresent him. How do we fix this issue? The answer to this question is no different today than it was thousands of years ago. Go to the source of truth. One of the

the same opportunity with the word of the Lord!

This brings me to my final point and an application that has recently convicted my own heart. A.W. Tozer once said that, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." Our natural view of God is marred by our own sin, by cultural normalities, and by family

Day 1 – Psalm 97:7-9

- 1 Read Psalm 97:7-9. Many people place their trust in false idols and boast about them. How is it harmful to trust in an idol? Can they ever deliver any true joy to us?
- 2 Why is it right for God's people to rejoice in his just judgment? How is God's condemnation of idols an encouragement to us?
- 3 God is called the Most High. Those who trust in idols worship them in vain, but our God rules the heavens and the earth. He is infinite in his majesty and power. How can we continue to be awestruck at the reality of God's majesty? What can we do to help one another remember the righteous power of God?

Day 2 – Isaiah 45:15-17

- 1 Read Isaiah 45:15-17. What could it mean that God hides himself? How can we have faith in God beyond what we can see?
- 2 While all creation continues to declare the glory of God, man has made idols for himself to worship rather than the Creator. What does it mean that both the idol and the idol maker will be humiliated?
- 3 God is eternal, but idols are temporary. What implications might this have on our lives and worship? How is this an encouragement to us?

Day 3 – Romans 1:16-25

- 1 Read Romans 1:16-25. How does creation testify to the eternal power and divine nature of God? What can we learn about God from creation?
- 2 Both God's existence and attributes are clearly seen by all, yet many suppress this truth. What does this tell you about the inclination of our hearts?
- 3 Knowing that fallen hearts are inclined toward idolatry, what does it mean to be given over to the desires of their hearts? What does this passage reveal about the foolishness of worshipping creation rather than the Creator?

Day 4 – Insight from Church History

Man does not need to be commanded to worship, as there is not a race so high or so low in civilization that doesn't have some kind of a god. What he needs is to be directed in the right way. The first commandment is for this purpose. Before we can worship intelligently, we must know what or whom to worship. God does not leave us in ignorance. When Paul went to Athens, he found an altar dedicated to AN UNKNOWN GOD, and he proceeded to tell of Him whom we worship. When God gave the commandments to Moses, He began with a declaration of His own character and demanded exclusive

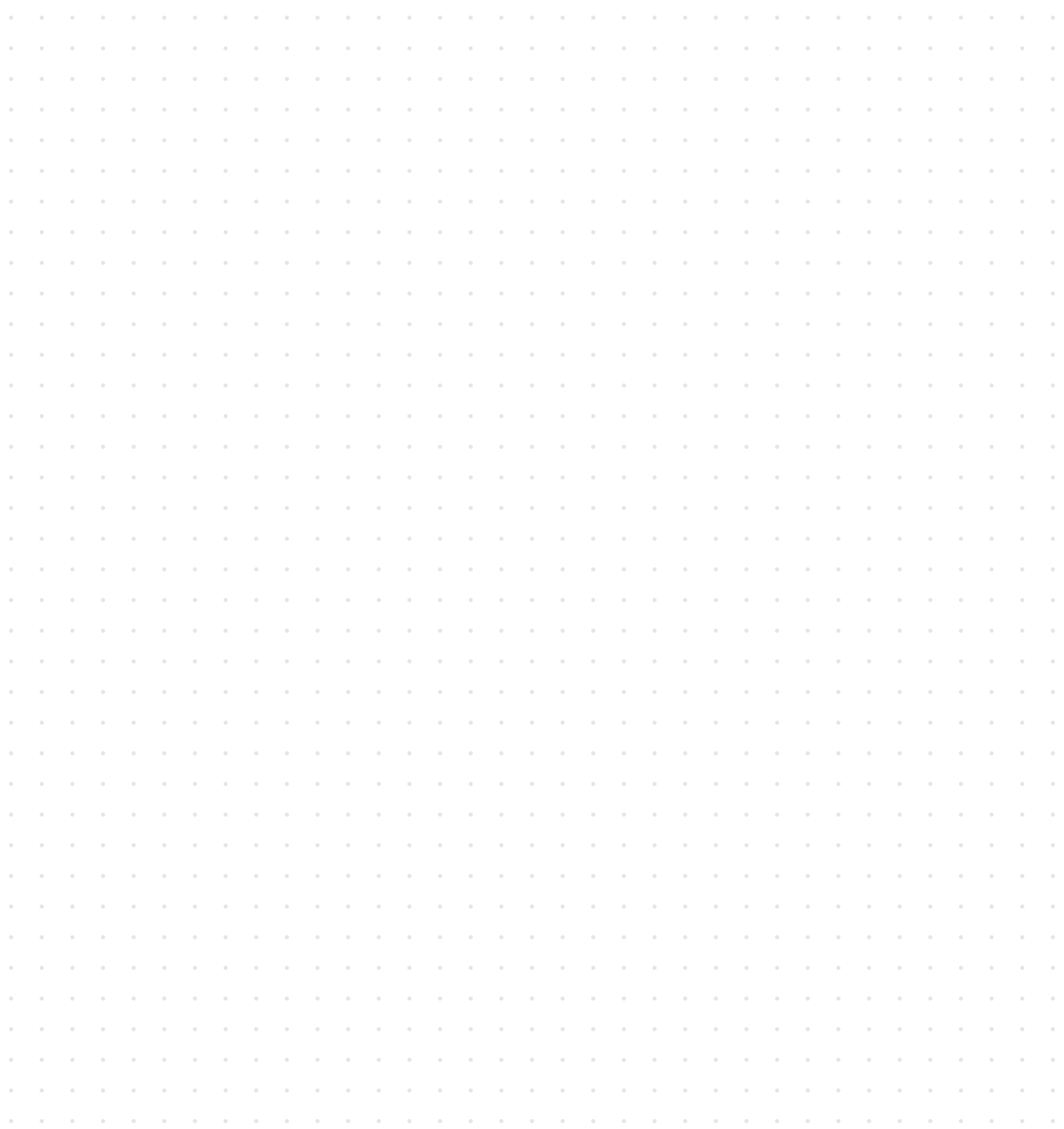
recognition: I am the LORD thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt out of the house of slavery. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. The first commandment points out the one true object of worship; but the second commandment tells us the right way to worship. The first commandment commands us to worship God alone; the second calls for purity and spirituality as we approach Him. The former condemns the worship of false gods; this one prohibits false forms. It relates more to outward acts of worship, but these are only expressions of what is in the heart.

D.L. MOODY (1837-1899)

Notes

Day 5 – Sermon Notes

A large grid of small dots, arranged in approximately 30 rows and 40 columns, intended for taking notes. The dots are light gray and spaced evenly across the page.



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Week Three

III.

The Third Commandment

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

EXODUS 20:7

Taking the Yoke

Brett Toney

Simply standing beside the massive draft horse, I could feel the power of the animal. It dwarfed my 6'2" stature—I couldn't see over its shoulders. Then, to see hanging on the wall the rigid, oblong collar used to equip the horse to pull thousands of pounds, I imagined how unbearable the collar alone would be around my own neck.

The day I spent on the “living history” farm made Jesus's description of discipleship in Matthew 11:28-30 all the more vivid:

COME TO ME, ALL WHO LABOR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST. TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU, AND LEARN FROM ME, FOR I AM GENTLE AND LOWLY IN HEART, AND YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. FOR MY YOKE IS EASY, AND MY BURDEN IS LIGHT.

As Christians, we lay aside a righteousness of our own doing and pick up the mantle of the lordship of Christ. *He*

makes us righteous by his own work, freeing us to obey him by faith.

We now bear the name of Christ—we are *Christ*-ians.

The summons to bear the name of God is all-encompassing. It is a call to unrelenting holiness.

The same dynamic is at work in Exodus. The significance of the Ten Commandments, beginning with a declaration of the definitive delivering work of Yahweh, cannot be downplayed. “I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (Exodus 20:2). God saved a people to set his name on them. The people of Israel were Yahweh-ians.

So, when we come to the command to “not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain,” consider what it does *not* say. The word choice is not ultimately about speech. “Take” is not “say” or “write”; it is a word about carrying. Do

not *carry* the name of Yahweh your God in vain. Israel bore the yoke of Yahweh, and God's people were to live in such a way as to reflect his sovereign lordship

over all of their lives.

That lordship most certainly includes speech. It is sinful to use the name of Yahweh, God, or Jesus in a thoughtless, common, or certainly vulgar way. But it is Pharisaical to reduce this command to a prohibition of speaking a few certain nouns. The salvation God has accomplished for his people in Christ is extensive, and so is the extent of his lordship over our lives. When we disobey him, we make him look worthless.

