

SHINE BRIGHT

Ten days with the Ten Commandments



MR. MOODY ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

“If it were known that God Himself was going to speak once again to man, what eagerness and excitement there would be. For nearly nineteen hundred years He has been silent. No inspired message has been added to the Bible for nearly nineteen hundred years. How eagerly all men would listen if God should speak once more. Yet men forget that the Bible is God’s own Word, and that it is as truly His message to-day as when it was delivered of old. The law that was given at Sinai has lost none of its solemnity. Time cannot wear out its authority or the fact of its authorship.”

Dwight Moody, *Weighed and Wanting: Addresses on the Ten Commandments*





THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Why don't we steal? That was the question I posed to my twin daughters several years ago after they informed me that they had been studying the seventh commandment (Exod 20:15; Deut 5:19) in children's ministry. I'm not really sure what I was expecting, but when they reported that they had been told that we don't steal because it hurts other people, I found that reason lacking. To be sure stealing hurts other people. Yet, when we consider the Ten Commandments and what they were intended to convey to Israel and to us, it is difficult to set aside some sort of theological rationale for the prohibition against theft.

The Ten Commandments lay out a clear set of guidelines and prohibitions for the fledgling nation of Israel. Having previously lived under the rule of Pharaoh, Israel needed to learn how to live under a new King whose sovereignty, wisdom, and benevolence were unmatched. Whereas Pharaoh ruled with all the limitations, fears, and frailties of a mortal man, Yahweh's kingdom enjoyed the benefits of the limitless possibilities that come from serving a God who is not constrained by nature, time, or human politics. The Ten Commandments and the rest of God's instruction, or Torah, are more than guidelines that keep us from hurting others. They are the wisdom of God given to us so that we can reflect the glory of God to the world as we trust in the Lord and allow him to guide us along the path.



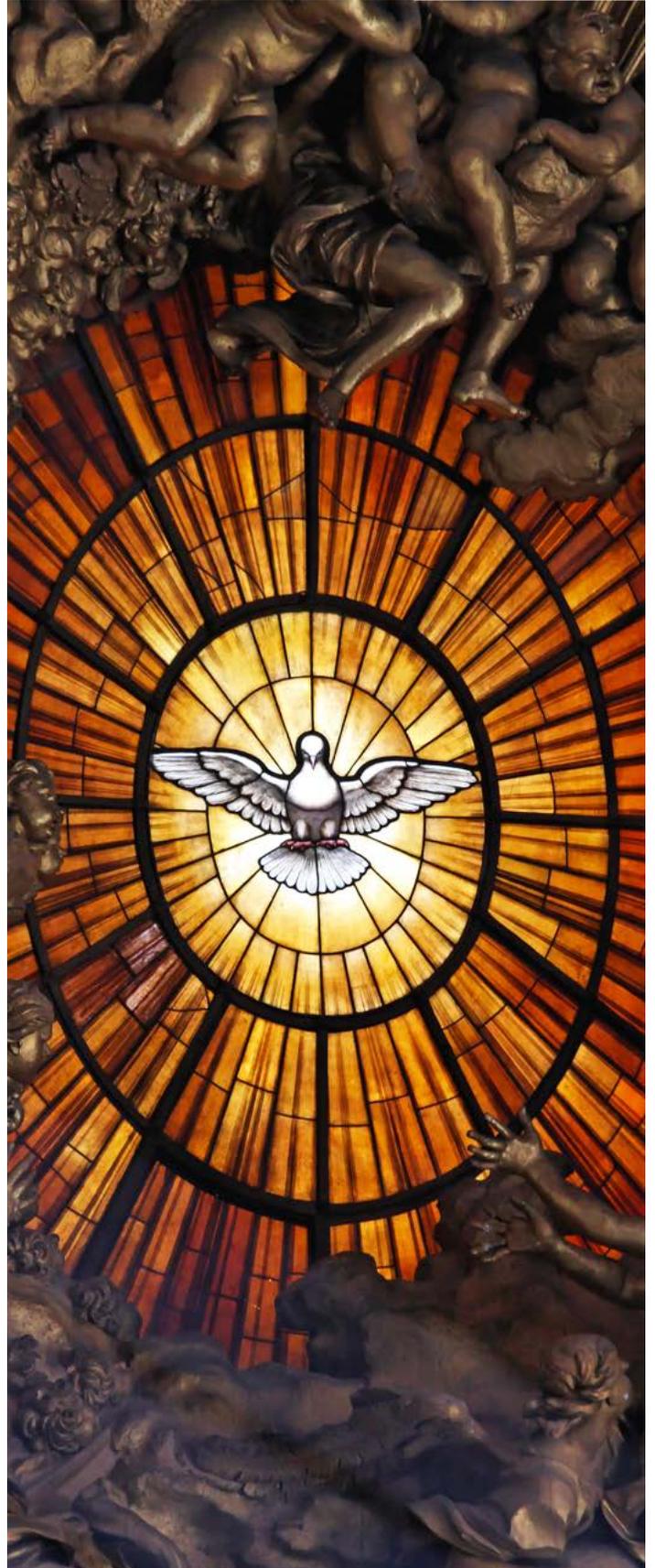
SHINE BRIGHT

When we read the Ten Commandments, we would do well to keep in mind the response Jesus offers to the Pharisees question in Matthew 22:

“But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ And he said to him, ‘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’” (Matt 22:34-40).

The greatest command concerns our unreserved commitment to God. We surrender all we are and have to him. The second concerns the love we show to our neighbors. The love of God and neighbor are bound together. To think of one without the other is, from a biblical perspective, simply impossible. To love God without loving neighbor is empty piety that can never be “religion that is pure and undefiled before God” (James 1:27). Conversely, to love one’s neighbor without loving God is a hollow morality that can never truly demonstrate love because it does not acknowledge God. Love of God and love of neighbor are bound together through the scriptures. As John writes, “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome” (1 Jn 5:2-3).

As you study the Ten Commandments, then, you are not simply memorizing a set of rules



SHINE BRIGHT

for living, but interacting with and reflecting upon the revelation of God to Israel and to us. These “ten words” remind us of the wisdom of obedience. They point to the freedom we now have in Christ whose sacrificial death and victorious resurrection redeemed us from slavery to sin and the flesh. As Paul writes, “For God had done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Rom 8:3-4). In the Ten Commandments, we see a vision of the life we are now capable of living in the Spirit. It is a life that is not consumed by “do’s and don’ts” but by an overwhelming love for God and neighbor.

A PRAYER TO PREPARE US AS WE STUDY YOUR WORD

Lord, as we approach your word, help us to do so not only with joy and delight but with a sober and serious mind that respects your instruction. May we lay aside all our distractions and concerns in order to sit at your feet, to listen to your voice, and to be in awe of your willingness to reveal yourself to us. Show us the ways we are not living as you desire and reshape our hearts so that we are prepared to honor you. We are grateful for your teaching and ask that you would help us not only to learn it but to put it into practice. Amen.



“You shall have no other gods before me.”

Exodus 20:3; Deut 5:7



THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

Perhaps the most foundational confession of Israelite belief may be found in Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone.” Known as the *shema* (“hear”), this passage reminds Israel that they have only one God. Because Yahweh alone is God, he is to have Israel’s complete and total loyalty. As such, Israel is commanded to pledge their unconditional and unrestricted allegiance to the Lord (Deut 6:4).

The first commandment reinforces this confession prohibiting Israel from having any other gods. In the context of the ancient Near East, it was not uncommon for people to look to many different gods to care for their various needs. Storm gods, fertility gods, family gods, national gods, and a host of others would have been available to the people of Israel. The first commandment reminds Israel that God does not need any help. Whatever specialties other ancient Near Eastern gods might be supposed to have, the God who Created the heavens and earth, who freed the Israelites from Egypt by defeating Pharaoh and all the gods of Egypt, and who sustained his people through the long wilderness journey needs no assistance.

By looking to other gods, Israel would misrepresent God. They would present a false picture of their Lord. Israel could not represent the Lord as the only God as they sought out the empty powers of other gods to meet their needs. God will not share glory. The first commandment is crucial to Israel’s testimony because getting it wrong means they



SHINE BRIGHT



will become incapable of keeping any of the others. Even if Israel were able to overcome the challenges of a broken world and to thrive as a nation despite political and military threat, they would not realize God's desire for them to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod 19:6).

