

Exodus 20 Commentary

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Irving Jensen ([Online](#)) - Used by Permission
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 View Chuck Swindoll's chart of Exodus.

Summary Chart of The Book of Exodus									
DELIVERANCE FROM OPPRESSION						PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP			
Redemption from Egypt Ex 1:1-18:27						Revelation from God Ex 19:1-40:38			
Getting Israel Out of Egypt						Getting Egypt Out of Israel!			
Narration						Legislation			
Birth of Moses Ex 1-2	Call of Moses Ex 3-6	Conflict with Pharaoh Ex 7-10	Exodus from Egypt Ex 11-12	Red Sea Crossed Ex 13-15	Journey To Sinai Ex 16-18	Law Given Ex 19-24	Tent Plan Ex 25-31	Idol Worship Ex 32-34	Tent Built Ex 35-40
Subjection			Redemption			Instruction			
Suffering and Liberation of People of God			Guidance of God			Worship of God			

Moses and Burdens of Israel	Pharaoh and Plagues Upon Egypt	Red Sea Deliverance	Wilderness Provision	Sinai Instructions					
Bondage and Oppression		Deliverance and Provision		Law Pattern and Construction					
Israel in Egypt Ex 1:1-13:16		Israel to Sinai Ex 13:17-18:27		Israel at Sinai Ex 19:1-40:38					
God's People Enduring Bondage		God's Grace Revealed in Redemption		God's Glory Manifested in Worship					
Egypt 430 Years (15% of Exodus)		Wilderness 2 Months (30% of Exodus)		Mt Sinai 10 Months (55% of Exodus)					
From Groaning									To Glory!

[Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament - online](#)

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[Click for Excellent Map of Route of the Exodus](#)

[Click another Exodus from Egypt](#)

[Click for Events during the Sojourn at Kadesh-Barnea](#)

GENESIS	EXODUS
human effort and failure	divine power and triumph
word of promise	work of fulfillment
a people chosen	a people called
God's electing mercy	God's electing manner
revelation of nationality	realization of nationality

SUMMARY OF THE PENTATEUCH
(from [Believer's Study Bible](#))

Exodus 20:1 Then God spoke all these words, saying,

- De 4:33,36 5:4,22 Ac 7:38,53
- Exodus 20 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

GOD SPEAKS "TEN WORDS"

Then - When? When the pre-law portion in Exodus 19 was complete. Presumably the supernatural effects were on full display.

NET Note introduction - This chapter is the heart of the Law of Israel, and as such is well known throughout the world. There is so much literature on it that it is almost impossible to say anything briefly and do justice to the subject. But the exposition of the book must point out that this is the charter of the new nation of Israel. These ten commands (words) form the preamble; they will be followed by the decisions (judgments). And then in chap. 24 the covenant will be inaugurated. So when Israel entered into covenant with God, they entered into a theocracy by expressing their willingness to submit to his authority. The Law was the binding constitution for the nation of Israel under Yahweh their God. It was specifically given to them at a certain time and in a certain place. The Law legislated how Israel was to live in order to be blessed by God and used by him as a kingdom of priests. In the process of legislating their conduct and their ritual for worship, the Law revealed God. It revealed the holiness of Yahweh as the standard for all worship and service, and in revealing that it revealed or uncovered sin. But what the Law condemned, the Law (Leviticus) also made provision for in the laws of the sacrifice and the feasts intended for atonement. The NT teaches that the Law was good, and

commandments, I will love you.” Instead, he first washes the feet of the disciples and then says, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). All of our doing is only because of what he has first done for us. ([10 Things You Should Know About the Ten Commandments](#) - recommended read)

Note that Exodus 20:1-17 is not referred to as the “**Ten Commandments**” but that description is found elsewhere in the OT - Exod. 34:28; Deut. 4:13; Deut. 10:4. “As ABC’s Ted Koppel said in his now famous commencement address at Duke University, “What Moses brought down from Mount Sinai were not the Ten Suggestions ... they are commandments. Are, not were.” (Ryken - See [Exodus: Saved for God's Glory](#))

Exodus 34:28 So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the **Ten Commandments**.

Deuteronomy 4:13 “So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, that is, the **Ten Commandments**; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.

COMMENT - Combining the facts in these two passages it is clear that what was written on the tablets were the commandment Yahweh had spoken to Israel from Mount Sinai.