What are we communicating about the all-powerful work of the death and resurrection of Christ when we ex-

claim, “Jesus!” upon seeing a sale that ended before we took advantage of it? How much value are we attributing to the only begotten Son of God when we “innocently” respond, “OMG!” to a shocking text? What are we saying about the sanctifying power of the indwelling Spirit when we laugh at the same jokes, watch the same shows, fritter our time away with the same consumption of sports as our friends, neighbors, and colleagues who do not bear the name of Jesus? Do our lives—our thoughts, relationships, spending, hobbies, professional dealings, civic engagement, social media presence, parenting—more closely resemble the world or Jesus?

The summons to bear the name of God is all-encompassing. It is a call to unrelenting holiness. The Lord Jesus is not satisfied to see us only partially sanctified. Whenever sin and worldliness are found in our lives, we must bear the Name by living a repentant life.

Christian, the stakes are too high to do otherwise. “Yahweh will not

hold him guiltless who bears his name in vain.” If you profess faith in Christ, claim to bear the yoke of Jesus, but it is all ultimately meaningless and false, you will face his wrath and judgment. Jesus gave the same warning:

NOT EVERYONE WHO SAYS TO ME, ‘LORD, LORD,’ WILL ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, BUT THE ONE WHO DOES THE WILL OF MY FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN. ON THAT DAY MANY WILL SAY TO ME, ‘LORD, LORD, DID WE NOT PROPHECY IN YOUR NAME, AND CAST OUT DEMONS IN YOUR NAME, AND DO MANY MIGHTY WORKS IN YOUR NAME?’ AND THEN WILL I DECLARE TO THEM, ‘I NEVER KNEW YOU; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WORKERS OF LAWLESSNESS’.

MATTHEW 7:21-23

Let us not bear the name of Jesus in vain but live in faith-filled obedience, submitting our lives to his lordship.

Day 1 – Matthew 5:33-37

- ① Read Matthew 5:33-37. This is a segment from the Sermon on the Mount. What does it mean to use the Lord's name in vain? How is it wrong to take an oath by invoking the name of God?
- ② This passage shows us our powerlessness to affect those things which we swear by. How does this show us the importance of keeping our word? Why does it not make sense to swear even by your own head?
- ③ Jesus takes oath giving a step further, showing us that it is not even necessary. How can we let our 'yes' mean 'yes' and our 'no' mean 'no'? Are there any ways we unknowingly take the Lord's name in vain in our daily lives?

Day 2 – James 5:12

- 1 Read James 5:12. In this verse, what does it mean to swear?
- 2 James starts his command by saying “above all.” Why is it important not to swear by any oath?
- 3 How is it dishonoring to the name of God when we don’t tell the truth? How can we glorify God with our words?

Day 3 – Matthew 7:21-23

- 1 Read Matthew 7:21-23. Many people call on the name of the Lord without actually knowing him. How is this dishonoring to God?
- 2 When we pray, we do so in Jesus' name. What does this passage tell us about the importance of praying for the will of God when we pray?
- 3 Are there bad reasons for desiring something seemingly good (e.g., casting out demons)? How can we have pure motives as well as righteous actions?

Day 4 – Insight from Church History

Consider how holy and sacred the ordinances of God are. What mockery you are guilty of in making such a show, and such pretenses in attending ordinances, and yet voluntarily acting the reverse of what you pretend. Consider that there is no sort of sinners with whom God is so provoked, and who stand so guilty before him, as the profaners of his ordinances. The fire of God's wrath is kindled by none so much as by the polluters of holy things. They are represented as those who are especially guilty before God, in the third commandment: "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Why is this annexed to this command, rather than to any other of the ten, but because the breach of it especially renders a man guilty in the sight of God? The taking of God's name in vain includes the profanation and pollution of ordinances and holy things. They do in

a very dreadful manner take God's name in vain, who attend on his ordinances, and yet live in known sin. For, as we have shown, they manifest the greatest irreverence for him, and contempt of divine things. They manifest a contempt of his authority, a contempt of the business and design of his ordinances, and a most careless and irreverent spirit in things wherein they have immediate converse with God. Ordinances, as we have shown, are attended in the name of God. And therefore, by such an attendance on them, the name of God is greatly profaned. You that attend ordinances in such a manner, take the name of God so much in vain, that you use it only in mockery, and so as to expose it to contempt. Such a way of attending ordinances is a trampling of all that is sacred under foot.

JONATHAN EDWARDS (1703-1758)

Notes

Day 5 – Sermon Notes

A large grid of small dots for taking notes, consisting of 20 columns and 30 rows of dots.



- 45 The Fourth Commandment
Exodus 20:8-11
- 46 *The Enigmatic Command*
Nick Aufenkamp
- 50 Reflection
- 53 Insight from Church History
- 54 Sermon Notes

Week Four

IV.

The Fourth Commandment

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

EXODUS 20:8-11

The Enigmatic Command

Nick Aufenkamp

When I examine the Ten Commandments, the command to “remember the Sabbath” is perhaps the most enigmatic. Throughout the Old Testament, Sabbath-keeping was very serious business. The Sabbath was deeply woven into the fabric of Israel’s cultural identity and functioned as a weekly reminder of their dependence upon Yahweh as their protector and provider. It was a holy day; therefore, failure to observe the Sabbath was an offense punishable by death (Exodus 31:14–15).

What Is the Sabbath?

In Exodus 20:8–11, the Sabbath is grounded in the creational order: because God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, Israel likewise must pattern their lives after God’s own rhythm of work and rest. Later, in Deuteronomy 5:12–15, the Sabbath is called a day of remembrance of God’s deliverance of Israel from their enslavement to the Egyptians. From

these two accounts, we can derive two principles:

1. The Sabbath was one of God’s primary means of setting the people of Israel apart, marking them as his chosen people. Like circumcision served as a sign of the Abrahamic covenant, it is right to think of the Sabbath day (along with other holy days, such as Passover) as the covenant sign of the Mosaic covenant.
2. The Sabbath was intended to remind people of God’s deliverance and faithfulness to his people. Every seventh day the people of Israel were to cease from their work as an embodied expression of trust in Yahweh’s care and providence.

When considering the significance of the Sabbath, it becomes clear why a failure to participate in Sabbath observance was such a grave offense. One who worked on the Sabbath broke the

conditions of God’s covenant with Israel, thereby separating himself from the promises of God’s protection and favor. Working on the Sabbath was also a high-handed act of distrust in Yahweh and disregard for the salvation he provides. To work on the Sabbath was to communicate unbelief in God’s ability or willingness to provide for his people. It exhibited a need to live self-sufficiently, rather than in dependence upon the Most High God.

Jesus and the Sabbath

From the time of Moses until Jesus established the New Covenant, the most consistent feature of Israel’s worship was Sabbath observance. When Jesus began his incarnate ministry, the first accusations brought against him were his apparent failures to uphold the Sabbath (Mark 2:23–28, 3:1–6; Luke 13:10–17; John 5:16). The debate between Jesus and the Pharisees (his accusers) was over whether or not “doing good”—healing, feeding the hungry, or casting out demons from the spiritually oppressed—

took priority over strict adherence to doing no work on the Sabbath day. Jesus argued that, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27), and silenced them with the question, “Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?” (Luke 14:5–6).

In his incarnate ministry, Jesus re-framed the Sabbath as he did the entire Mosaic Law. When asked, “Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:36–40). Jesus revealed that God’s heart behind the Law was love. Love for God is chiefly expressed by his people extending self-giving love to their neighbors. The love includes remembering the Sabbath.

Should Christians Observe the Sabbath?

We see in Jesus that the act of keeping the Sabbath was penultimate to the command to love. We also know that Jesus established a new covenant with his people that is founded not upon the Law, but upon his atoning death and resurrection. The signs of this New Covenant are no longer circumcision, Passover sacrifice, and Sabbath observance. Rather, they have been replaced

in the establishment of the New Covenant? Or, put another way, should Christians today observe the Sabbath?

The answer is fundamentally ‘no,’ but in some senses ‘yes.’