As we consider this first commandment, we do so from a different context and perspective. While there are still several world religions (some of which have multiple gods), our challenge is often slightly different than Israel. The "gods" we seek out are less often supernatural, but no less deceptive.

In his book entitled *Graven Ideologies*, Bruce Ellis Benson suggests that we have fallen prey to "conceptual idolatry" which is "either the creation or adoption of a concept or idea that we take to be equivalent to God and thus worship as God." Whether it be a particular political philosophy, economic theory, business strategy, or conception of family, we stand within a new pantheon of gods vying for position on par with the

The first commandment is, in one sense, more than a prohibition against other gods. In so much as it expresses an underlying reality of how the world works, it reinforces the wisdom of obedience and futility of disobeying the law of God. Israel's world cannot be well-ordered when the Lord and his instruction are not given our absolute devotion. God demands our full and complete loyalty. He also demands that our portrayal of him be truthful. God is our life and length of days (Deut 30:20). Our Lord, Creator, and Savior is the one "who is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think, according to the power at work within us" (Eph 3:20). We have no need to worship anyone or anything else.

MR. MOODY ON THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

“You don’t have to go to heathen lands to-day to find false gods. America is full of them. Whatever you make most of is your god. Whatever you love more than God is your idol. Many a mans heart is like some Kaffirs’ huts, so full of idols that there is hardly room to turn around. Rich and poor, learned and unlearned, all classes of men and women are guilty of this sin... A man may make a god of himself, of a child, of a mother, of some precious gift that God has bestowed upon him. He may forget the Giver, and let his heart go out in adoration toward the gift. Many make a god of pleasure; that is what their hearts are set on. If some old Greek or Roman came to life again and saw men in a drunken debauch, would he believe that the worship of Bacchus had died out? If he saw the streets of our large cities filled with harlots, would he believe that the worship of Venus had ceased? Others take fashion as their god. They give their time and thought to dress. They fear what others will think of them. Do not let us flatter ourselves that all idolaters are in heathen countries. With many it is the god of money. We haven’t got through worshipping the golden calf yet. If a man will sell his principles for gold, isn’t he making it a god? If he trusts in his wealth to keep him from want and to supply his needs, are not riches his god?”

Dwight Moody, *Weighed and Wanting: Addresses on the Ten Commandments*



WHAT OTHER GODS?

In *Thinking Christian*, James Spencer asks the following question: “How is it that we have, in the midst of our agendas, strategies, moral outrage, and legitimate concerns, fashioned God into a deity of our own making so that He looks increasingly like us rather than us being transformed to look increasingly like Him?” When we put other gods before the Lord, we distort our understanding of him and are unable become who he desires us to become or to demonstrate who he truly is to a watching world.

1. How have we set the Lord aside as we seek to address the challenges of our time? Are there moments when we have diminished God by relying on other philosophies, governments, or tactics rather than relying on God?
2. When have we acknowledged other gods by giving them the glory and withholding it from the Lord? Do we speak as if God was not involved in our successes?
3. Do we still recognize God as unique, holy, and different or does God seem to look suspiciously like us? To what extent has our concept of God overshadowed who God really is?



“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...”

Exodus 20:4-5; Deut 5:8-9



THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

Speaking of Jesus, Paul writes, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (Col 1:15). In the incarnation, Jesus made God known. As John writes, “No one has ever seen God. The only one, himself God, who is in closest fellowship with the Father, has made God known” (John 1:18). In Jesus, we see God. The way Jesus moved and breathed in the world reflected God’s character and glory. Even the decision not to use his own position as God to his own advantage and, instead, to humble himself by becoming human demonstrates what it means for God to be God (Phil 2:5-11).

We are also made in the image of God (Gen 1:28). We were created to represent God and to be his vice regents over all creation. Our role was to embrace God’s wisdom and rule, to recognize that he directs our paths for our good, and to reflect his glory by setting aside whatever might make sense to us in order to obey God’s instruction. When we follow God’s wisdom and receive God’s blessings, he is magnified in our lives. Just as Christ acted in line with the Father (Jn 5:19) to showcase and glorify God, we also are to live in accordance with the obedience of faith (Rom 1:5; 16:26) so that we make much of God.

The images God has created are not made by human hands. He has made them. They alone are worthy of representing him. The idols and images that the second commandment prohibits are inaccurate, false replacements that cannot stand in



SHINE BRIGHT

for the images God has made. When we place an idol made with human hands between us and God, we shirk our duties as God's image and engage in a subtle attempt to domesticate and manipulate God. We assume that God will inhabit the work of our hands.

Yet, as Habakkuk makes clear, idols are empty and lifeless:

“What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it, Or an image, a teacher of falsehood? For its maker trusts in his own handiwork when he fashions speechless idols. Woe to him who says to a piece of wood, ‘Awake!’ To a mute stone, ‘Arise!’ And that is your teacher? Behold it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all inside it. But the Lord is in his holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him” (Hab 2:18-20).

Idols are not conduits for truth, but for falsehood. They are expressions of our own conception of God. They limit him by conforming him to us. God is not defined by human understanding. We do not determine God. We reflect him as we stand beneath his word and conform ourselves to “the image of His Son” (Rom 8:29).

The prohibition against the creation of idols is designed to keep us from empty worship. Idols do not simply misrepresent God, they draw us into falsehood and empty us of true spirituality. We become as hollow and lifeless as the idols we create.

As we consider idolatry, then, we would do well to consider more than just the construction of physical idols. We must take care that our understanding of God and the



SHINE BRIGHT

concepts that guide our activities in the world do not create a façade that keeps us from seeing the truth. In addition, we must take care not to identify God with the institutions we follow. We do not need to learn to whittle wood or carve rock to make an idol. We do so when whenever we allow God to be defined by anything other than his revelation to us.

Today, our idols are, in many respects, less recognizable as idols than the physical figures of ancient Israel. While we may not be able to hide them or steal them as Rachel did in Genesis 31:19 or worship them at constructed high places (1 Kgs 14:23), we bring different sorts of idols into God's temple. In many ways, they are idols on a grander scale. When we allow our own understandings of God to replace God as he truly is, we create an image that reflects God less and ourselves more.

MR. MOODY ON THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

“People have a desire for something tangible, something that they can see. It is so much easier to live in the sense than in the spirit. That is why there is a demand for ritualism. Some people are born Puritans; they want a simple form of worship. Others think they cannot get along without forms and ceremonies that appeal to the senses. And many a one whose heart is not sincere before God takes refuge in these forms, and eases his conscience by making an outward show of religion. The second commandment is to restrain this desire and tendency. God is grieved when we are untrue to Him. God is Love, and He is wounded when our affections are transferred to anything else. The penalty attached to this commandment teaches us that man has to reap what he sows, whether good or bad; and not only that, but his children have to reap with him. Notice that punishment is visited upon the children unto the third or the fourth generation, while mercy is shown unto thousands, or (as it is more correctly) unto the thousandth generation.”

Dwight Moody, *Weighed and Wanting: Addresses on the Ten Commandments*



A golden bull statue stands on a large, multi-tiered stone pedestal in a desert landscape. The background is a gradient of orange and blue, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The scene is dimly lit, with the golden bull being the most prominent feature.

AND YOUR NEXT AMERICAN IDOL IS...

We are easily tempted to understand God in a manner that will allow us to stay the same. We want to craft God in our own image and likeness. This tendency demands that we continually revisit God's word, accept wise counsel, learn from other members of Christ's body, and allow for the possibility that who we think God is may be incomplete.

1. Take an honest look at your life and understanding of God. Where might your potential idols be found?
2. In what areas of your life do you really want God to conform to who you are and what you think? Are there truths about God that you wish you could change?
3. What sort of idols do you see in the church today? How would you think through Paul's identification of idolatry with greed in Ephesians 5:5 and Colossians 3:5?



“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; Deut 5:11



THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

I recently served on a Grand Jury, and took note of the respect and seriousness shown to the judge, and all the proceedings. If you look up a list of rules related to ones conduct towards a judge in a courtroom, here's what you'd find. Make sure you are very polite to the judge. Always be standing when talking to the judge. Everyone must rise when the judge enters the room. Each of these rules points to fearing and respecting the authority of the judge. The judge in the court room is a unique individual with great authority.

Now let's consider what the scriptures say about God. Psalm 75:6-7 reads "For exaltation comes neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the Judge: He puts down one, and exalts another." Jesus said of Himself, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven, and on earth." Far above the most powerful courts on earth, is the Almighty courtroom of God as Judge, who has ultimate authority. Psalm 33:8 says, "Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the earth stand in awe of Him." Because God is who He is, He should be feared, and being far above the authority of any earthly judge, He should be spoken to, and about, with the greatest of respect.