God spoke all these words, saying - It is so easy to read past this and forget the impact of the statement that the Almighty God was speaking these words from Heaven and they clearly had a significant impact on the people for in Ex 20:18-19 they are so fearful that they ask Moses to speak to them rather than God! At this point however the “Ten Commandments” come directly from God without Moses serving as an intermediary. Presumably the entire nation heard these words at the foot of Mount Sinai. As an aside, we often refer to these laws as Moses’ laws but they are more accurately described as God’s laws, the point being that even Moses was subject to these laws. As [Guzik](#) says “God spoke all these words, and no man is above the law.”

Alan Cole writes “It has been well said that the commandments are God’s nature expressed in terms of moral imperatives...Israel lived in the midst of a polytheistic world: this terse prohibition deals with one of the dangers that came from living in just such a world. These commandments were after all addressed to the ordinary Israelite, not to the religious élite of the day: they are expressed in strong simple terms, understandable to all, and deal with the temptations of the common man, not of the theologian.” .” (See [Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

[Guzik](#) - From the perspective of the entire Bible, we can say that the law of God has three great purposes and uses: (1) It is a guardrail, keeping humanity on a moral path. (2) It is a mirror, showing us our moral failure and need for a Savior. (3) It is a guide, showing us the heart and desire of God for His people. ([Enduring Word Commentary - Exodus 20](#))

Steven Cole introduces his message on Exodus 20:1-17

In 1963, the U.S. Supreme Court decided that reading the Bible and reciting the Lord’s Prayer in public schools violates the U.S. Constitution. **Then in 1980, the Court ruled that it is unconstitutional for public schools to post the Ten Commandments on classroom walls.** The Court’s 5–4 majority reasoned (cited by Kent Hughes, Disciplines of Grace [Crossway], p. 11):

If the posted copies of the Ten Commandments are to have any effect at all it will be to induce the schoolchildren to read, meditate upon, perhaps to venerate and obey, the Commandments. However desirable this might be as a matter of private devotion, it is not a permissible state objective under the Establishment Clause.

In other words, we dare not post the Ten Commandments because some students might actually read and obey them! They might actually read, “You shall not murder”! But we can’t seem to figure out why so many students are shooting their classmates and teachers!

As Christians, we rightly decry our national slide into immorality and violence, and yet many Christians can’t even name half of the Ten Commandments! There is a lot of debate and confusion among evangelicals as to whether we are required to obey the Ten Commandments. In part, this is due to the influence of [moral relativism](#) in the church. It’s also due to a widespread misunderstanding of what it means to live under grace. Many think that any call to obey God’s commandments is legalism. They think that grace means hang-loose living, where we don’t need to be concerned about obeying God. After all, if we mess up, He will forgive!

But don’t forget the setting in which God gave these commands (Exod. 19)! The Lord descended on Mount Sinai in fire and smoke. The whole mountain quaked. There were thunder, lightning flashes, and loud blasts on a trumpet. If the people got too near the mountain, they would die. Both the people and Moses were terrified. Yes, God is gracious to sinners who repent, but even His redeemed people are to offer Him worship “with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:28–29). We dare not presume on His grace by

5:16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21. Our "water" comes from Christ, who gives us an ever-present flow of spiritual refreshment "springing up into everlasting life" (Jn. 4:14).

Without the fences of God's commands or the water Christ provides, we would be as spiritually lifeless as the bleached bones that dot the western prairies. But we have the privilege to graze in His pastures and to drink freely of the Water of Life. --D C Egner ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Like sheep that sometimes wander from the flock
 In tangled paths of life to lose their way,
 I need my Shepherd's hand and watchful eye
 To keep me always, lest I go astray.
 -Sanders

If the Lord is your Shepherd, you have everything you need.

TEN COMMANDMENTS IN THE OT AND NT			
COMMAND	OT	OT PENALTY	NT
1st Polytheism	Ex 20:3	Ex 22:20 Dt 6:13-15	Acts 14:15
2nd Graven Images	Ex 20:4	Dt 27:15	1 Jn 5:21
3rd Swearing	Ex 20:7	Lev 24:15,16	Jas 5:12
4th Sabbath	Ex 20:8	Nu 15:32-36	Col 2:16-17 Nullifies
5th Obedience to parents	Ex 20:12	Ex 21:15-17	Ep 6:1
6th Murder	Ex 20:13	Ex 21:12	1 Jn 3:15
7th Adultery	Ex 20:14	Lev 20:10	1 Co 6:9,10
8th Theft	Ex 20:15	Ex 21:16	Eph 4:28
9th False Witness	Ex 20:16	Dt 18:16-21	Col 3:9, 10
10th Coveting	Ex 20:17	---	Eph 5:5

- Modified (Borrow [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

A SIMPLE SUMMARY OF THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

- See also [power of Law to stir up sin](#)
- [Purpose of the Law - complete article](#)

1). Law reveals sin for what it is.

"Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the **Seed (Christ)** should come (Gal 3:19+).

Before you look in the mirror, you might have a vague sense that you've got dirt on your face. But when you look in the mirror and see it, you know that you're dirty!

"Through the Law comes the knowledge of sin" (Ro 3:20+),

"What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the

Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET." 8 But **Sin**, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law **Sin** is dead. 9 I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, **Sin** became alive and I died." (Ro 7:7-9+)

Though the law is not itself sinful ("the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good." Ro 7:12+), the Law does have the effect to **arouse** sin!

"For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, **which were aroused by the Law**, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death." (Ro 7:5+)

PRINCIPLE - The law by itself arouses within us the desire to disobey. There is something about saying "Don't" that makes us want to "Do." There is something about saying "Do" that makes us want to "Not Do." We all by nature instinctively rebel inwardly against rules and regulations. The sign says, "Wet Paint. Do not touch." What do you do? You touch it.

Calvin - "As in a mirror we discover any stains upon our face, so in the Law..."

Matthew Henry - There is no way of coming to that knowledge of sin, which is necessary to repentance, and therefore to peace and pardon, but by trying our hearts and lives by the law.

Spurgeon - There could not have been a better law. Some talk about the law of God being too severe, too strict, too stringent, but it is not. If the design had been that men should live by the law, there could not have been a better law for that purpose; and hence it is proved that, by the principle of law nobody ever can be justified because, even with the best of laws, all men are sinful, and so need that justification which comes only by grace through faith.

Plumbines (plumb bobs) are not meant to straighten the building but to tell one how crooked it is and where change is needed. The Law was given as a plumbline to show us our need for a "divine reconstruction."

2). **Law shuts up** (shut in on all sides, describes fish caught in a net or trap which is a common way of fishing) all men under sin... (until they enter) "by faith (into) **Christ** Jesus"

"But the Scripture **has shut up** everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe." (Gal 3:22+)

Spurgeon - All of us, by nature are shut up like criminals in a prison that is so securely bolted and barred that there is no hope of escape for any who are immured within it. But why are all the doors shut and fastened? Why in order that Christ may come and open the one only eternal door of salvation: "that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believes."

3). **Law keeps men in custody** under the Law. **Keep** is a military term for soldier on guard. The Law keeps unbelievers under protective custody and they cannot escape.

"But before faith came, we **were kept in custody** under the law, **being shut up** to the faith which was later to be revealed." (Gal 3:23+) "until we could put our faith in the coming **Savior**" (NLT)

Spurgeon - Well do I remember when I was "shut up" in this fashion. I struggled and strove with might and main to get out, but I found no way of escape. I was "shut up" until faith came, and opened the door and brought me out into "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

4). **Law serves as a tutor** ("guardian," "custodian," "disciplinarian.") to lead us to Christ. The "**pedagogue**" had the responsibility of taking a child to the schoolmaster in the morning and leaving him there) -

"Therefore the Law has become our **tutor** to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith." (Gal 3:24+) "until **Christ** came" (NLT)

Spurgeon - The **pedagogue** was a slave who led the children to school, and sometimes whipped them to school. That is what the law did with us; it took us under its management, and whipped us, and drove us to Christ.

God didn't give His Law to save us. We are saved (delivered from God's judgment) by His undeserved favor through faith in Christ

and His death on our behalf (Eph. 2:8–9+). He paid the penalty that we deserved. When we trust in Christ, God puts our sin on Christ and imputes Christ's righteousness to us. Only after putting your trust in Christ and receiving His indwelling Holy Spirit can you begin to obey His Law.

Good But Guilty

Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. —James 2:10

Was the apostle Paul right when he declared that “there is none righteous” and “all have sinned”? (Romans 3:10,23). Or is that verdict of condemnation too sweeping?

Many people might protest. They don't see themselves as rebels against the laws of society or the laws of God. They consider themselves to be good people. So why condemn them as deserving God's judgment?

According to James, “Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10). In God's eyes, it takes only one act of disobedience to put us in the company of those who have broken His law and deserve His judgment.