The apostle Paul addresses the Sabbath in several of his epistles. In all of his discourse on the Sabbath, his resounding instruction is that the Sabbath is not binding upon Christians. Grounding his argument in the finished work of Jesus, Paul writes to the

For the Christian, Sabbath observance is not a legal obligation for communion with God. However, there remains great wisdom in cultivating regular rhythms of rest and worship.

by the seal of the Holy Spirit upon the lives of God’s people, the sacraments of baptism, and the Eucharist. So, what are the implications of Jesus’s fulfillment of the Law of Moses, resulting

Colossians, “[Let] no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance

belongs to Christ” (Colossians 2:13–15). In the closing chapters of his letter to the Romans, Paul addresses how those strong in the faith are to bear with those who are weak in the faith. Here, Paul implies that the weaker brother is the one who “esteems one day [the Sabbath] as better than another” (Romans 14:5). Paul permits weaker Christians to observe the Sabbath, saying, “Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord” (Romans 14:5–6). But, Paul also makes clear that the one who does not observe the Sabbath honors the Lord, is not in sin, and therefore should not be judged by the brother whose weaker conscience compels him to continue Sabbath observance (Romans 14:1–23).

In sum, the Sabbath is not a requirement for Christians in this strict sense, and Christians should not pass judgment upon another’s decision not to observe a ‘Sabbath day.’ The Sabbath day, as established by the Old Covenant, was fulfilled in Christ and thereby removed

as a stipulation for communion with God. Now, in Christ, the Spirit-filled people of God commune with him and find their ultimate rest in Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28).

This said, while it is not a sin to not keep the Sabbath, there is still wisdom for Christians today to extract from the principles inherent to the Sabbath. As Jesus taught, the great aim of the Law is love, and this applies equally to the command to remember the Sabbath as it does to the command not to murder. As finite people, we do well to remember that we are made of dust. Our lives are in utter dependence upon Jesus, the one who upholds the universe by the word of his power (Hebrews 1:3). One means of remembering this reality is by creating regular rhythms of rest—ceasing from the typical labors of life for the primary purpose of enjoying God, being refreshed by gospel indicatives, and remembering that Jesus is the ultimate provider and sustainer of life. Additionally, it is loving for Christians to seek to provide regular rest for employees,

those who serve their communities, and even the land itself (Leviticus 25:1–7). In fact, because of the lavish grace that Christians have received in Jesus, they should enjoy and extend more regular rhythms of rest to their neighbors than a strict one day out of seven.

For the Christian, Sabbath observance is not a legal obligation for communion with God. However, there remains great wisdom in cultivating regular rhythms of rest and worship. Christians should prayerfully evaluate their schedules and consider where, when, and with what frequency they can create time for intentional rest and communion with God. In doing so, they provide testament to the ultimate Sabbath rest they have found for their souls in Jesus.

Day 1 – Genesis 2:1-3

- 1 Read Genesis 2:1-3. What does this verse teach us about the importance of rest from our work?
- 2 God declared the seventh day holy. What does it mean for the day to be blessed and holy?
- 3 What does rest on the seventh day tell us about the other days of the week? How can we honor God in both our work and our rest?

Day 2 – John 5:1-15

- 1 Read John 5:1-15. This passage describes some of Jesus' activities on the Sabbath. What does Jesus do? Why?
- 2 Picking up your mat on the Sabbath was supposed to be forbidden by the law, but Jesus (the lawgiver) commanded him to pick up his mat. What does this tell us about the Sabbath command? How can it be misunderstood?
- 3 Jesus shows mercy to the disabled man, falls back into the crowd, and is then persecuted by the Jews. What can we learn about Jesus from this story?

Day 3 – Mark 2:23-28

- 1 Read Mark 2:23-28. What did the Pharisees believe about the Sabbath? How did they understand what it meant to keep it holy?
- 2 Jesus says two things which help us understand the purpose of the Sabbath. First, what does it mean that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath?
- 3 Second, why is it important to understand that Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath? How does this affect our understanding of the commandment?

Day 4 – Insight from Church History

The first reason for this Commandment was to put aside error, for the Holy Spirit saw that in the future some men would say that the world had always existed. “In the last days there shall come deceitful scoffers, walking after their own lusts, saying: Where is His promise or His coming? For since the time that the fathers slept, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation. For this they are willfully ignorant of, that the heavens were before, and the earth out of water, and through water, created by the word of God” (2 Pet 3:3-5). God, therefore, wished that one day should be set aside in memory of the fact that He created all things in six days, and that on the seventh day He rested from the creation of new creatures. This is why the Lord placed this Commandment in the law, saying: “Remem-

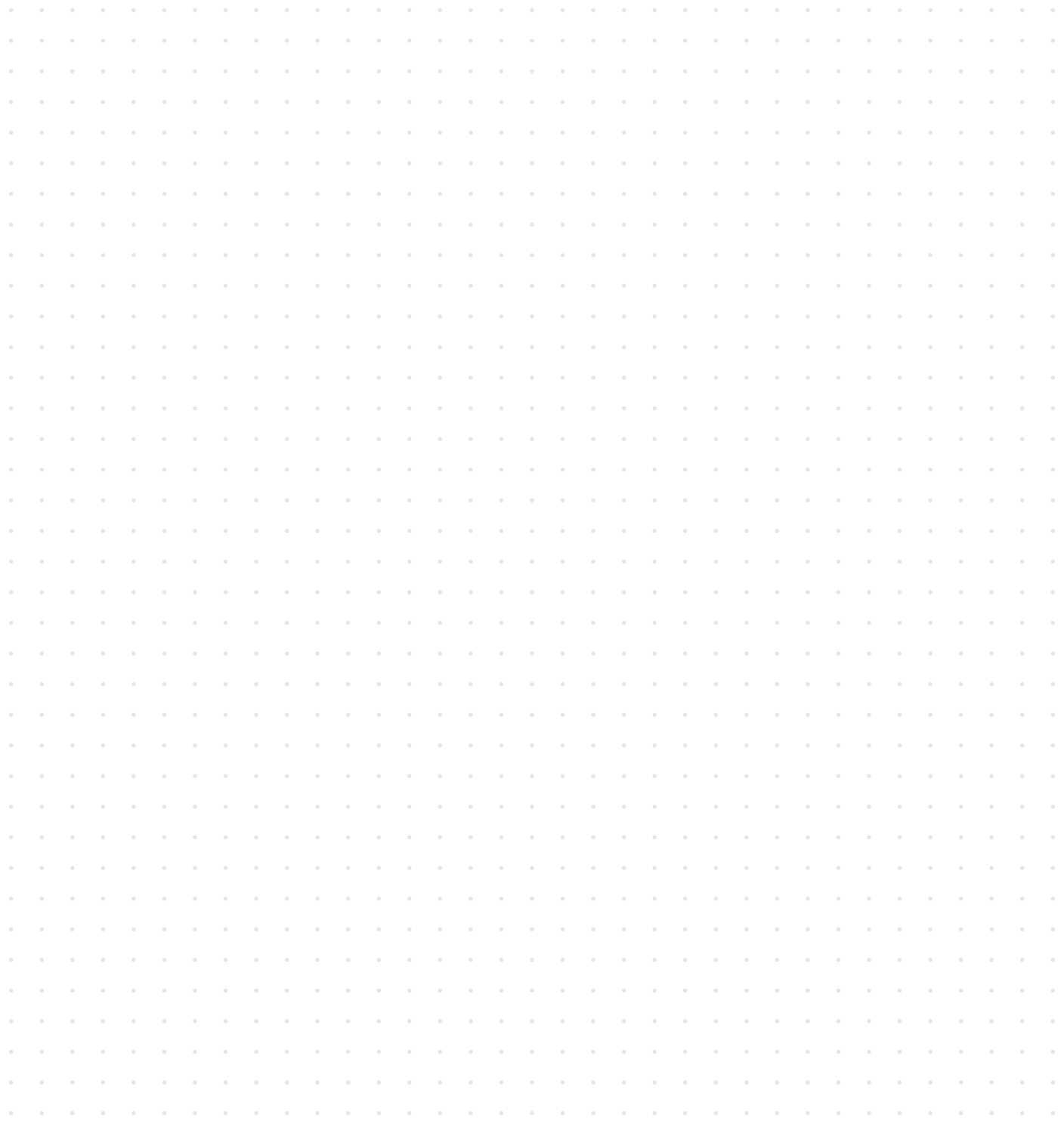
ber that you keep holy the Sabbath day.” The Jews kept holy the Sabbath in memory of the first creation; but Christ at His coming brought about a new creation. For by the first creation an earthly man was created, and by the second a heavenly man was formed: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision is worth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature” (Gal 6:15). This new creation is through grace, which came by the Resurrection: “That as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, so shall we also be in the likeness of His resurrection” (Rom 6:4-5). And thus, because the Resurrection took place on Sunday, we celebrate that day, even as the Jews observed the Sabbath on account of the first creation.

THOMAS AQUINAS (1225-1274)

Notes

Day 5 – Sermon Notes

A large grid of small dots, arranged in approximately 30 rows and 40 columns, intended for taking notes. The dots are light gray and spaced evenly across the page.