With that understanding about our Creator, the third law of the Ten Commandments makes perfect sense. Exodus 20:7 reads "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." The word take can be translated misuse. The word vain means empty or thoughtless. This



SHINE BRIGHT

command is calling for the LORD God's name to not be misused in an empty or thoughtless manner. The command goes on to say that those who do use His name in vain, God will hold them guilty of this sin. God's name is misused vainly when someone, for example, in a rage, uses one or more of His names as a form of cursing. Misuse of His name happens when someone uses it to express surprise. Texting OMG is the abbreviated version of that type of misuse. Someone could recite prayers that include the Lord's name, but just like the previous examples, the person saying His name, is not speaking directly to God, but merely quoting His name in a vain impersonal manner. In light of who God is, to use His name in such meaningless ways, is an offense to Him, as well as to those who love and honor Him.

I believe there's another reason to not take our Lord's name in vain, namely, because of what He's done for us. Imagine being in a room, and next door there's a group of people to whom you've done a tremendous amount of good, providing food, shelter, and clothing when they had none. Basically you saved their lives. Imagine overhearing their conversation, speaking cheaply and thoughtlessly about you, and your name getting unjustly dragged through the mud. That would break your heart, wouldn't it? God provides and maintains the very breath of life you and I are breathing at this moment, giving to us, every good thing this earth affords. He also poured out perfect sacrificial love toward us through the death of His Son on the cross for our sins. This eternal unmatched love for you and I is deserving of our loving respect in return, isn't it? Such love being lavished on us is cause for honoring and exalting His name, not using it flippantly or casually. Scripture



SHINE BRIGHT

reveals that one day every knee shall bow at the very name of Jesus, and confess that He is Lord. Scriptures also declare that there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. Like a fine cherished vase, the Lord's name should be treasured and held carefully in our hearts, proudly and respectfully displayed from our lips, for those around us to hear and admire.

MR. MOODY ON THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

“When God said, “I will not hold him guiltless that takes My name in vain,” He meant what He said, and I don’t believe any one can be a true child of God who takes the name of God in vain. What is the grace of God for, if it is not to give me control of my temper so that I shall not lose control and bring down the curse of God upon myself? When a man is born of God, God takes the “swear” out of him. Make the fountain good, and the stream will be good. Let the heart be right; then the language will be right; the whole life will be right. But no man can serve God and keep His law until he is born of God. There we see the necessity of the new birth.”

Dwight Moody, *Weighed and Wanting: Addresses on the Ten Commandments*



NOT IN VAIN

Dear Father in heaven, who's name is hallowed in my heart. I know I live in a world where Your holy name is often used in all kinds of dreadful ways. I pray Father that you would anoint my lips to always be full of Your grace and seasoned with salt towards those around me who do not know you, and at times, even despise you. Father, as You are worthy of all honor and glory, and blessing, may the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my Strength and my Redeemer. Amen.



“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; Deut 5:12-15



THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

Unceasing labor characterized the lives of Israel under the Pharaoh who knew not Joseph (Exod 1:8). When Pharaoh looked out upon the Israelites, he saw did not see a people through whom he and his nation might experience blessing, but as a threat that needed to be neutralized in order to preserve Egypt. Having not witnessed or been made aware of the great blessings Joseph brought to the nation of Egypt, this new Pharaoh found himself standing against Israel and, more importantly, against Israel's God.

When God brought Israel out of slavery, he did not intend for them to become the next Egypt. As James Spencer suggests in *Trajectories: A Gospel-Centered Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, God's redemption of Israel from Egypt

"...was not intended to bring about a reversal of power relations, but a fundamental change in the system of governance. Pharaoh's economy required labor and precluded the worship of the Lord. Once they were delivered, however, Israel was brought under the rule of the Lord. This new Sovereign is capable of providing for his people without their work. The call to practice complete rest on the Sabbath recalls that the power behind the Israelite economy is not found in the amount of labor accomplished, but in the provision of God."



SHINE BRIGHT

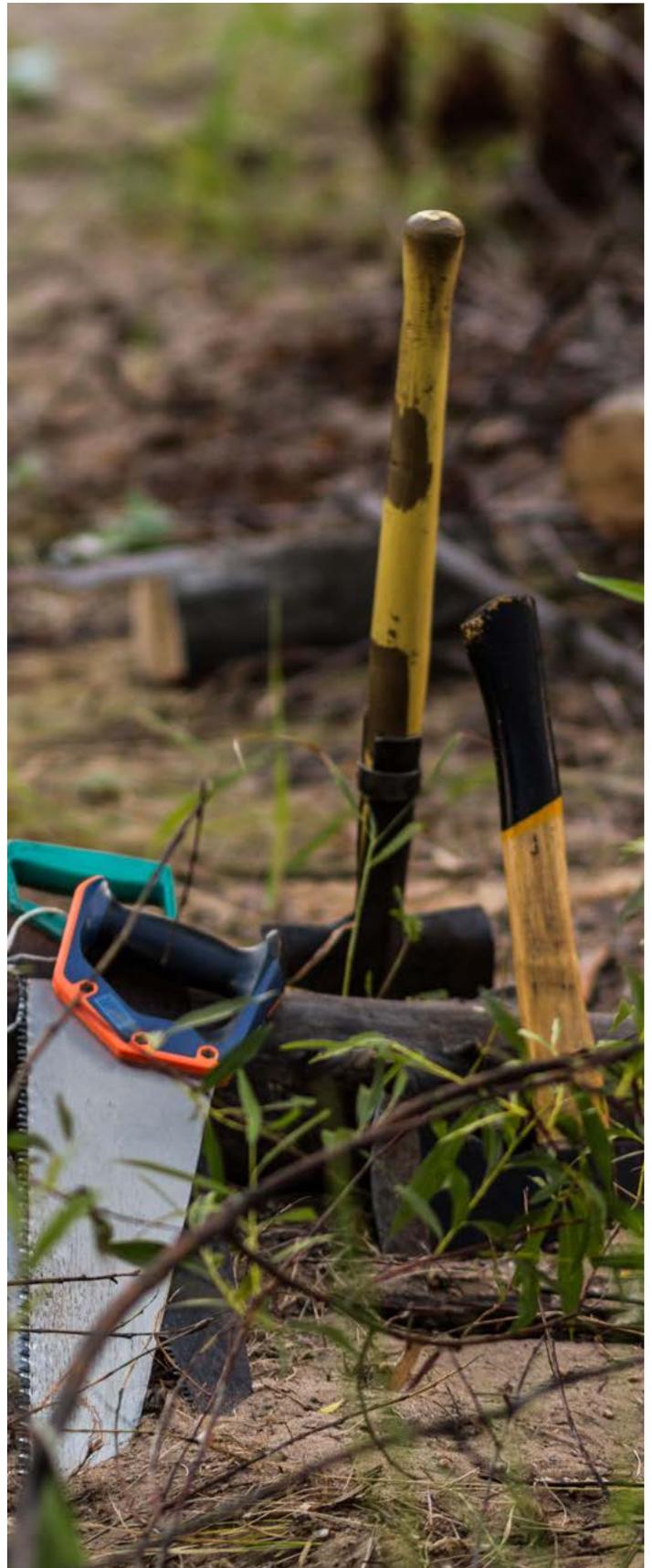
The command to keep Sabbath was given so that Israel could give visible expression to the power that fueled the nation's success. Unlike Egypt, Israel wasn't dependent on ceaseless labor to sustain the nation. Rather, to survive and thrive, Israel needed to walk according to the commands of God.

In keeping the Sabbath, Israel remembered that God brought them out from the land of Egypt (Deut 5:15). By remembering the exodus, Israel was not looking back with nostalgia, but enacting in the present what God had delivered them to be. Through Sabbath, Israel proclaimed that God was different from any other ruler on the planet.

When we consider the implications of the Sabbath command for God's people today, we would do well to remember what the Sabbath conveyed about God and what it was designed to reinforce in the people of God.

First, the Sabbath was to proclaim to the world that God's people serve a different kind of ruler. It demonstrated that the Lord was not subject to the constraints of the world as other rulers are. God is not dependent on natural or economic resources, nor is he bothered by the political maneuvering of the nations. As such, those who serve him are free to set aside the normal anxieties and, at every turn, to trust him. The Sabbath showcases our dependence on God rather than on worldly efforts and wealth.

