

**The TENDER Commandments  
The One Commandment to Rule them All pt.1**

**THE FIRST LAW OF LOVE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

As we start, my prayer is that in this series, we'll all understand that **The Ten Commandments ARE NOT ABOUT WHAT God WANTS FROM US, BUT WHAT HE WANTS FOR US.**

**Remember that THE Ten Commandments ARE SOMEONE WE MEET BEFORE THEY ARE SOMETHING WE OBEY.**

Here is an overview.

The Ten Commandments are like a “free fire zone” that God has with us, in that he speaks into our lives in the most intimate and relevant areas. God jumps right into the middle of where we tend to have the most conflict – Family, Sex, and Money. God is not aloof and unconcerned with **REAL WORLD ISSUES.**

The Ten Commandments are about who we worship, and are also about our most personal and intimate relationships - parents and our marriage. They show how we are to relate to one another in integrity by being authentic and by being content with where we are and with what God provides for us rather than trying to create a life that is filled with spin and cover up.

I must ask, “Does your spiritual practice keep God at arm’s length? Are you afraid to give God a “free fire zone” in your life? IF SO, then you are missing out on what He has for you.

**The context of the Ten Commandments is to be understood as a Covenant commitment ceremony, ie. Like a wedding.**

Years ago, I heard Randy Pope from Perimeter Church preach on the Ten Commandments and his wedding illustration has forever influenced my understanding and presentation of this passage.

FIRST, There is an Engagement, and then the Stipulations are spelled out in the wedding service.

**The Engagement. Ex.19:3-6**

**Exodus 19:3-9 3 And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: 4 ' You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. 5 'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; 6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'**

Remember the relationship between Christ and his church / God and his people is symbolized by the relationship of husband and wife. The two parties make vows and there are stipulations given for the good of the relationship.

“Forsaking all others, I commit myself to you, til death do us part.”

If during the wedding the groom looks at the bride and says, "I can't believe you want that kind of relationship; you're really going to cramp my style", then that would be a good time for the bride to say, "You're not ready for marriage."

Is that a narrow-minded oppressive promise to make in the context of marriage? Is such an exclusive vow bad for the marriage? NO, IT HONORS and protects the marriage.

In the same way, the 10 commandments honor and protect authentic faith and spirituality. Sure, there are demands because we are dealing with a personal God; every personal relationship has demands. Any relationship with God WILL HAVE DEMANDS.

By functional definition, God is the being we worship, the one we center our lives around; our spiritual north. This will entail demands and will require submission on our parts. OR ELSE God ISN'T God; he's just one of the guys who deserves no special place or reverence in our lives.

### The Stipulations For Marriage

Ex. 20:1-17 Exodus 20:1-2 **1 Then God spoke all these words, saying, 2 " 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.**

### Stipulations Relating To Loving

## LOVE FOR God IS SINGULAR - EXCLUSIVE

God (with other commandments we'll see it must be Spiritual, Sincere, and Safe-Guarded

"EXCLUSIVE" that's a word that our culture hates.

EX: Like husband and wife; the relationship is Exclusive– how much adultery is OK? How many evenings spent with a former boyfriend or girlfriend are OK?

God made this the #1 commandment for a reason. It is no small thing. **This is ground zero of our spiritual lives** and of the spiritual battle described in Ephesians 6. What makes it so tricky is that we can be fooled into thinking that we're in line with this commandment if we develop certain standards of behavior. All the while our hearts may not be in line with God.

That was the problem in the book of Isaiah when God said "This people honors me with their lips but their hearts are far from me." Is 29:13; Matt 15:8 This was the problem with the church in Ephesus – Rev 2:2-4 – work, toil, patience, did not grow weary, BUT YOU LOST YOUR FIRST LOVE.

It is easy to have a lot going on and look all together while the love is gone.

♪*"You've lost that loving feeling"* ...You never close your eyes, anymore, when I kiss your lips, and there's no tenderness like before in your fingertips. ♪

The externals are there, but there's no heart. It can happen in human relationships and it can happen with God. It is so prevalent and so easy that God makes it the subject of the First Commandment.