- 57 The Fifth Commandment
Exodus 20:12
- 58 *The Call to Honor Your Parents Is Far-reaching*
Zach Krych
- 60 Reflection
- 63 Insight from Church History
- 64 Sermon Notes

Week Five



The Fifth Commandment

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

EXODUS 20:12

The Call to Honor Your Parents Is Far-reaching

Zach Krych

The fifth commandment in Exodus 20: “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.” This command is far-reaching and has many implications. It directly affects at least three groups of people in unique and profound ways:

1. Kids
2. Adult children
3. Parents

We have all been in one of these roles in some capacity. Some of us are currently in more than one role. Let’s examine each.

Kids

Children living under the rule of their parents are usually who come to mind with the command to “Honor your father and your mother.” We’ve all seen the 5-year-old in the grocery store defiantly yelling, “No!” at their parents. The indignation we feel at this sight is a

good reflex, for it is witness to this specific law of God written on our hearts. The child is disobeying his parents, and we naturally sense he is doing more than disobeying them; he is dishonoring them. For as long as they are part of their parents’ household, children show honor mainly through obedience.

The Apostle Paul makes this connection in Ephesians 6, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise) “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” Paul links honoring with obedience, because this obedience is honorable in God’s sight.

Many of us at Cities Church tell our children, “Obedience means to obey all the way, right away, with a happy heart.” We say this because this is how we are to obey our Lord: All the way, right away, and with a happy heart. This obedience recognizes God’s authority over us and honors him, halting his name. Our homes are little

training grounds for kids to learn this kind of obedience. The way kids obey parents is the way they will also obey God. If a child’s obedience is based on fear or manipulation, this will be how they will obey God. God wants children who love to obey.

Do not forget, God gave this command after the fall, when every father and mother was already a sinner. He knew there would be no perfectly honorable parents, yet he still commands children to honor their parents, because there is more at stake than just the feelings of the parents. God wants to raise up people who trust him, respect his order, and honor his ultimate authority. Children honor God when they obey their parents.

However, there are exceptions to this command of obedience. In Matthew 10:35–37, Jesus says, “I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother...Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.” Obedience to parents is not ultimate. Obedience and

allegiance to Jesus Christ is ultimate. Kids should never obey their parents if it means sinning. But after God, a child's next authority is their parents. It's not the state, not the school, not even the church. Parents are next in line to receive the honor of obedience.

Adult Children

"Honor your father and your mother." It's not something that we do for 18 years and graduate from when we get our "adult card." We never graduate from commandments of God; we grow up into them. After little boys grow up to become men, they are designed by God to leave their father and mother and cling to their wife, with two becoming one flesh. Little boys and little girls show honor through obedience, but adult men and adult women no longer show honor to their father and mother primarily through obedience. The form of the honor changes, but the honor always remains. It now looks like showing respect, speaking well of them, listening to their advice, etc., as well as caring for their needs. Honoring shifts from obedience to respect and care. In many ways our culture has outsourced the caring of our parents to the state or private market, which means we have outsourced honoring our parents. But the Bible is clear that the responsibility to care for parents falls on the child, because this care is a form of honor.

HONOR WIDOWS WHO ARE TRULY WIDOWS. BUT IF A WIDOW HAS CHILDREN OR GRANDCHILDREN, LET THEM FIRST LEARN TO SHOW

GODLINESS TO THEIR OWN HOUSEHOLD AND TO MAKE SOME RETURN TO THEIR PARENTS, FOR THIS IS PLEASING IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.

1 TIMOTHY 5:3

So, children making a return to their parents and providing for them is a means of honoring them, and it is pleasing to God. We also see Jesus' harsh words to those who would neglect their duty to care for their parents.

AND HE SAID TO THEM, "YOU HAVE A FINE WAY OF REJECTING THE COMMANDMENT OF GOD IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH YOUR TRADITION! FOR MOSES SAID, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER'; AND, 'WHOEVER REVILES FATHER OR MOTHER MUST SURELY DIE.' BUT YOU SAY, 'IF A MAN TELLS HIS FATHER OR HIS MOTHER, "WHATEVER YOU WOULD HAVE GAINED FROM ME IS CORBAN" (THAT IS, GIVEN TO GOD)—THEN YOU NO LONGER PERMIT HIM TO DO ANYTHING FOR HIS FATHER OR MOTHER, THUS MAKING VOID THE WORD OF GOD BY YOUR TRADITION THAT YOU HAVE HANDED DOWN. AND MANY SUCH THINGS YOU DO."

MARK 7:9-13

God doesn't want your money if means your parents are in poverty, for that would be a violation of the commandments. God did not command the government or the nursing home or the pension plan or the 401(k) to honor your parents by caring for them—God commanded you. Our society sees

caring for our parents as an optional responsibility, but this is a new phenomenon in human history, and we are just beginning to see the tragic effects. Our failure to honor our parents is one of the reasons that our land is in the mess it is in, for this is the first commandment with a promise: "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."

Parents

Whether we like it or not, parents teach children what God is like by providing their own examples. Parents show children what authority and obedience feel like. And it is the parents' duty to do everything they can to have their children experience good, godly authority and obedience, so they will be able to spot counterfeits a mile away. God's command for children to honor their parents makes it the parents' responsibility to do everything they can to help their children obey God. This means that the parents should be honorable. If they are dishonorable, it will be a burden for their children to honor them, and the kids will have a hard time believing there can be such a thing as joyful, happy, healthy obedience. Dishonorable parents make it hard for kids to obey God's command. Selfish, untrustworthy, angry, manipulative, dishonorable parents make it easy for their children to sin. Remember Christ's sobering words in Luke 12:2, "It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin."

Day 1 – Ephesians 6:1-4

- 1 Read Ephesians 6:1-4. The commandment tells us to honor our father and mother. What is one way this passage tells us we can honor them?
- 2 What does it mean that this commandment comes with a promise? How does honoring our parents affect our lives?
- 3 Fathers are told not to stir up anger in their children, but to raise them in the instruction of the Lord. How can parents lovingly help their children learn to obey the commandment?

Day 2 – John 5:19-23

- 1 Read John 5:19-23. This passage gives us insight into the relationship with God the Father and God the Son. What do we learn about the way the Father and Son interact with one another?
- 2 The relationship between Jesus and the Father can give us an example of what it means to love and honor our own parents. What can we learn from this passage about our relationships with our parents and children?
- 3 We are all inclined to imitate our parents. We learn from this passage that the inclination is not necessarily a bad thing. What does this tell us about the importance of setting a good example for our children? How can we be more godly in our attitudes and actions in our home?

Day 3 – Proverbs 30:17

- 1 Read Proverbs 30:17. What does it mean to ridicule your parents? How can we show that we value their instruction?
- 2 What does it mean to despise obedience to your parents? How can we have joy in obeying and honoring our father and mother?
- 3 How can we help our children learn to walk in obedience both to their parents and to the Lord? What obstacles make it hard for them to obey us? What can we do to show them the importance of heeding the instruction of their parents?

Day 4 – Insight from Church History

The first work is that we honor our own father and mother. And this honor consists not only in respectful demeanor, but in this: that we obey them, look up to, esteem and heed their words and example, accept what they say, keep silent and endure their treatment of us, so long as it is not contrary to the first three Commandments; in addition, when they need it, that we provide them with food, clothing and shelter. For not for nothing has He said: "Thou shalt honor them"; He does not say: "Thou shalt love them," although this also must be done. But honor is higher than mere love and includes a certain fear, which unites with love, and causes a man to fear offending them more than he fears the