Second, the Sabbath is to be a reminder that we exist as members of a new kingdom with a new ruler. Through rest, we offer more than our intellectual assent that God is in control. Through rest, we surrender ourselves to God. We trust him to provide because we honor him.



SHINE BRIGHT

As true as it may be that the human body needs rest, we should not lose sight of the fact that God is not primarily commanding Sabbath for our God. Sabbath is a radical activity that does not make sense to those who do not trust God. We don't Sabbath in order to regain our energy so that we can be more productive. We Sabbath to "keep holy" the day set apart by God. We do it as an expression of trust in the order God established in creation (Exod 20:9-11). We Sabbath as an act of worship that pulls back the curtain to reveal a simple reality: God reigns.

While we may not practice Sabbath in the exact way prescribed to the nation of Israel, we would be wise to consider how we will convey to the world just how God is different and remind ourselves that we are no longer dependent on the world's systems. Sabbath is not just a "state of mind." It is a concrete practice through which we recognize that our time and our productivity are of little consequence if we refuse to honor God.

MR. MOODY ON THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

“We want to-day men who will make up their minds to do what is right, and stand by it if the heavens tumble on their heads. What is to become of Christian Associations and Sunday Schools, of churches and Christian Endeavor Societies, if the Christian sabbath is given up to recreation, and made a holiday? Hasn't the time come to call a halt if men want power with God? Let men call you narrow and bigoted, but be man enough to stand by God's law, and you will have power and blessing. That is the kind of Christianity we want just now in this country. Any man can go with the crowd, but we want men who will go against the current.”

Dwight Moody, *Weighed and Wanting: Addresses on the Ten Commandments*

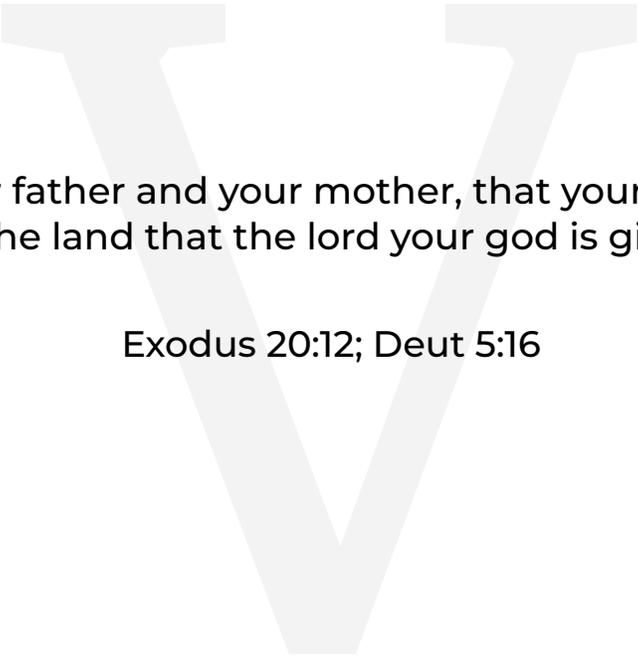


BEING ODD IN THE RIGHT WAYS

The Sabbath is one of those practices that have the potential to make Christians odd. Arguably Christians are often strange, but perhaps not strange in the right ways. In practicing Sabbath, we put ourselves in the hands of God. We set aside anything that might make it appear that we are still being productive in order to worship our Lord and Savior. To those who don't know God and don't have his resources to fall back on, setting aside productivity seems foolish. Yet, as we do so, we proclaim to the world and remind ourselves that we do not live on bread alone or the toil that produces it, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

1. How might you go about taking a Sabbath today?
2. What sort of obstacles hinder you from keeping Sabbath?
3. Consider what this commandment is intended to convey about who God is and what he did for Israel and has done for us. In what sort of practices do we engage to demonstrate the uniqueness of our God and the freedom we have to live differently in the world because of our union with Christ?





“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; Deut 5:16





THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

Growing up, my family was relatively small. I was an only child with only a handful of aunts and uncles that lived nearby. Despite having a rather large family on my father's side, geographic distance made it impractical to visit outside of summer vacations. My immediate family was not particularly dependent on my extended family. Sure, there were instances where people helped out but on a day-to-day basis, there was relatively little economic dependence.

Since becoming a father for the first time in 2005 and then again in 2009, it has been interesting to watch our family dynamics shift. My kids have been closer to their grandparents than I remember being. Both my parents and my in-laws make an effort to be a part of the kids' lives. Occasionally, I'll even hear one of my daughters on the phone chatting with my mom.

Beyond the kids, our parents have always been ready and willing to offer a helping hand. My wife and I are busy people. We both have demanding jobs and enjoy the work we do. Still, much of what we've been able to accomplish has been because our parents have been willing to help. We aren't economically dependent on them but we do appreciate their willingness to be around to drive the kids to practices, help with school, and do some chores around the house.



SHINE BRIGHT



The assistance our parents offer has given me a glimpse of the sort of role family played in ancient Israel. In Israel, families functioned in multiple realms of life. Economically, families were to steward specific distributions of land. They also educated the next generation, rallied together in times of war, and settled basic judicial cases.

Most importantly, however, the family performed a covenantal function. Part of the familial role was to ensure that the family's members understood the stipulations of the covenant and kept them. The family was the first line of defense against anything or anyone that threatened the covenant.

The covenant was crucial because “the Lord is your life and the length of your days” (Deut 30:20). Obedience was the cornerstone of Israel's life with God. As such, drastic measures were to be taken when parents were not honored. As Deuteronomy 21:18-21 underscores, “stubborn and rebellious” children who were unwilling to obey or to accept the discipline of their parents could not be allowed to carry the mantle of the covenant into the next generation.

As with the other commandments, we are wrong to boil down this commandment to nothing more than basic issues of politeness or respect. The command addresses a deeper notion of honor that is rooted in the assumption that fathers and mothers in Israel would be committed to teaching their children what it means to live in covenant with God.

To honor father and mother is not simply a call to be kind to one's parents. Instead, honoring one's father and mother involves embracing all that they have to say about

SHINE BRIGHT

being in covenant with God.

As we seek to apply this commandment, many of us may have parents who have not dedicated their lives to Christ. That does not mean we should not show them respect. It does mean, however, that our family of origin cannot be the place we turn to understand what it means to live in the presence of God. We must turn to the body of Christ to learn wisdom and to be made into disciples. Post-resurrection, God's people are not as dependent on biological succession and the family unit as was the case in ancient Israel. So, as lamentable as it is to have parents who do not know Christ, we are not alone. We can find others who are capable of playing the role parents were to play in ancient Israel.

We are no longer a family constituted solely by biology but by faith. As Paul notes, "Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham" (Gal 3:7). Honoring mother and father is, then, closely aligned with discipleship. To submit ourselves to the formation of the Holy Spirit and to the instruction and discipline of the community of faith is part of what it means for us to honor our mother and father today. As we look back at our ancestors in the faith, we understand the seriousness of the commitment we have made to Christ and seek to "throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles" and to "run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Heb 12:1).

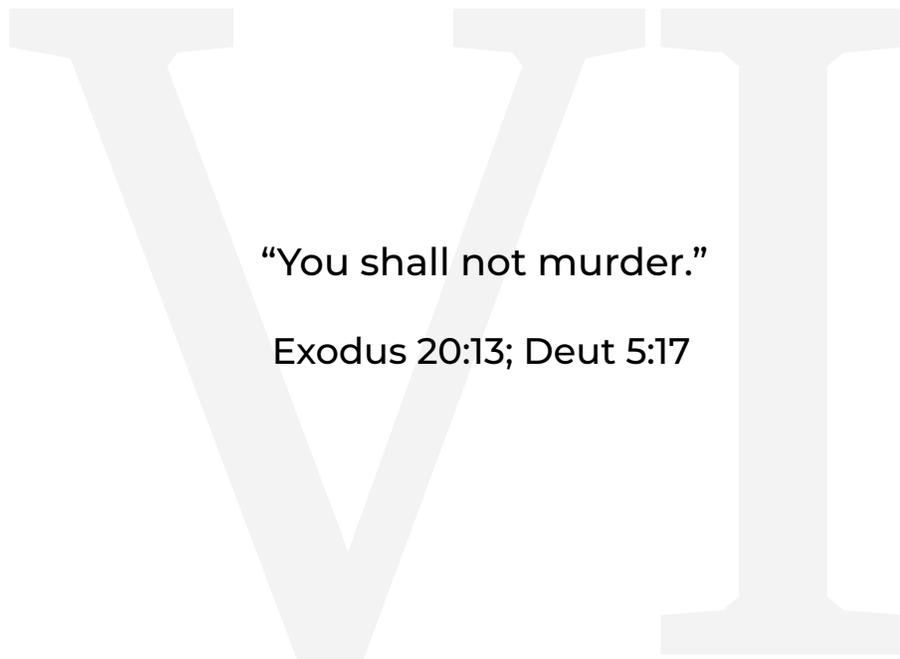
MR. MOODY ON THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

“Young man, if your parents are still living treat them kindly. Do all you can to make their declining years sweet and happy. Bear in mind that this is the only commandment that you may not always be able to obey. As long as you live, you will be able to serve God, to keep the sabbath, to obey all the other commandments, but the day comes to most men when father and mother die. What bitter feelings you will have when the opportunity has gone by, if you fail to show them the respect and love that is their due! How long is it since you wrote to your mother? Perhaps you have not written home for months, or it may be for years. How often I get letters from mothers urging me to try and influence their sons!”