Can any of us claim that we've never violated one of God's laws? What about the command not to covet? (Exodus 20:17). The truth is that all of us at some time or other have been guilty of longing to possess what belongs to someone else. Paul himself confessed that he was guilty of this sin and deserved God's judgment (Romans 7:7-10).

We may be relatively good, but in the eyes of a perfectly holy God we've fallen far short of His standards. We all need the guilt-cleansing grace that Jesus Christ alone provides.

Have you humbly acknowledged your guilt and received the gift of forgiveness that Jesus offers? —V C Grounds [Our Daily Bread](#). Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

I am trusting Thee, Lord Jesus—

Trusting only Thee;

Trusting Thee for full salvation,

Great and free.

—Havergal

Christ died for sinners—both good and bad.

Exodus 20:2 "I am the LORD your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

- **I am the LORD your God** - Ge 17:7,8 Lev 26:1,13 De 5:6 6:4,5 2Ch 28:5 Ps 50:7 81:10 Jer 31:1,33 Ho 13:4 Ro 3:29 10:12
- **who brought you** - Ex 10:1-15:27 Lev 19:36 23:43
- **out of the land of Egypt** - Ex 13:3 De 5:15 7:8 13:10 15:15 26:6-8
- Exodus 20 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

BROUGHT OUT OF IDOLATRY AND SLAVERY

Why do the Ten Commandments begin with Yahweh's self-declaration? One of the main reasons is because "the character of God undergirds everything. God tells them to do something because of who He is." (Tony Merida) If He had said I am a stick, and then given Ten Commandments, they would be meaningless. Notice also the repeated phrase in God's self-disclosure - "out of the...out of the." The point is crystal clear that God wants to emphasize to the sons of Israel that they are now no longer in a land rampant with idolatry and no longer in bondage. They have in effect been delivered from **idolatry** and from **slavery**. In a word, they now have "freedom!" What the Ten Commandments will clearly show the Israelites is that their newly bestowed freedom does not mean they now have the right to do as they please, but that now they have the privilege to do what pleases God. And what pleases God is living within the ten basic "boundaries" He will give to them in the Ten Commandments. In short His Ten Words are meant not to be onerous and oppressive, but to be words that if followed followed lead to life and blessing.

Mattoon - God identified Himself. He reminded them of His power, protection, and past. I brought you out of Egypt and have some things to say to you now. I have some guidelines and rules to lay down. If you want to please me, then obey me! If you want to demonstrate your love to the Lord today, then obey Him. He has not changed on this issue. John 14:15

It is interesting to read the commentaries on this first commandment. It seems crystal clear if read in the normal sense **-NO OTHER GODS. PERIOD.** There is only one true and living God. That settles all the erudite arguments. There are no other true gods. All are false, counterfeit gods with a little "g."

John Currid - The First Commandment tells us that we are to shun other gods. For us to trust in anything more than the Lord is to make that thing a god. And idolatry can take many different forms, whether it be riches, glory, wisdom, or one's physical appetites—it is giving homage to anything but Yahweh! As Calvin comments, 'Let us be content simply to have one sole God and let him suffice.' (EPSC-Ex)

Sadly, Israel did not obey the second commandment even days after they had heard the terrifying voice of Yahweh give the commandment at Mount Sinai! **What does that say about the power of the old sin nature?** That's a rhetorical question of course, for Sin continually seeks to "reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts." (Ro 6:12+, cf Ro 6:16+). If they "backslid" that fast, then beloved, marked it down, you and I can backslide just as fast or even faster (because we have not seen the scene at Mount Sinai!). Moses records the tragic story...

Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, "Come, **make us a god** who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."(Ex 32:1, read the full account - Ex 32:1-9+).

They made a calf in Horeb and worshiped a molten image. 20 Thus they exchanged (Same verb **allasso** in Ro 1:23!) their glory (THE GLORY OF THEIR MAJESTIC GOD) for the image of an ox that eats grass. 21 (**WHAT WAS THE ROOT PROBLEM? They forgot** God their Savior, Who had done great things in Egypt, (Ps 106:19-21)

APPLICATION - Read the Word of God daily, seeking especially to be reminded of the greatness of our God and the great thing He has accomplished for us in redemption through His Son Christ Jesus! If you are not in the Book, then you are in the world (cf Ro 12:2+) and the latter will "blur" out the truth of the former and you will fall into idolatry! It is almost a certainty! We all do well to rehearse the greatness of our salvation from slavery to Sin into the freedom in Christ. We often times emphasize the latter, which is fine, but we do well to not forget the greatness of the deliverance that brought us into Christ and freedom! Perhaps it would be wise to allot a portion of our prayers each morning to meditating on this truth, lest we fall into the same trap Israel did and forget what great things our Savior has done!