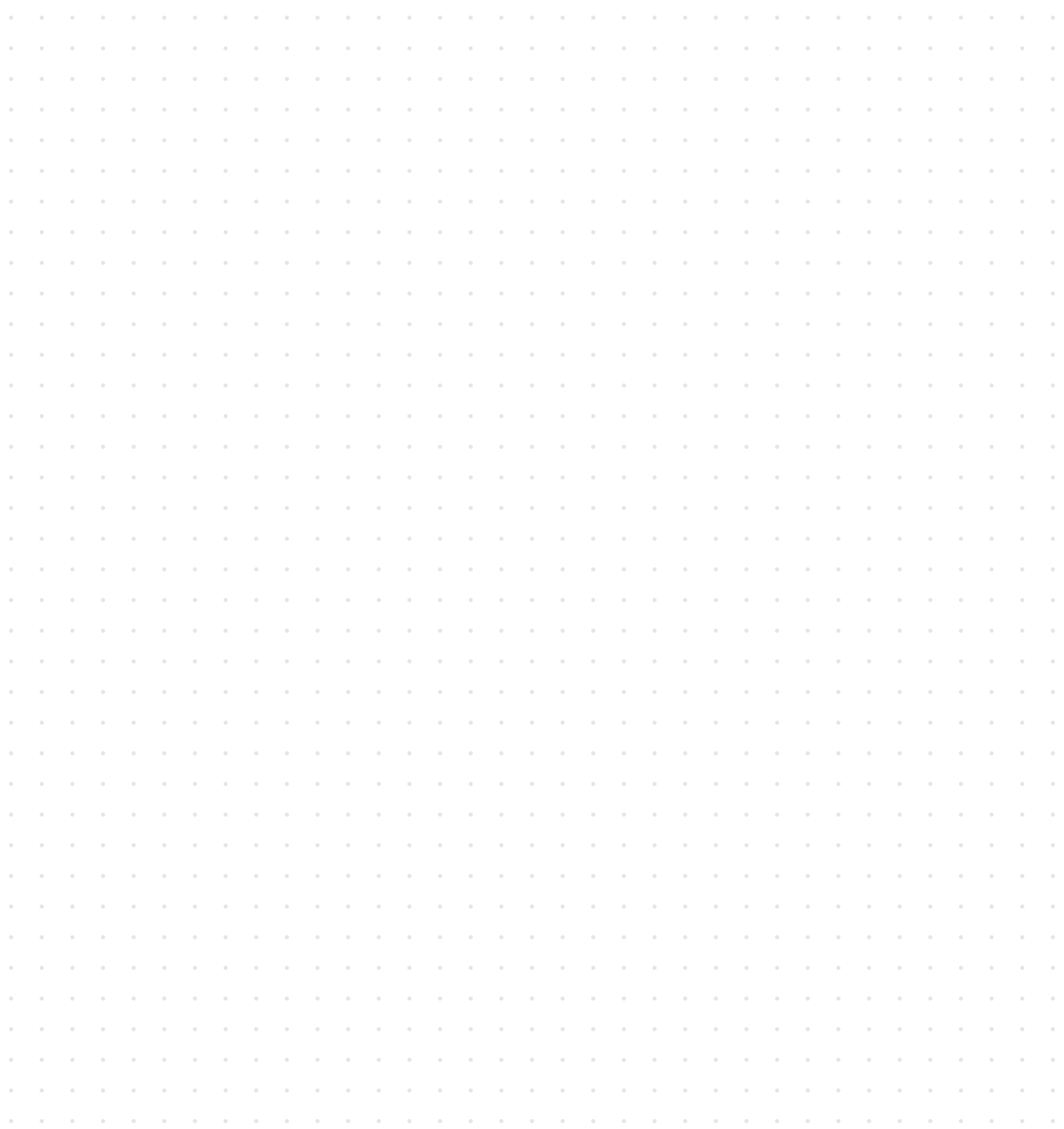
punishment. Just as there is fear in the honor we pay a sanctuary, and yet we do not flee from it as from a punishment, but draw near to it all the more. Such a fear mingled with love is the true honor; the other fear without any love is that which we have toward things which we despise or flee from, as we fear the hangman or punishment. There is no honor in that, for it is a fear without all love, nay, fear that has with it hatred and enmity. Of this we have a proverb of St. Jerome: What we fear, that we also hate. With such a fear God does not wish to be feared or honored, nor to have us honor our parents; but with the first, which is mingled with love and confidence.

MARTIN LUTHER (1483-1546)

Notes

Day 5 – Sermon Notes

A large grid of small dots for taking notes, consisting of 20 columns and 30 rows of dots.



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Exodus 20:13
- 68 *Do Not Murder*
Will McKenzie
- 70 Reflection
- 73 Insight from Church History
- 74 Sermon Notes

Week Six

VI.

The Sixth Commandment

You shall not murder.

EXODUS 20:13

Do Not Murder

Will McKenzie

This command is simple and practical. It's obvious why God would command people not to murder. But does this seem particularly relevant for our church today? Most humans never murder anyone, so I think many Christians assume that this isn't all that relevant to us—at least not directly. By taking a deeper look into how this prohibition of murder might be more relevant than we imagine, I hope to encourage you towards love (Lord willing).

I think it's fair to assume that most of us are not tempted to murder. Author Eugene Peterson helps to sharpen the point of this command in this way, "Life is sacred and inviolable. Not just my life but your life. We do not simplify our lives by getting rid of other lives no matter how inconvenient or disgusting or impossible they seem to us."¹ In other words, we are not to remove others from our life for the sake of our own convenience.

In his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul makes clear that the com-

mandments are chiefly about prohibiting perversions in the hearts of men. "For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, *You shall not murder*, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Romans 13:9 ESV, emphasis added). The command to not murder is not merely a command to not kill someone, but also a prohibition on valuing your own life over that of another.

You may not be tempted to murder, but have you ever excluded or avoided someone? I have. Have you ever spoken a harsh word out of anger to someone? I have. Have you ever neglected someone in need because it would be inconve-

nient for you to help them? Yes, I have done that as well, and I'm sure I'm not the only one. We do these things because we love ourselves more than our neighbors. This is not how we are to live in light of the sixth commandment. We ought to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. But as I survey my own life, I see myself frequently failing to love my neighbor. I'm sure some of you feel the same way. What then are we to do? We are to look to Christ's love and patience and, by his grace, we follow suit.

Christ, who was perfectly happy in communion within the Trinity in eternity, entered into creation. We did not deserve grace: we were self-loving and sinful creatures. "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with

The command to not murder is not merely a command to not kill someone, but also a prohibition on valuing your own life over that of another.

which he loved us” (Ephesians 2:4 ESV), laid down his life that we might live in him. Christ did not leave us to save ourselves; instead he loved us. For the sake of our good and his glory, he humbled himself.

Also noteworthy is our Lord’s patience with us. We often get frustrated with others when they are not living up to our standards. We get frustrated with those who are not moving with haste or growing in faith as fast as we wish they would. It is easy to forget how slow we ourselves have progressed in our heavenward pilgrimage. Remember, our Lord is not impatient with us. Instead, he helps us on our way, through all our highs and lows. He is our comforter, keeper, and dearest friend. His patience is unrivaled. His giving-of-himself type of love is beyond anything we could ever earn in our own efforts; but let us strive to imitate him!

Instead of excluding, let us seek out others to bring in. Instead of a harsh word, let us show patience. Let us not get rid of other lives that inconvenience

us. Instead of murder, let us love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Let us love others as Christ has loved us!

¹ Eugene H. Peterson. *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 258.

Day 1 – Genesis 9:1-7

- 1 Read Genesis 9:1-7. What do the commands to be fruitful and multiply and to not murder fellow humans have in common in this passage? What does this tell us about the value of human life?
- 2 We are told that God placed much of creation under our authority. We also see that every creature that lives is good for food. Yet, murdering other humans is given a very strict sentence. Why do you think that is? What might this tell us about humanity?
- 3 The passage tells us not to shed human blood because humans are made in God's image. What does it mean to be made in God's image? What is the significance of killing an image-bearer?

Day 2 – Matthew 5:21-25

- 1 Read Matthew 5:21-25. What are the commands that Jesus gives in this passage?
- 2 Jesus explains that we can have the same heart that desires to murder without murdering. What does anger towards our brothers and sisters reveal about our own hearts?
- 3 What does it mean to have a godly heart? How can we apply Jesus' commands in this passage?

Day 3 – James 2:8-13

- 1 Read James 2:8-13. What does it mean to love your neighbor? Why is it impossible to love your neighbor and murder, even in your heart? What does the law of love tell us about how we should actually be toward our neighbor?
- 2 If we have broken one law, we are told that we are a lawbreaker. What does this mean? What does this tell us about our need for redemption?
- 3 What does it mean to speak and act as those who are judged by the law of freedom? What is the law of freedom? How can we apply this in our daily lives?

Day 4 – Insight from Church History

The fountain head of all forgiveness is God. The groundwork of all forgiveness is found in the unmerited love and mercy of God. By our attitude toward others we reveal how much we have made that love our own. God not only gave us the revelation of how he is able to forgive our sins, but he gave us an example of forgiveness in the Person of Christ. The Lord reinforced his own teaching about forgiveness by praying for the forgiveness of those who nailed him to the rugged Cross, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Jesus commanded us to forgive if we would be his followers. This is as much a commandment of God as any of the Ten Commandments. Jesus said, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. Let us re-emphasize the fact that forgiveness in attitude conditions our own for-

giveness, namely, that our attitude toward others reveals how much we have made the love and attitude of God our own. If a man reacts with unforgiveness after he professes to be saved by Christ, he reveals the true nature of his heart as hard and unregenerate, rather than tender and transformed. Though we are not saved by what we do, our actions will reveal the condition of our hearts. An unforgiving person is an unsaved person, or, at least, he is in a backslidden condition. There is a natural desire in men to inflict pain for pain, to exact an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But there is no place for this in the Christian life. The right to repay wrong belongs to God alone. If there is any retaliation to be taken by a believer it must be doing good for evil. The Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ not only means our forgiveness from sin through the grace of God, but demands our forgiveness of others.