HONORING MOTHER AND FATHER

God, we are grateful for those who teach us to follow you. Guide us as we seek to teach the next generation to serve you well. We ask that you would work through your people to show the world the importance of family. Grant parents wisdom and grace to lead their children in the faith. Amen.





“You shall not murder.”

Exodus 20:13; Deut 5:17



THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

I can't think of a time when I ever wanted to kill someone. No matter how angry I might get, I have never gotten to the point where taking another human life seemed like a reasonable next step. In many ways, it is difficult to “connect” with this command because it seems so intuitive. Common sense and a general sense of morality would seem to tell us that killing another person just isn't right. Yet, we see it happen. Even in today's society, we see women and men breaking this command both as individuals and through various, collective legislative acts.

The prohibition to kill is not simply rooted in our common sense. It isn't some innate law genetically encoded within us. Cain certainly didn't have it. For him, it seemed to be the logical solution to his problem. In his anger, Cain lures his younger brother Abel out into a field and kills him. Whether Cain kills Abel as an act of pure rage or to eliminate his younger sibling so that he can claim God's blessing (a rather common tension in the book of Genesis), Cain sees murder as a viable option in the moment.

The impetus to kill was not limited to Cain. We see it a few other times in Genesis, particularly amongst siblings. Esau plans to kill Jacob once the period of mourning Isaac is completed (Gen 27:41). Joseph's brothers consider killing him and telling Jacob that “a fierce animal has devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams” (Gen 37:20). It is only Judah's suggestion that it would be more profitable to sell Joseph into slavery that spares his brother's life (Gen 37:26-27).



SHINE BRIGHT



These examples surely do not authorize killing, but they offer examples and illustrations that show the ease with which murder becomes a viable option. The prohibition against murder does not speak against the utility of murder, but against the theological error that allows murder to seem logical. If we are pursuing ends that justify any means, murder becomes one option within the range of possibilities.

When God prohibits murder, he is not simply voicing again the sanctity of human life. Surely that stands behind this command. Yet, it would seem that God is also giving us license not to kill by offering us his care and provision. In other words, God is not only prohibiting murder, but eliminating any reason that one might consider murder as being within the range of options available to one who follows God.

God is the author of life. He is also the one who places all people where he desires them to be. In creating all life, he also sustains and orders all life. To kill one of those who God has placed in a particular position is to question God's order. God does not create extra people who have no purpose. People are not expendable.

As we consider this command, we shouldn't just resolve never to kill anyone and move on. We should also think about the reasons why murder is never an option *because God is a reality*. Understanding that God empowers us to eliminate murder as an option, no matter how expedient it may seem.

God's provision affords us the opportunity to respect life even when it seems inconvenient for us to do so. Life is not expendable. It is a gift, yet without God, life can seem burdensome. Part of the reason Christians

SHINE BRIGHT

can obey the command not to kill is that we serve a God without limits. It is God's unbridled ability to provide and to care for us that allows us to set such a value on life that we would never even consider ending it.

The sixth command, then, is an affirmation of God's sovereignty. He is not limited. He is not constrained. While it may be uncomfortable at times to value life, we are never without the resources we need to do the right thing. "Thou shalt not kill" reflects the reality in which we exist. We live in the presence of God and are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live a life worthy of Christ's resurrection. While murder might be an option for those who do not know God, it is never an option for those who have placed their trust in the God who created the heavens and the earth.

MR. MOODY ON THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

“What it does forbid is the wanton, intentional taking of human life under wrong motives and circumstances. Man is made in God’s image. He is built for eternity. He is more than a mere animal. His life ought therefore to be held sacred. Once taken, it can never be restored. In heathen lands human life is no more sacred than the life of animals; even in Christian lands there are heartless and selfish men who hold it cheap; but God has invested it with a high value. An infidel philosopher of the eighteenth century said: “In the sight of God every event is alike important; and the life of a man is of no greater importance to the universe than that of an oyster.” “Where is the crime,” he asked, “of turning a few ounces of blood out of their channel?” Such language needs no answer.”

THEY SHOULDN'T BE HERE

While we are certainly right to think of the sanctity of life when we consider the sixth commandment, we should not limit the rationale for the prohibition against murder to the sanctity of life. The lives of others are not obstacles to be overcome. The lives of others are not an inconvenience to be eliminated. In giving the sixth commandment, God points to his order, provision, and will for all of his creatures. We live in God's world amidst those he has created. We must respect the dignity of every human being while at the same time recognizing God's wisdom in placing them in our path. To reject or eliminate what God has put before us is to question God and distrust his way of ordering the world he has made.

1. Assume that one reason for murder is the inconvenience that a particular individual poses to another. What might the body of Christ do to diminish or eliminate the concern that a given individual's life is no longer convenient to support?
2. How can we convey the rationale for the sixth commandment to others in a way that highlights God and the gospel rather than emphasizing a moral virtue?
3. What does it mean for us to demonstrate the value of others not only by choosing not to commit murder, but by so respecting the fact that God has put them in our path that we seek to honor God in the way we interact with them?



VII

“You shall not commit adultery.”

Exodus 20:14; Deut 5:18



THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

The average cost for a wedding in 2020 was approximately \$20,000. If you live in Massachusetts, New Jersey, or Connecticut, you would have expected to pay around \$30,000 to get hitched, whereas those who live in Nevada, Montana, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Mississippi, West Virginia, or Arkansas can tie the knot for under \$15,000. After buying the engagement ring, renting the venue, feeding the guests, and enjoying the cake, the fanfare of the wedding begins to fade away. The realities of marriage begin to set in.

I'm assuming that weddings were a little less expensive in 1999, but the experience probably hasn't changed much. For my wife and I, marriage really started on the honeymoon. In an effort to avoid the costs of a travel agent, I'd gotten on the internet via a dial-up modem (remember those) and found an early website for a "resort" in the Poconos. A guy in a bright sweater with blonde feathered hair was riding a horse next to his seemingly happy and adoring wife. The website noted ice skating, as well as a variety of other activities in a serene, peaceful setting. As I explored the rest of the site, I found the ultimate selling point: a heart-shaped hot tub.

Our romantic getaway started off a bit rocky. I was only twenty-one when we got married and Kim was only twenty, so I couldn't rent a car. After maxing out my money on a limo to get to the resort, I had my first real experience of deferred maintenance. Heart-shaped hot tub aside, the room was less-than five star. That was doubly



SHINE BRIGHT

unfortunate since most of the activities noted on the website like horseback riding and ice skating weren't on-site but about three miles away. Not insurmountable without a car, but certainly not ideal.

I'm happy to say that my wife and I made it through the honeymoon and have now been married for more than 20 years. If I've learned anything during my marriage its that marriage is about commitment. I think it is fair to say that there have been moments (maybe even long stretches) when my wife has not been my biggest fan. Our marriage has been amazing. It hasn't been easy.

I am absolutely committed to my wife, but I'm also committed to marriage. The two concepts are a bit different. Marriage is a covenant before God. It has tremendous implications for the broader witness of the body of Christ because marriage reflects Christ's union with the church (Eph 5:22-33). Marriages begin with a public ceremony, in part, because one's marriage is not a private affair. It is a personal relationship with communal implications.

