

The Ten Commitments, Part 5

The Lord gave the Ten Commandments to a people that He had just RESCUED out of slavery! The nation of Israel had **NO HISTORY BUT SLAVERY!** They were a family when they went into Egypt and now they were a nation, but they had never been FREE. They had no laws up until this point, because **YOU DON'T NEED LAW WHEN YOU ARE A SLAVE, YOU ONLY NEED LAW WHEN YOU ARE A FREE PEOPLE.**

The Ten Commandments were not given to see if Israel could establish a relationship with God – they already had one! They were not given to see if God would be their God – He already was!

GOD'S RULES ARE NOT A CONDITION OF RELATIONSHIP, THEY ARE CONFIRMATION OF RELATIONSHIP!

(RULES WITHOUT RELATIONSHIP ALWAYS RESULT IN REBELLION)

You will hardly ever meet a Christian who made a major lifestyle change because of guilt, but you will meet thousands of them who would tell you their own personal “Exodus story.” They were in bondage and couldn't get out ... but then God delivered them ... and they have made all of their lifestyle changes not out of GUILT, but out of GRATITUDE!

Commandment 1 – “Don't go to multiple gods for multiple needs; come to me for all of your needs!” (Make God the center of your everyday life.)

Commandment 2 – “Don't form anything with your hands that replaces me!” (Don't make God a “location” or make Him a “manageable size.”)

Commandment 3 – “Don't misuse my name!” (Don't use the name of God to accomplish something God has nothing to do with.)

Commandment 4 – Remember to take a day off every seven days and set it apart unto the Lord. (Trust God's provision, not your own.)

These aren't really COMMANDMENTS, they are COMMITMENTS!
(They answer “What is going to function as the God of your life?”)

When we do get these first four **commitments** in place, it becomes easier to keep the “**thou shalt not**” commandments – because we've already chosen to do what God thinks is best, not what we think is best!

The first four commandments teach me **how to think about God** (my life revolves around Him); the last six commandments teach me **how to treat others** (they are valuable to God, so they must be valuable to me).

The concept of placing every human being ON THE SAME LEVEL under God's law was ground-breaking at this point in human culture. The Ten Commandments taught that a Ruling King or Religious Leader had no special rights compared to everyone else in society. **In Israel, there would not be a person above the law who made the law!** Everyone had value. Everyone played by the same rules before God. No one could sidestep or circumvent God's law for their own gain. THERE WAS NO OTHER NATION IN THE ANCIENT WORLD ANYTHING LIKE THIS!

The Ten Commandments must have been divinely inspired, because there is no commandment that says “Thou shalt obey Moses!” ☺ Don't you think he would have liked to add that one? And don't you think he must have had that conversation with God a few times later on? ☺

This system of law was so unusual to the ancient world, and so uncomfortable for Israel, that eventually they asked God for a king (!).

1 Samuel 8:4-7 Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: **now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.** But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: **for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.**

God wanted Israel to be a witness to all the nations around them by proclaiming, “GOD IS OUR KING” – but they wouldn't do it.

Once they had a human king, Israel learned the lesson that all the other nations had learned – **MIGHT MAKES RIGHT.** Their king could do whatever he wanted to do, and they could do nothing about it!

From the time Israel rejected a THEOCRACY (rule by God) and became a MONARCHY (rule by a king), the idea of everyone being equal before the law became non-existent until 1776 when the United States became a DEMOCRACY (rule by the people). A democracy is better than a monarchy, but even this ideal is deficient when compared to a theocracy!

What God knew, and what we know instinctively, is that if I am the one making the laws then I will feel empowered to disobey my own laws. But when I understand that there is actually a Divine Lawgiver, that places me under an entirely different sense of accountability!

In history, where you see shocking human rights abuses you will typically find a culture that has no sense of Divine Law. The rulers have made the law, so they feel like they can live above the law and oppress others.

One of the critical issues in Canadian and US government is “how much power should the Supreme Court have to make laws?” And behind that question is this question – “Is there a Divine Source of Law or not?”

Think about your own family – where God has given a rule, everyone is accountable to it. But where a parent has made a rule, they feel at liberty to break their own law – simply because they are the parent!

THE VALUE OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS IS NOT SO MUCH THE LAWS THEMSELVES, BUT THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT THAT THERE IS A SUPREME LAWGIVER TO WHOM WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE!

At this point in the Ten Commandments, God changes gears ... from “HONOR ME” to “HONOR OTHERS” ... and He starts with PARENTS!

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

God said, “I put you in the land, and if you don’t honor your parents I will take you out of the land!” ☺ Did your mom ever say something like that?

God knew that there would be a tendency, once Israel got in their land, to forsake the heritage of faith that had been passed down by their parents.

HONOR YOUR PARENTS, THEN HONOR EVERYONE ELSE!

Exodus 20:13 Thou shalt not kill. **(honor their bodies)**

Exodus 20:14 Thou shalt not commit adultery. **(honor their marriages)**

Exodus 20:15 Thou shalt not steal. **(honor their possessions)**

Exodus 20:16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. **(honor their reputations)**

The last commandment is the INVISIBLE commandment, the unenforceable commandment, the commandment that had to do only with what was going on in the HEART.

Exodus 20:17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

COVET – to desire so strongly something that someone else has that it impacts the relationship (coveting leads to breaking the other commands)

You are not just accountable to God for what you DO, you are accountable to God for what you THINK. (and this is Old Testament!)

GOD: “I’m not trying to make you GOOD, I’m trying to keep you FREE!”