HAROLD J. OCKENGA (1905-1985)

Notes

Day 5 – Sermon Notes

A large grid of small dots, arranged in approximately 30 rows and 40 columns, intended for taking notes. The dots are light gray and spaced evenly across the page.



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Exodus 20:14
- 78 *For Our Greatest Joy*
Austin Felber
- 80 Reflection
- 83 Insight from Church History
- 84 Sermon Notes

Week Seven

VII.

The Seventh Commandment

You shall not commit adultery.

EXODUS 20:14

For Our Greatest Joy

Austin Felber

The Lord mercifully and graciously holds his people fast as their God (Psalm 103:8). The seventh commandment allows us, as God’s church, to understand more about the Lord in our relationship to him as his bride. From Genesis 1–3 to Revelation 19–21, marriage is the dramatic enactment of the Lord’s relationship with his people on earth. Thus, as the Lord commands against adultery for his people, we are given a better understanding of how Yahweh gives marriage as the greatest display of the relationship between himself and his people.

Marriage — The Divine Display

Throughout the Bible, marriage represents, dramatically enacts, and foreshadows the unity of God and humankind, thus exemplifying the unity of heaven and earth. We are shown that the Lord initiates and enjoys a relationship with his people. “A man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one

flesh” (Gen 2:24; cf. Eph 5:31). This relationship is instituted by the Triune God, who is in himself a relational God. The one-in-many nature of the Lord in the persons of the Father, Son, and Spirit is on display in the two-in-one nature of his people when they are united in marriage.

The Apostle Paul writes on the Genesis of marriage, “This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church” (Eph 5:32). For Paul, followers of Christ are members of Jesus’s body, and they are married to him as one through faith (Eph 5:29–32).

riage on earth, until the quintessential relationship of the Lamb and his bride is made manifest through Christ at the coming of the new heavens and the new earth (2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1; cf. Rev 19:6–8). With this in mind, we can understand the greatness of the joy cultivated in the marriage between one man and one woman.

The Seventh Commandment — Our Greatest Joy

Adultery interrupts the exclusive relationship of marriage when people wrongly and willingly choose to par-

In Christ, all who believe in faith are united to him as one. Thus, choosing to love or enjoy something in place of Christ can also be considered adultery.

The earthly people of God are united to the heavenly Lord by grace. This is displayed through the act of human mar-

take in sexual relations with a person other than their wife or husband. This is not in agreement with how the Lord

designed covenant marriage, as it does not reflect his character. When the Lord commands, “You shall not commit adultery” (Ex 20:14), he is lovingly and rightfully directing his people to their greater source of joy. The sound, loving relationship between one man and one woman is the greatest reflection of the Lord’s relationship with his people. Therefore, this commandment is meant not only for people who are currently married, but it also applies to widows, singles, and children who may honor the commandment against adultery by remaining faithful to the Lord and relying on his direction alone as their rightful head and spiritual husband.

Marriage is instituted by God (Mk 10:9; Matt 19:4–6), honors God (Heb 13:4), and is a display of God in Christ (Eph 5:31–33). Though the commandment against adultery in Exodus 20 is straightforward and clear, its implications point beyond Old Testament Israel and their standards for human relationships. In Christ, all who believe

in faith are united to him as one. Thus, choosing to love or enjoy something in place of Christ can also be considered adultery. We may commit adultery by worshipping idols which will not satisfy our hearts. We may rely on our own strength or power to hold ourselves fast to the Lord, though we soon will fail and fall short of his glory (Isa 53:6; Rom 3:23). When we come up short in our attempts to faithfully adhere to Christ in this spiritual marriage, we must humble ourselves by casting our anxieties upon him who cares for us (1 Pet 5:7).

As our rightful head, Jesus Christ leads us and declares us as righteous before him in love. For us to choose anything other than our loving God is to choose a lesser, unsatisfying joy. To choose a lesser joy is to be adulterous. However, by glorifying God each day, by remaining faithful to him, and by remaining faithful to the spouse that the Lord has given us, we enjoy him most. God is our greatest joy. The commandment against adultery in Exodus 20 is for our greatest joy.

Day 1 – Hebrews 13:4

- 1 Read Hebrews 13:4. What do you think it means to honor marriage?
- 2 Other than committing adultery, in what ways can marriage be dishonored? How does this verse teach us to think about marriage?
- 3 What biblical examples do we have of the importance of fleeing this sort of temptation?

Day 2 – 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

- 1 Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. In what ways does this passage urge us to live a God-centered life?
- 2 What might it mean that sexual immorality is not only a sin against God, but also against one's own body?
- 3 The passage says that we were bought with a price, referring to the crucifixion of Jesus. How does the humility and sacrifice of Christ affect our struggle against all kinds of sin?

Day 3 – Matthew 5:27-30

- 1 Read Matthew 5:27-30. What does Jesus tell us about lust? How do lust and adultery relate to one another?
- 2 What does this passage teach us about sin? What does it teach us about the importance of fleeing from temptation?
- 3 What steps can we take to keep ourselves from temptation (See Matthew 6:13)?

Day 4 – Insight from Church History

The purport of this commandment is, that as God loves chastity and purity, we ought to guard against all uncleanness. The substance of the commandment therefore is, that we must not defile ourselves with any impurity or libidinous excess. To this corresponds the affirmative, that we must regulate every part of our conduct chastely and continently. The thing expressly forbidden is adultery, to which lust naturally tends, that its filthiness (being of a grosser and more palpable form, in as much as it casts a stain even on the body) may dispose us to abominate every form of lust. As the law under which man was created was not to lead a life of solitude,

but enjoy a help meet for him, and ever since he fell under the curse the necessity for this mode of life is increased; the Lord made the requisite provision for us in this respect by the institution of marriage, which, entered into under his authority, he has also sanctified with his blessing. Hence, it is evident, that any mode of cohabitation different from marriage is cursed in his sight, and that the conjugal relation was ordained as a necessary means of preventing us from giving way to unbridled lust. Let us beware, therefore, of yielding to indulgence, seeing we are assured that the curse of God lies on every man and woman cohabiting without marriage.

JOHN CALVIN (1509-1564)

Notes

Day 5 – Sermon Notes

A large grid of small dots for taking notes, consisting of 20 columns and 30 rows of dots.



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Week Eight

VIII.

The Eighth Commandment

You shall not steal.

EXODUS 20:15

Fighting A Heart of Stealing through the Promises of God

Matt Sundquist

Have you ever had something stolen from you? How did that make you feel? I recently returned from a trip to visit my wife's family in China. Her family are farmers and live in a rural area of Hunan province. When we arrived in November to see my wife's family, the rice harvest had just ended, and they had transitioned to other income streams until the next rice season. During this time of year, my parents-in-law raise chickens, ducks, and geese to supplement their income. To protect their livelihood, my father-in-law and his father-in-law sleep in a small tin hut every night near the field where they are raising the animals. They do this to fend off thieves that may try to steal their animals during the night.

While we were in China, some thieves were able to cut the power to the surveillance system, avoid the guard dogs, and steal some of the poultry without being caught. When we heard the news, I remember feeling so disgusted and disappointed that someone

would steal what my parents-in-law had worked so hard for. It was their livelihood! I was upset that they would take something that wasn't theirs instead of putting their own hands to good work. What I didn't see right away, and what has become more evident to me, is that I am just as much of a thief as those people who stole the chickens and geese from my parents-in-law. Even though I do not steal in that way, I am guilty of stealing in more subtle and hidden ways that I self-justify.

Ways We Steal

There are many forms of stealing. The most obvious situations are the physical theft of property, theft of someone's ideas, theft of someone's intellectual property, etc. There are also more subtle ways we can steal. Do any of these examples resonate with you?

- Taking office supplies from work for your personal use
- Slacking off at work

- Using company time to do something personal
- Stealing music, movies, software, etc.

I have definitely been tempted to steal in these ways at various points in my life. I've also been tempted to justify that it is okay—that it won't be a big deal if I slack off a little or check the news/personal emails while on the clock because I'm still getting my job done. That certainly doesn't align with the attitude I ought to have in working as if I am working for the Lord. These are the truths I need to call to mind when faced with these temptations.

In Ephesians, the Apostle Paul helps us understand what our heart attitude should be. "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need" (Ephesians 4:28). The heart of stealing is a heart of selfishness, but God calls us to do honest work

so that we can give to those in need. We are called to have a heart of generosity.