The prohibition against adultery is not simply addressing personal piety (though it certainly is that). It isn't a private affair even if a couple elopes. Marriage has communal implications. The church's blessing of a marriage is not simply a recognition of two people's love for one another but a recognition that the union of two individuals will contribute to the church's witness to Christ.

To commit adultery is to diminish the witness of the church and to suggest that commitments made before God and the other members of Christ's body are easily broken. To commit adultery suggests that



SHINE BRIGHT

faithfulness is less important than fulfilling our lustful desires or some unmet needs. Committing adultery is a fundamentally selfish act that disrespects one's spouse, community, and one's God.

MR. MOODY ON THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

“Lust is the devil’s counterfeit of love. There is nothing more beautiful on earth than a pure love, and there is nothing so blighting as lust. I do not know of a quicker, shorter way down to hell than by adultery and the kindred sins condemned by this commandment. The Bible says that with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, but “whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart.” Lust will drive all natural affection out of a man’s heart. For the sake of some vile harlot he will trample on the feelings and entreaties of a sainted mother and beautiful wife and godly sister...May God show us what a fearful sin it is! The idea of making light of it! I do not know of any sin that will make a man run down to ruin more quickly. I am appalled when I think of what is going on in the world; of so many young men living impure lives, and talking about the virtue of women as if it didn’t amount to anything. This sin is coming in upon us like a flood at the present day. In every city there is an army of prostitutes. Young men by hundreds are being utterly ruined by this accursed sin.”

MAY WE BE FAITHFUL

Lord, we echo the prayer that Jesus taught the disciples to pray: lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. As we experience the difficulties of life or the natural urges and attractions that make us human, we pray that you would remind us of our commitments. Remind us that only you can truly satisfy our needs. Help us to avoid seeking out sexual relationships outside of marriage whether real or virtual. If we are lonely, dissatisfied, or lustful, correct us. May we find our fulfillment in you. Grant us the strength to obey that we might glorify you with our bodies. Amen.



VIII

“You shall not steal.”

Exodus 20:15; Deut 5:19



THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

During college I drove an Oldsmobile Cutlass. I affectionately referred to it as my “grandma car.” It was white with a blue cloth interior. I’m not much of a car guy, so having a vehicle that was dependable (and affordable) was more important than style. It had over 100,000 miles on it and was still going strong. Aside from a sagging headliner and a few rips in the carpet, the Cutlass was a great car.

The other perk of the Cutlass was that it wasn’t flashy. I was living in Chicago’s Little Italy area and was parking on the street. Having a car that wouldn’t stand out to anyone who might be looking for a vehicle to steal seemed like a good idea. The Cutlass really seemed to be that car. Who would want to steal the grandma mobile?

That question was answered for me one morning when I walked down to the space where I had remembered parking my car. After seeing the broken glass on the ground, I went into denial and took a couple of trips down the block making sure I hadn’t just forgotten where I parked. I finally had to face facts: someone had stolen the Cutlass.

I called the police and reported the car missing. As I gave them the details about the car, I remember feeling a sense of helplessness, frustration, and, to a large degree, surprise. I couldn’t figure out why someone would have chosen to steal my car. I couldn’t imagine that it had any sort of real value. If I were running a chop shop and someone pulled in



SHINE BRIGHT

with an old, white Oldsmobile Cutlass, I wouldn't have been jumping for joy. So why steal the car?

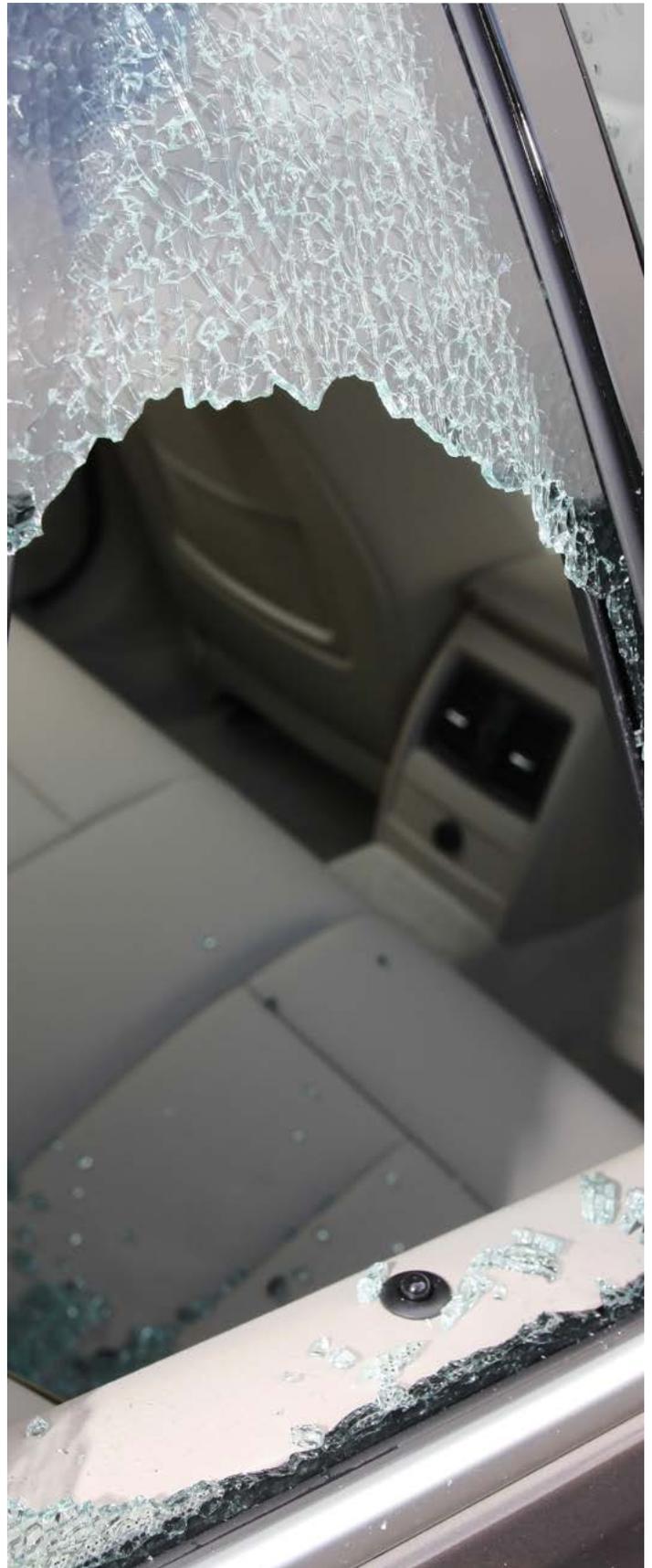
While I may never know who decided to steal my Cutlass, I have at least a general sense about why it was stolen. Someone felt that they were lacking something they needed. Instead of trusting in God's provision and respecting the way he allocates material goods, the individual(s) who stole my car took it upon themselves to determine how property should be distributed.

Such is the essence of theft. It is an orientation that is undeterred by the threat of punishment and consequences. Stealing is often an act that looks out at what God has given and instead of learning contentment, seeks to overcome perceived deficits. Is it a selfish act? Certainly. It is an act that does not express care for others but is willing to harm one's neighbor to meet some need or fulfill some desire.

Theft violates the second great commandment (Mt 22:39) by taking away the resources of another. Stealing creates a downside for others. The act of taking something that does not belong to us dismisses the value of others. Essentially, by stealing, we say that what we've stolen is worth more than those from whom we've stolen it.

Stealing is also a violation of the greatest commandment (Mt 22:37-38). We are to love God with all we are and all we have. We are to trust and obey even if we do not have all we need to survive. We don't take matters into our own hands when doing so runs counter to God's instruction.

To suggest that theft is never an option does



SHINE BRIGHT

not suggest that those who do not have enough are to be left with no options. The prohibition not to steal is made within the context of a community that is to support the poor, the widow, and the orphan. God has so provided for his people that there need be no fear of sharing or giving what God has given us. In some ways, our care for neighbor is a means of curtailing theft that is motivated by want. Surely generosity will not overcome the human propensity to sin. Yet, we are not generous to ensure that others have not need to steal but because we can think of no better way to use the gifts God has given than to provide for others.