"Has a nation changed gods when they were not gods? But My people have changed (Same verb **allasso** in Ro 1:23!) their glory (THEIR GLORIOUS GOD!) for that ("a god") which does not profit. (Jeremiah 2:11)

In his great sermon before the antagonistic Jews, **Stephen** alluded to the ongoing idolatry of the first generation of Israel that came out of Egypt...

"This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, 'GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN.' 38 "This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and who was with our fathers; and he received living oracles to pass on to you. 39 "Our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him, but repudiated him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt, 40 SAYING TO AARON, '**MAKE FOR US GODS** WHO WILL GO BEFORE US; FOR THIS MOSES WHO LED US OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT—WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM.' 41 "At that time they **made a calf** and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and were rejoicing in the works of their hands. 42 "But God turned away and delivered them up to serve the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, '**IT WAS NOT TO ME THAT YOU OFFERED VICTIMS AND SACRIFICES FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS, WAS IT, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL? 43 'YOU ALSO TOOK ALONG THE TABERNACLE OF MOLOCH AND THE STAR OF THE GOD ROMPHA, THE IMAGES WHICH YOU MADE TO WORSHIP** (quoting Amos 5:26). I ALSO WILL REMOVE YOU BEYOND BABYLON.' (Acts 7:37-43+)

If Israel was delivered from Egypt in about 1446 BC, so the following words were written over 100+ years later by aged Joshua. So again after the second generation had possessed most of the promised land under his leadership, Joshua gave his last words warning to the sons of Israel:

"Now, therefore, **fear the LORD** (SEE THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS FEAR IN Ex 20:20+) and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and **put away the gods** which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt (THE IMPLICATION IS THEY WERE STILL CLINGING TO THE EGYPTIAN GODS!), and serve the LORD 15 If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether **the**

Johnny's parents were going shopping," she read to them. "They asked Johnny to wash the dishes while they were gone. When they returned, however, Johnny was watching cartoons and the dishes still were unwashed." In one accord the class responded, "Honor thy Father and Mother!" "Good," said the teacher. "Ann went shopping with her mother but when no one was looking, she slipped a candy bar into her pocket." Again, the class was quick: "Thou shalt not steal!" "Great," said the teacher. "Andy was a cruel little boy and had a bad temper. He got angry with his little sister one day and, grabbing her pet kitten, he threatened to pull its tail off." Now this was a much tougher example. Everyone was real quiet for a moment but then one little fellow brightened up and shouted, "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder!"

We are not under the condemning power of the Law as Christians. We are, however, under its commanding power. It is to be our guide in godly living as Christians.

Obedying God's Law gives us an opportunity to demonstrate our love and obedience to the Lord. Love for God is expressed by obedience to His will and Word.

Golden Gods

You shall have no other gods before Me. —Exodus 20:3

Today's Scripture: Exodus 12:29-36

God had seized the attention of Pharaoh and the Egyptians with a series of plagues. Now they were dying to be rid of their Hebrew slaves. But God didn't want the Israelites to leave Egypt empty-handed. After all, they had 400 years of wages due them. So they asked their former masters for articles of silver, gold, and clothing, and they got them. Exodus 12:36 says that the Israelites "plundered the Egyptians."

It wasn't long, however, until God's people fell into idolatry. They used their gold to make a golden calf, which they worshiped while Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the law (32:1-4).

This tragic experience highlights the tension that Christians are required to maintain in relation to their possessions. There is much in our society that we may enjoy, but material things can also pose grave dangers when we use them unwisely. Os Guinness says that we are "free to utilize" but "forbidden to idolize." We are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13), and we must not become so enamored with "the treasures in Egypt" (v.26) that we grow complacent and forget our true calling.

Are we using our material blessings to serve the Lord— or have we become slaves to them? By: Haddon W. Robinson [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

I have an old nature that noisily clamors
To satisfy empty desire;
But God in His goodness has sent me a Helper
Who whispers, "Your calling is higher."
—Gustafson

Gold can be a helpful servant but a cruel master.