Are We Stealing from God?

Perhaps even more deceptive is a heart that steals from God. What does it look like to steal from our Lord? God has blessed us with talents and resources. He has entrusted us with the most precious gift—the gospel. He has ransomed our lives and has freely given us all things. Are there ways we are stealing from him?

Malachi 3 shows a very direct way that the people of Israel were robbing the Lord.

WILL MAN ROB GOD? YET YOU ARE ROBBING ME. BUT YOU SAY, ‘HOW HAVE WE ROBBED YOU?’ IN YOUR TITHES AND CONTRIBUTIONS. YOU ARE CURSED WITH A CURSE, FOR YOU ARE ROBBING ME, THE WHOLE NATION OF YOU. BRING THE FULL TITHE INTO THE STOREHOUSE, THAT THERE MAY BE FOOD IN MY HOUSE. AND THEREBY PUT ME TO THE TEST,

SAYS THE LORD OF HOSTS, IF I WILL NOT OPEN THE WINDOWS OF HEAVEN FOR YOU AND POUR DOWN FOR YOU A BLESSING UNTIL THERE IS NO MORE NEED. I WILL REBUKE THE DEVOURER FOR YOU, SO THAT IT WILL NOT DESTROY THE FRUITS OF YOUR SOIL, AND YOUR VINE IN THE FIELD SHALL NOT FAIL TO BEAR, SAYS THE LORD OF HOSTS. THEN ALL NATIONS WILL CALL YOU BLESSED, FOR YOU WILL BE A LAND OF DELIGHT, SAYS THE LORD OF HOSTS.

MALACHI 3:6-12

Are we robbing God of what is rightfully his? He has generously given us so much abundance. But it is not ours. What we own, it is his. Do we give God our first fruits or do we give the government our first fruits in taxes and give God a portion of our after-tax pay? This is something that God convicted me of a few years ago, and I commend you to seek your own heart in this area and ask God to give you clarity on what his calling is for your giving. The heart of

stealing may take a few different forms – a heart that fears and steals for lack of provision, a heart of greed that loves money, a heart that doubts the promises of God.

God calls his people in Malachi not to steal from him, but instead obey his commandment, thereby asking them to trust that his promises are true and believe that he will provide for their every need. A heart of trust in God’s promises will kill the sin of stealing. I pray that my heart believes these promises. When I am tempted to take my finances into my own hands, I pray that I trust in God’s word and have a joyful heart of giving and generosity. This is my prayer for all of us.

Day 1 – Proverbs 11:1

- ① Read Proverbs 11:1. What principle is this proverb teaching us?
- ② What do honest scales have to do with theft? What do lying and stealing have to do with one another?
- ③ What does it mean that an accurate weight is the Lord's delight? Why does it delight him when we live righteously?

Day 2 – Proverbs 30:7-9

- 1 Read Proverbs 30:7-9. How can we avoid sin in both wealth and poverty? What does this passage teach us to avoid when wealthy or poor?
- 2 What does the Bible tell us about wealth (See 1 Timothy 6:6-10)? What does it tell us about worrying about our needs (See Matthew 6:25-34)?
- 3 What might it mean to profane the name of God? How does stealing profane his name?

Day 3 – Ephesians 4:25-30

- 1 Read Ephesians 4:25-30. What do the commands listed have in common?
- 2 What does it mean to steal? What are some common situations where we might be tempted to steal?
- 3 We are commanded to do honest work with our own hands. Why does the passage tell us this? How should we use the benefits of our labor?

Day 4 – Insight from Church History

In the last book of the Old Testament, God spoke through the prophet Malachi. He raised a provocative question: “Will man rob God?” How could anybody rob God of anything? Yet God gives answer to this question immediately dispelling any absurdity connected with it. He explains pointedly how indeed it is possible for human creatures to be guilty of theft against God. He answers his question, “Will man rob God?” saying, “Yet you are robbing me.” The Israelite response is: “How have we robbed you?” To which God replies, “In your tithes and contributions” (3:8). Recently, I read an article that gave an astonishing statistic that I find difficult to believe is accurate. It declared that of all of the people in America who identify as evangelical Christians, only four percent of them return a tithe to God. If that statistic is accu-

rate, it means that ninety-six percent of professing evangelical Christians regularly, systematically, habitually, and impenitently rob God of what belongs to Him. One of the sad realities of failure to tithe is that in so doing not only are we guilty of robbing God, but we also rob ourselves of the joy of giving and of the blessings that follow from it. I have yet to meet a person who tithes who has expressed to me regret for being one who tithes. On the contrary, I hear from them not a sense of judgment towards those who don’t give but rather a sense of compassion toward them. Frequently, I hear tithers saying, “People who don’t tithe just don’t know what they’re missing.” It is a cliché and a truism that you can’t out-give God. That statement has become a cliché because it is so true.

R.C. Sproul (1939-2017)

Notes

Day 5 – Sermon Notes

A large grid of small dots for taking notes, consisting of 20 columns and 30 rows of dots.



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Week Nine

IX.

The Ninth Commandment

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

EXODUS 20:16

Fighting the Sinful Instincts

Hank Andre

The ninth commandment has the potential to seem sort of odd when compared to the others. The other commandments seem to directly deal with how we relate to God and to one another in everyday life. However, the ninth commandment implies a court setting. Being a witness in a court of law isn't something we expect to be each day. Maybe that's why it's easy to misunderstand the importance of this command—or to flat out ignore it.

Also, it's very tempting to think this command is not that 'big-a-deal.' After having read about adultery, stealing, and murder, lying feels small. Many of us would be inclined to minimize the ninth commandment in Exodus 20. This minimization does us a disservice. We must fight that instinct, the instinct to neglect or minimize this command. This command deserves and demands the same treatment as any other command of God.

The Apostle Paul reminds us that the law has spiritual significance in

God's eyes. In his letter to the Romans he says, "All who sin without the law will also perish without the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For the hearers of the law are not righteous before God, but the doers of the law will be justified" (Romans 2:12-13 ESV).

There is something far more profound in the ninth commandment than a mere directive to not lie in court against one's neighbor. As witnesses to the character and personhood of God, and as bearers of his image, we become guilty of a crime ourselves when we lie; especially when we tell lies at the expense of another person.

Both Mark and Matthew chronicle the spectacle that took place at the home of Caiaphas the high priest. Jesus had been arrested and forced to endure a sham impromptu trial. The biblical authors paint a scene where the Sanhedrin, the council of Jewish elders, was trying to fabricate evidence against Jesus that would allow them to put him to death. Many people succumbed to

that sinful instinct—to bear false witness. There were several that evening that seemed very eager to please the council with their false testimony (cf. Matthew 26:59 ESV). Both Mark and Matthew's depictions are stark. Jesus has been abandoned by his disciples—his closest friends. He stands in front of a large group that is determined to find any reason whatsoever to put him to death, even a boldfaced lie. There is an entire group of people intent on seeing his blood spilled.

At that moment in time, doing the right thing (being associated with Jesus) was toxic. Admitting you had any dealing with him was literally life-threatening, or at best would amount to social suicide. Moments later, the Apostle Peter, Jesus's protégé, is asked if he had anything to do with Jesus. Peter immediately rejects the notion. Peter's instinct was to lie, to save himself. His instinct—which many of us share—was to bear false witness for some personal gain.

These passages show us that there are circumstances when external pressures make it potentially hazardous to tell the truth, both in and out of court. Perhaps the hazard is being fined. Maybe it means someone is angry with you or that you lose your social standing or followers. Maybe it means that people you love no longer want to have anything to do with you. Maybe it means going to jail. In extreme cases, maybe it means your life.

As witnesses to the character and personhood of God, and as bearers of his image, we become guilty of a crime ourselves when we lie, especially when we tell lies at the expense of another person.

Social media provides the clearest modern-day picture of this dynamic. In 2002, a fifteen-year-old boy videotaped himself pretending to be Darth Maul from *Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom*

Menace. Later, some other kids found the footage and posted it online where people repeatedly edited it in an effort to mock the boy. Overnight, the teenager went from simply a kid who liked Star Wars to the butt of a joke the entire world was laughing at.

We now live in a world of social capital and personal branding. A world where the number of followers you have can earn you nights in luxury hotels, the friendship of celebrities, clothing,

or nearly anything you can dream of. Those who have enough of this capital are called influencers. Influencers have the ability to affect the opinions of hundreds of thousands of individu-

als with a single post to their social media networks.

Who we are in the world of influencers is defined by the people, products, and groups that we associate with online. To be associated with someone who is considered a social pariah affects our standing in this online hierarchy. It hurts our personal brand.