MR. MOODY ON THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

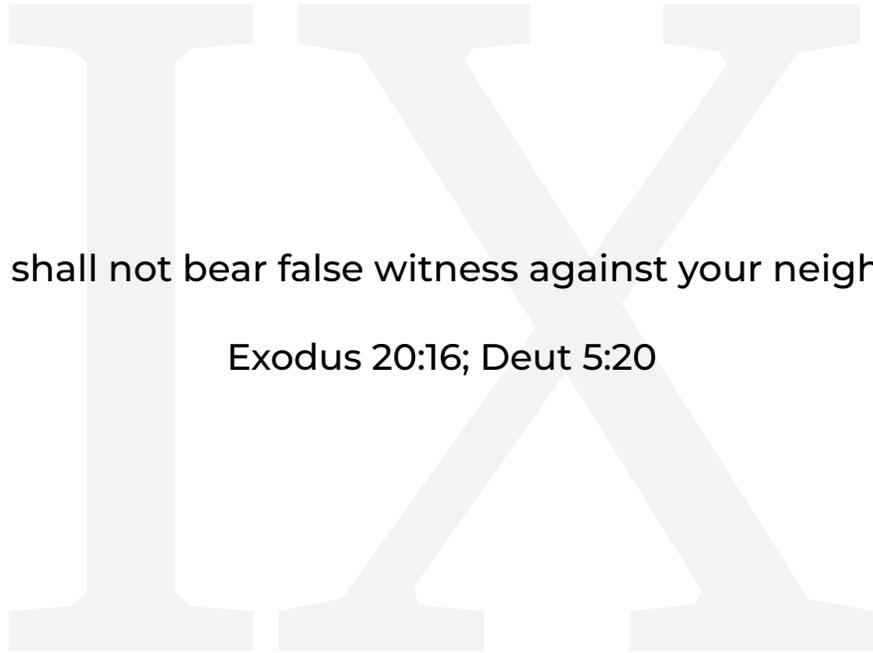
"I have noticed that people are satisfied when you preach about the sins of the patriarchs, but they don't like it when you touch upon the sins of to-day. That is coming too near home. But we need to have these old doctrines stated over and over again in our churches. Perhaps it is not necessary to speak here about the grosser violations of this eighth commandment, because the law of the land looks after these; but a man or woman can steal without cracking safes and picking pockets. Many a person who would shrink from taking what belongs to another person, thinks nothing of stealing from the government or from large public corporations, such as streetcar companies.

If you steal from a rich man it is as much a sin as stealing from a poor man. If you lie about the value of things you buy, are you not trying to defraud the storekeeper? "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth." On the other hand, many a person who would not steal himself, holds stock in companies that make dishonest profits; but "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished."

CONTENT AND GENEROUS

Lord, we know that you provide all that we need and are able to do more than we could ever ask or think. We know that you work all things for our God because we love you. We are grateful and we ask that you would teach us to be content. Keep us from distrust so that we have no inclination to steal. Instead, teach us to be generous and to care for those around us who need our help. May we be the sort of people who do not selfishly take from others but selflessly give knowing that your generosity is limitless and that our lives are not dependent on what we have. Amen.





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

Exodus 20:16; Deut 5:20



THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

The ninth commandment has, in many ways, may be one of the most relevant commands in the world today. While relatively few of us will have the need to testify as a witness in a formal courtroom setting, we live in an era where promoting falsehoods and spreading rumors is easier than ever. Ruining reputations can be as simple as posting on Facebook, sending a Tweet, or uploading a YouTube video.

False testimony often involves outright lies. When Ahab and Jezebel conspire to get Naboth's vineyard, for instance, they send in two "worthless men" to accuse Naboth of wrongdoing (1 Kgs 21:1-16). The ninth commandment likely refers specifically to such instances. We are not to commit perjury. Yet, the prohibition ties into a broader injunction concerning falsehood more generally.

Leviticus 5:1 extends beyond perjury condemning the suppression of the truth: "When a person sins in that he hears a public curse against one who fails to testify and he is a witness (he either saw or knew what had happened) and he does not make it known, then he will bear his punishment for iniquity." Here we see the importance of witness in the nation of Israel and, likely, its linkage to justice more generally. Whether I lie in court or stand by silently as someone who is guilty goes free or who is innocent is punished, I have promoted falsehood and diminished justice. The spirit of the ninth command, then, is rooted again in God's desire to maintain order and to enact justice.



SHINE BRIGHT



Within our current media environment, we are often in an environment that is less truthful than provocative. In “The Idiot Culture” Carl Bernstein (of Woodward and Bernstein fame) notes, “In this culture of journalistic titillation we teach our readers and our viewers that the trivial is significant, that the lurid and the loopy are more important than real news. We do not serve our readers and viewers, we pander to them. And we condescend to them, giving them what we think they want and what we calculate will sell and boost ratings and readership.” Whatever truth we are getting is often given less in the service of justice and order than in the service of page views and ad sales.

Despite the widespread discussions about “fake news” and demonstrable evidence of polarization in storytelling, we continue to engage and, in many instances, endorse scandal-chasers who have little interest in telling the whole truth often opting to offer sizzle with as little steak as possible to provide a sensational, share-worthy story. When we are aware or choose to remain blissfully ignorant of the holes in the stories we are told, we support false testimony and stand opposed to the spirit, if not the letter, of the ninth commandment.

Perjury in court creates a situation in which just judgment is more difficult. Even the most discerning judge will be less capable of rendering a proper verdict when witnesses lie on the stand. In the court of public opinion, our support of narratives that are false or even less-than true yields a similar problem. Our brothers and sisters are, at times, not given a fair hearing. At the same time, telling only the sensational parts of a story shield those who may have been involved in a more mundane role that is as

SHINE BRIGHT

substantive, but less captivating than certain other actors. Yet, the community of faith is not simply to rebuke those who stand in the spotlight or occupy prominent position, but to bring the truth to light even in the more uninteresting matters.

The ninth commandment does not lose its punch outside of the courtroom. Instead, as we come to recognize that God values the truth and desires to see justice done, we will begin to see that the prohibition against false testimony points beyond formal legal proceedings. It is our role to promote truth. To do so, we cannot be content to be honest ourselves. We must also take care to encourage truthfulness and diminish falsehood in the broader community of faith as well.

MR. MOODY ON THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

“The most dangerous thing about it is that a word once uttered can never be obliterated. Some one has said that lying is a worse crime than counterfeiting. There is some hope of following up bad coins until they are all recovered; but an evil word can never be overtaken. The mind of the hearer or reader has been poisoned, and human devices cannot reach in and cleanse it. Lies can never be called back.

A woman who was well known as a scandal-monger, went and confessed to the priest. He gave her a ripe thistle-top, and told her to go out and scatter the seeds one by one. She wondered at the penance, but obeyed; then she came and told the priest. He next told her to go and gather again the scattered seeds. Of course she saw that it was impossible. The priest used it as an object-lesson to cure her of the sin of scandalous talk.”

CAN I GET A (TRUE) WITNESS?

Falsehood in the Christian community is a dangerous thing. It is a threat to those who claim to be committed to the truth. False testimony is particularly challenging because it harms our neighbor. It also weakens the community of faith as we sustain those for whom the truth is something that can be compromised. The truth is not a means to an end, but an end in itself. Presenting or supporting falsehoods (as we see in Lev 5:1) places our neighbor at risk and opposes justice. As a people committed to pursuing truth, we would do well to embrace Paul's exhortation to Timothy, "protect what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly, empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called 'knowledge'—which some have professed and thereby have gone astray from the faith" (1 Tim 6:20-21).

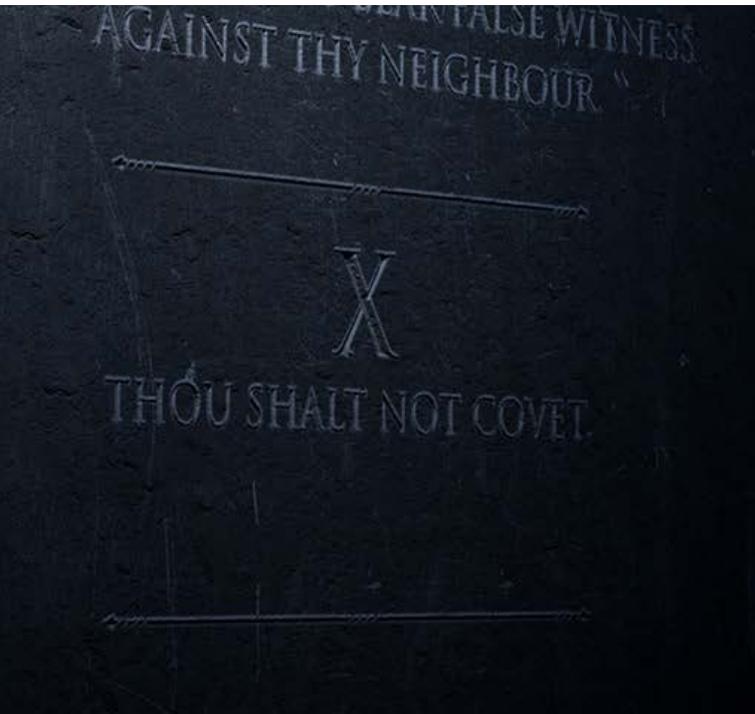
1. Consider the news that you consume on a daily basis and the people to whom you listen. To what extent are they providing you with sufficient information to constitute a truthful witness?
2. Next time you read a story about some scandal or even about a legitimate court case ask yourself the following question: What am I not being told about this situation that could be relevant to understand the situation with greater depth? How might I go about getting that information?
3. How am I participating in falsehood by what I say (or don't say) or by what I listen to or watch?