Hard work, good theology, faithful service, ministry, and standing for biblical virtues aren't enough; they aren't the essence of what God is after. This is a relationship and God is concerned with the condition of our hearts towards him.

On the outside, you can have two people and they look the same in terms of behavior yet one is violating this commandment and one is honoring it. One is doing it out of love for God, the other is doing it because he/she is using God to get something else.

**HOW DO YOU KNOW THE DIFFERENCE?**

Your response when things don't go the way you wanted or planned: One is angry when things don't go well, because she was using God to get something else. What is missing is a deeply felt experience of the presence of God. The other has supernatural peace and an experience of God's presence even though things don't go the way she wanted. (she hasn't lost what she was really after).

**ANOTHER HINT IS IN THE LORD'S PRAYER** – it starts with praise. The person doing it out of love for God has a prayer life that is characterized by praise. The person doing it for something else, IF he/ she prays, focuses on asking God for the thing he wants.

When we know and love God as He is, then the natural response is to praise HIM.

**WCF LC - Question 104: What are the duties required in the first commandment?**

**Answer: The duties required in the first commandment are, the knowing and acknowledging of God to be the only true God, and our God; and to worship and glorify him accordingly, by thinking, meditating, remembering, highly esteeming, honoring, adoring, choosing, loving, desiring, fearing of him; believing him; trusting, hoping, delighting, rejoicing in him; being zealous for him; calling upon him, giving all praise and thanks, and yielding all obedience and submission to him with the whole man; being careful in all things to please him, and sorrowful when in anything he is offended; and walking humbly with him.**

**THIS IS LOVE LANGUAGE** – HOW PEOPLE think and relate when they are in love. You will do this toward something or someone. God knows this and commands the people to keep Him first because He knows how we are prone to wander.

**WHEN YOU SHUCK IT DOWN TO THE COB, This commandment is about ENJOYING God.** Keeping Him first in our hearts is not a problem when we are enjoying God. What we enjoy most is what we keep first in our hearts.

It may be new to you to talk about enjoying God in the same context as the Ten Commandments. "How can I enjoy a God who gives so many commands?" It is hard to love and enjoy someone if we don't trust him or her. That is why God REMINDS them of how He delivered them – EAGLES' WINGS.

God is supremely enjoyable because he is supremely gracious and compassionate and just and holy. He is also supremely personal and accessible while being transcendent and incomprehensible.

We today have the great advantage of understanding God through the person of Christ and his work. We see how the love and justice of God met on the cross. We see how he is able to hold together his compassion and his holiness through his Son. The OT believers didn't have this full picture. God was the thundering God of the mountain, YET, he bore them on eagles' wings. They had a taste of the full nature of God, but not to the extent that we do now.

Do you enjoy this God of grace and holiness who is revealed in scripture? Do you keep him FIRST ie. "no other gods before him?"

### **WHY WOULD WE WANT TO HAVE ANY GOD BESIDES THE LORD?**

In our right minds we wouldn't but God knows the reality of sin in our hearts. This command is a testimony to the reality of sin. If we could see life from the divine perspective, we would not need this commandment.

EX: Do we need a commandment, "Do not eat squashed possum off the side of the road?"

NO. few, if any, people would be tempted to do that; there would be no desire for that, but having a false God is a real problem. Ever since the Fall the human heart has been, and is prone to wonder. As one pastor put it, "the greatest challenge in all of life is to keep God first...the greatest challenge I face every day of my life is probably the very one you face every day...maintaining a close, personal, growing relationship with God through Jesus Christ. It is keeping Him first."

### **WHY IS IT SO HARD?**

The Fall introduced into the human heart a sin virus that infects all people from conception; this sin condition is hardwired into the human heart and it impacts everything we do and desire. This is the condition described in Eph 2, Romans 3. not only do we fail to love God as we should "with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength", but according to Romans 3 and 8, on our own, we hate God. We don't want to obey Him, we are at enmity with Him. That may sound strong to some in our day, but it is the teaching of scripture.