That night in Caiaphas's courtyard, Peter saw that it was going to be costly for him to admit to knowing Jesus. When asked if he was one of Jesus's followers, Peter lied. Then he did it again. And, finally at the third mention that he might have anything to do with Christ, he began invoking a curse on himself.

This scene played out hundreds of years ago in a secret tribunal held against our savior, but it's a scene that repeats itself to this day. Day after day, online and off, we subject those around us to our standards and our approval. We join the trolls online, ridiculing people for not being liberal or conservative enough or for not saying what

we wanted them to. We mock people whose clothes, interests, or culture is different than ours. We appoint ourselves judge and jury of other people, asserting that we have the right and authority to proclaim judgement.

We forget who was sitting on the floor in Caiaphas's house that night, listening to the screams of those who found fellowship with one another as the taking of Jesus's life was demanded. We forget about the one who sweat blood at the thought of what he was about to endure under the Sanhedrin, followed by Pontius Pilate, and finally on a cross, all because he wouldn't forsake his relationship to his father. We forget the one who was stripped naked and who was mocked, beaten, rejected, and killed. We forget that the object of that vitriolic hate that night was the only righteous one in the room. We forget the cross and its condemnation of our judicious hearts. And we forget the blood that covered it for that very reason. We seemingly forget that Jesus's instincts were not to protect himself,

but to serve us, by laying down his life for us. Jesus's instincts are different than ours.

The instinct to violate the ninth commandment is alive and well, in the hearts and minds of humans—in your heart and in mine. This instinct has, perhaps, strengthened in our day because of the anonymity of social media and the internet. The instincts to slander someone for our own benefit is real—as is the temptation to protect ourselves at the costs of others' reputations or welfare. But we must resist those temptations. We must seek God's grace to fight those instincts.

When we are humiliated because someone else has slandered us, we have hope because Jesus suffered humiliation too. Jesus understands the pain of those moments and he comforts those who mourn. And when we are tempted to be the slanderers, like the Sanhedrin, we remember the cross. We must remember the pain Jesus suffered—in part because humans bore false witness against him.

We must remind ourselves that Jesus died for our sins. Jesus brutally suffered to purchase our forgiveness. Jesus now sits at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us. May we not continue to live in the sin that he died for. May we remember his sacrifice and seek his grace. May we honor him by fighting against the instincts to bear false witness.

Day 1 – Psalm 101:5-7

- 1 Read Psalm 101:5-7. What does it mean to slander your neighbor? What should we do when our neighbor truly sins against us?
- 2 How is slander related to haughtiness and arrogance?
- 3 What is integrity? What might it be to live in the way of integrity mentioned in verse 6?

Day 2 – Romans 13:8-10

- 1 Read Romans 13:8-10. What does it mean not to owe anyone anything? What is the passage teaching us?
- 2 What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself? How is it unloving to steal from your neighbor?
- 3 What does it mean that love is the fulfillment of the law? How can we each improve in our love for our neighbors?

Day 3 – James 4:11-12

- 1 Read James 4:11-12. What do you notice about the law in this passage? What does it mean to defame or judge a fellow believer?
- 2 How do these verses intend to humble us? Who is the highest authority, the lawgiver the passage mentions?
- 3 How can we edify one another with our words rather than speaking evil of one another? How can we care for one another's souls with our words?

Day 4 – Insight from Church History

“Thou shalt not bear false witness” forbids:
“1. Speaking falsely in any matter, lying, equivocating, and any way devising and designing to deceive our neighbor. 2. Speaking unjustly against our neighbor, to the prejudice of his reputation; and (which involves the guilty of both). 3. Bearing false witness against him, laying to his charge things that he knows not, either judicially, upon oath

(by which the third commandment, and the sixth and eighth, as well as this, are broken), or extrajudicially, in common converse, slandering, backbiting, tale-bearing, aggravating what is done amiss and making it worse than it is, and any way endeavoring to raise our own reputation upon the ruin of our neighbor’s.”

Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

Notes

Day 5 – Sermon Notes

A large grid of small dots for taking notes, consisting of 20 columns and 30 rows of dots.



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Exodus 20:17
- 110 *You Shall Not Covet*
Max Kozak
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Week Ten



The Tenth Commandment

You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.

EXODUS 20:17

You Shall Not Covet

Max Kozak

In Matthew 22, Jesus summarizes the heart of the law in two commandments: Love the Lord your God with all your heart/soul/mind and love your neighbor as yourself. I think this is a good framework with which to approach the tenth commandment. In Exodus we read: “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.” (Exodus 20:17).

Commandments against adultery (sleeping with your neighbor’s wife) and stealing (taking your neighbor’s stuff) and then follows it up with a commandment against the very desires behind those sins. At first glance, it almost seems redundant as God takes the heart of commandments seven and eight, and seeks to address these commands at a “heart” level. Yahweh is not merely concerned with Israel’s behavior, but he cares about Israel’s affections too. Why is this?

try against God. A covetous heart replaces satisfaction and contentment in God with a desire for something that God forbids.

God Commands Our Affections and Holds Us Accountable for Our Desires

God starts and ends the ten commandments by addressing our affections. Why? Because he is the only rightful recipient of our desires and affections. And he is as jealous for our affections as a husband is jealous for the love of his wife. The reason we even have affections is so that we can direct them back to God! But we see as far back as the garden of Eden, Satan’s goal has been to intercept these affections. From the very first sin in the garden of Eden, covetousness started with a seed of discontentment. The idea that God is not enough is a void that Satan is more than happy to fill, be it with a fruit or your neighbor’s possessions, so long as it’s something other than God. In Colossians 3:5, the Apostle Paul tells us that

A covetous heart replaces satisfaction and contentment in God with a desire for something that God forbids.

The word translated as “covet” is in this case a generic word for desire. So, in a nutshell, you could paraphrase the tenth commandment as, “Don’t desire your neighbor’s wife and don’t desire your neighbor’s stuff.” I find it fascinating that God had just given Israel com-

Why does God care to address, not just our behavior, but our affections too? I believe that while the acts of stealing and adultery show the horizontal outworking of a heart that has no love for its neighbor, the desire that leads to them reveals a heart of idola-

covetousness is idolatry, and idolatry is anything that opposes or contends with God to be the object of our affections. Satan is always on the lookout for things to take that spot. He finds pleasure in arousing desires for anything that God says is off limits.

Fight Covetousness with Contentment in Jesus

God, I confess that I can all too easily become discontent and quick to look for idols to replace you as the objects of my affections. This is covetousness and idolatry, and you hate it. You are jealous for my affections and for my contentment in you. Please help me fight the subtle creep of covetousness in a world driven by “never enough.” Help me be like Paul and face every circumstance, both abundance and need, with contentment, knowing that you are enough. Help me believe that you really will supply my every need according to your riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Help me be content in your promise that you will never leave me nor for-

sake me. Help me fight covetousness by looking for my satisfaction in you, and in all your promises through Jesus.

Day 1 – Colossians 3:5

- ① Read Colossians 3:5. What does it mean to be greedy?
- ② How is greed idolatry? How can we glorify God with our desires?
- ③ In what ways are we tempted to be greedy in our own lives? How can we avoid greed in our hearts?

Day 2 – 1 Timothy 6:6-10

- 1 Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10. What does this passage teach us about wealth? Is it possible to love money without sinning?
- 2 What does it mean to be content? In this passage, where does our contentment come from?
- 3 How can we steward our resources well?

Day 3 – Philippians 3:15-21

- 1 Read Philippians 3:15-21. What does it mean to imitate those who set good examples?
- 2 Can desiring to imitate someone lead to covetousness? How can we obey both the command to follow the examples of our leaders and the command to not covet?
- 3 What does it mean to be focused on earthly things? How can we focus on heavenly things? How might this affect our desire to be jealous for earthly rewards?

Day 4 – Insight from Church History

The Thorn

I stood a mendicant of God before His royal throne
And begged Him for one priceless gift that I could call my own.
I took the gift from out His hand, but as I would depart
I cried, 'But Lord! this is a thorn! and it has pierced my heart.
This is a strange, a hurtful gift which Thou hast given me.'
He said, 'My child, I give good gifts and gave My best to thee.'
I took it home, and though at first the cruel thorn hurt sore,
As long years passed I learned at last to love it more and more.
I learned He never gives a thorn without this added grace:
He takes the thorn to pin aside the veil that hides His face.

—

Martha Snell Nicholson (1886-1957)

Notes

Day 5 – Sermon Notes

A large grid of small dots, arranged in approximately 30 rows and 40 columns, intended for taking notes. The dots are light gray and spaced evenly across the page.