“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; Deut 5:21





THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

God created the heavens and the earth. God calls forth creation from what was once formless and void. He orders chaos by the power of his word. Unlike many ancient Near Eastern accounts of creation in which the gods battle one another as part of the creative process, God creates without resistance. He also creates alone. The heavens and the earth respond to God's voice obeying his words.

In Genesis 1:3-5, God makes a separation between light and darkness, day and night. He then creates the stars, sun and moon to “be signs and for seasons” and “to rule” the day and the night (Gen 1:14-19). We see a similar pattern as God creates specific environments like the water and the dry land and then populates those environments with the appropriate living creatures and vegetation. God's creation proceeds in an orderly fashion in so much as a place is prepared for the living things God will ultimately create.

In creation, God establishes a particular order. At the end of the creation story, we see God rest. The Sabbath is the end of creation. When God has done all of his created work, we find a world in which God is capable of rest. It is fully at peace with itself. It is a harmonious ecosystem in which all of the parts and pieces fit and work together seamlessly. God has a way of fitting things together to accomplish his purpose. His arrangements are beautiful and right. They cannot be made better.



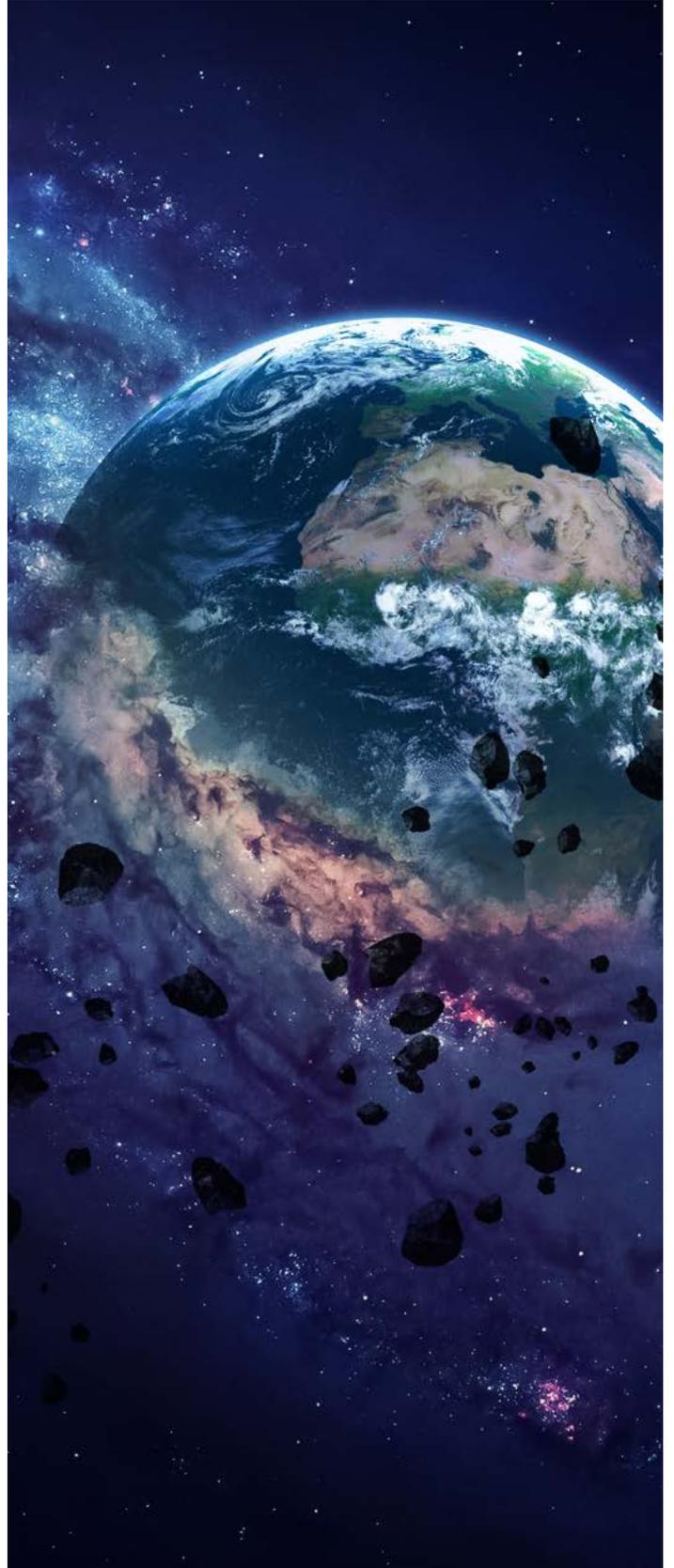
SHINE BRIGHT

The tenth commandment prohibits coveting. When we long for something that God has given to someone else, we covet. When we covet, we deny God's sovereignty, diminish his wisdom, or question his benevolence. In essence, coveting what has been given to our neighbor not only expresses a dissatisfaction with what God has given us but assumes that we know better what we should have.

Covetousness is an act of the heart. We look around at our God-given lot in life and find God's gifts insufficient. By coveting, we promote a false picture of God. We tell ourselves and others who become aware of our discontentment that God is not worthy. He may be powerful and capable in many ways, but he doesn't really know what we need.

Covetousness is, in many respects, the opposite of contentment. It may be easy to assume that our contentment is dependent on what we have. Coveting, then, would seem natural when we see that our neighbor has something we don't. Yet, contentment is learned. As the apostle Paul notes, "...for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need" (Phil 4:11-12).

When we covet what our neighbor has, we deny ourselves the opportunity to enjoy what God has given us. We miss the opportunity to be grateful. The prohibition against coveting reminds us that we serve a gracious, all-knowing God who does not arrange the world at random, but with a specific purpose and intention. As such, we can trust that we have exactly what God desires us to have.



MR. MOODY ON THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

“Contentment is the very opposite of covetousness, which is continually craving for something it does not possess. “Be content with such things as ye have,” not worrying about the future, because God has promised never to leave or forsake you. What does the child of God want more than this? I would rather have that promise than all the gold of the earth. Would to God we might all be able to say with Paul—“I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel.”

The Lord had made him partaker of His grace, and he was soon to be a partaker of His glory, and earthly things looked very small. “Godliness with contentment is great gain,” he wrote to Timothy; “having food and raiment, therewith let us be content.” Observe that he puts godliness first. No worldly gain can satisfy the human heart. Roll the whole world in, and still there would be room.

May God tear the scales off our eyes if we are blinded by this sin. Oh, the folly of it, that we should set our heart’s affections upon anything below! “For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. . . . Be thou not afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dieth he shall take nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him.””

Dwight Moody, *Weighed and Wanting: Addresses on the Ten Commandments*

A PRAYER FOR CONTENTMENT

Lord, we admit that we don't always trust you. We are dissatisfied no matter how much you give us. We have not learned to be content in all circumstances. Help us to find joy in the way you have arranged the world. Instead of evaluating what we have or what our neighbors have by sight, allow us to do it by faith. In doing so, grant us hearts that overflow with gratitude so that even in poverty and suffering, we may rejoice that we are your people and are sharing in the suffering of Christ. We know that you are a God who gives good gifts. We know that you are wise and do not act in haphazard ways. We know that you have given us the gifts you want us to have. Put it in our hearts and minds to rejoice in the order you have established. Keep us humble so that we do not somehow think we could have done better. May we be a people who do not covet what our neighbors have, but learn to be content and satisfied with all you have provided to us. Amen.