We would say, "I don't hate God, I didn't hate God at any time in my life". That may be our perception, but the perspective of God's Word is that apart from His work in our hearts, our natural condition is to hate God.

How is this "evil" manifested and displayed? In the obvious ways of rejecting God, mocking God, lack of reverence for God and his ways. But it goes deeper and is more subtle. This evil is displayed by treasuring something more than God – anything or anyone.

<<How does one do that? What do you mean?>>

Test: look at your life and see if you ever sin – the answer is "yes".

**Every time we sin we are treasuring something more than God.** We sin because we've made the choice that we'd rather have \_\_\_\_\_ more than God. We've put something else before God.

By way of reminder about what sin looks like, just remember all the things that we are commanded to do that we fail to do, or the things that are forbidden that we do – gossip, lust, bitterness, boasting, immorality, greed, slander, spreading strife, etc. **Another way to look at sin is to simply identify the opposite of the fruit of the spirit in your life;** the opposite of LPPKGFSGS – that would be sin.

This is evidence of this virus of evil which actually hides itself so that it doesn't look like hatred for God; in fact, one of its forms can look like godliness – the Pharisees – Jesus warned against them – their hypocrisy and self-righteousness. Their self-righteousness, and ours, is a deep manifestation of this sin virus. It is a way in which we turn from God; it is turning from God at the heart level. It is trusting in our own righteousness rather than trusting in and treasuring the righteousness of Christ on our behalf.

"You shall have no other gods before me means 'you shall have no other savior before me'". Self-righteous record building is a form of self-salvation and it is the default mode of the human heart. It is the approach to life that says, "If I obey enough and am good enough, then God must accept me and bless me."

The problem is that this is so **EASY TO FALL INTO**, and it passes so well in religious circles. It even looks like God is saying this in the OT, right?

Wrong, that is why I emphasized the first part of Exodus 19 last week – God has already graciously saved this people before he establishes the Law; he has already entered into a Covenant of personal intimacy and blessing with them, so the Law can't be the way in.

Remember the **MIRROR** – the Law keeps us in tune with the nature and character of God and it directs us so that we might fully realize God's design for us. **BUT IT CAN'T SAVE US**; it can point us to **THE SAVIOR**, who perfectly fulfilled the Law. **Jesus Christ is the living manifestation of what Holy Spirit empowered obedience to the Law looks like. But he is more than an example; He is a savior for sinners**, ie those who don't live in obedience to the law.

Another part of the virus is indwelling sin buys into and promotes the ideas that there is something better than knowing God; there is something that we're willing to sell God out for. **WHO ME? MOI?** Certainly not!!

Money, approval, success, winning, food, a private fantasy life, a relationship with the right person, popularity, power, comfort, control, morality, image, clothes, furniture, cars, etc.

Have you ever lied, stretched the truth just a bit, cheated – even just a bit, to get any of those things? Do you ever find yourself pre-occupied with any of those things? Or felt under their control? Even just a bit?

Then you've sold out God. You've violated the **FIRST COMMANDMENT**. And the reality is that we do it more than we want to admit – the message of the bible is that “we are bigger sinners than....”

The reason that this is the first of the commandments is because it is the sin beneath all other sins, it's the problem beneath all other problems, it's the main thing that's wrong with us. if we get this one wrong, we get the rest of them wrong. **BUT WE DON'T SIMPLY** break the rules, we miss the relationship for which we were made – an exclusive love for the God who made us, cares for us, and who has brought us to himself.

When we see how he Treasures us, then it motivates us to treasure HIM.

EX: **SOUND OF MUSIC** – “there is nothing more irresistible to a man than a woman who is in love with him.” How about having a God who loves you!!!

How did he bring us to Himself? It wasn't just on eagles' wings; it was through the **CROSS** as Jesus bore our sin; he took our place; he was forsaken; he lost the intimacy so that we could be brought in. as we go to the Table, let the work of Christ melt your heart and draw you to himself. Hear Jesus say to Father, “I'll be despised so that they might be treasured.”

**The ABC's of coming to faith –**

Come to the table

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