Murphy's Laws

You shall have no other gods before Me. —Exodus 20:3

Today's Scripture: Exodus 20:1-17

Murphy's Laws are observations about life that seem to have the weight of experience behind them. You've probably heard this one: "If anything can go wrong, it will." Here's another one: "You can't do just one thing; everything has its consequences."

My own experience seems to confirm many of Murphy's Laws, but it's that second one that I would hang on the wall as a motto. Wrong choices have their consequences. For example, if we choose to live for pleasure, that will affect our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren (Ex. 20:4-5). If we walk away from God, we may discover that our children have taken that trip with us. Later, even if we return to Him, they may not.

But there is also good news. Devotion to the Lord has its consequences too. Men and women who live in faith before God can have a strong influence on their children and their children's children. If they live a long life, they can witness the effect their faith has had on several generations. What satisfaction it brings to older people to see their posterity living for Christ!

Murphy and the Bible agree on this point: "Everything has its consequences." By: Haddon W. Robinson ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

If you sow seeds of wickedness,
Sin's harvest you will reap;
But scattered seeds of righteousness
Yield blessings you can keep.

—Sper

People who follow Christ lead others in the right direction.

Only Room For One

BRITISH statesman W. E. Gladstone (1809–98) visited Christ Church College and spoke optimistically about the betterment of English society during his lifetime. His outlook was so positive that a student challenged him:

"Sir, are there no adverse signs?"

Gladstone reflected,

"Yes, there is one thing that frightens me—the fear that God seems to be dying out of the minds of men."

Obedying the first commandment would prevent this from happening. Yet people attempt to make gods out of such things as money, possessions, pleasure, knowledge, and people, and in so doing forget the true God. But no created thing can ever fill the place in our hearts that God intends for Himself.

A child was asked,

"How many gods are there?"

"Only one," he replied.

"How do you know?"

"Because," he said, "God fills heaven and earth, so there's room for only one."

Why does God command us to love and worship Him alone? Because in Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28), and from Him we receive eternal life (Colossians 1:13–18). He has every right to say, "No other gods!" because He alone is the living and true God who created us and redeemed us. —D J De Haan

Lord, just as there is room for only one God in the universe, there is room for only one in my heart. Take away every desire I have that threatens to crowd You out. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Who Is On The Throne?

According to English poet Oliver Reynolds, an old man had a family altar where he burned incense to an engraving of Napoleon. When asked why he worshiped the picture as a god, the man replied that he would worship anything.

Imagine venerating a picture of that French general! Imagine burning incense to the portrait of a human being who has no meaningful relationship to his worshipers! That's idolatry at its worst!

We don't think of ourselves as idolaters, of course, but are we in subtle ways disobeying God's commandment: "You shall have no other gods before Me"? (Exodus 20:3). We would never dream of bowing down to the picture of any mortal, however famous or powerful. But who is on the throne of our hearts?

Are we giving a loved one first place in our lives? Is that person number one in our affections? Maybe we're worshiping money. Or perhaps our job is our top priority.

Jesus said, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve" (Luke 4:8). Are we worshiping and serving only Him?

Spend some time alone with God to examine your heart. Make sure that you haven't become an idolater. —Vernon C Grounds [Our](#)

Unless we worship only God
Our lives cannot be truly free;
For we were made for Him alone—
All else is but idolatry.
—D. De Haan

An idol is anything that takes the place of God

Exodus 20:4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth."

NET Exodus 20:4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is on the earth beneath or that is in the water below.

NLT Exodus 20:4 "You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea.

ESV Exodus 20:4 "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.

LXE Exodus 20:4 Thou shalt not make to thyself an idol, nor likeness of anything, whatever things are in the heaven above, and whatever are in the earth beneath, and whatever are in the waters under the earth.

KJV Exodus 20:4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

NIV Exodus 20:4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

ASV Exodus 20:4 Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

CSB Exodus 20:4 Do not make an idol for yourself, whether in the shape of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth.

NKJ Exodus 20:4 "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;

NRS Exodus 20:4 You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

YLT Exodus 20:4 'Thou dost not make to thyself a graven image, or any likeness which is in the heavens above, or which is in the earth beneath, or which is in the waters under the earth.

NAB Exodus 20:4 You shall not carve idols for yourselves in the shape of anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters beneath the earth;

NJB Exodus 20:4 'You shall not make yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything in heaven above or on earth beneath or in the waters under the earth.

GWN Exodus 20:4 Never make your own carved idols or statues that represent any creature in the sky, on the earth, or in the water.

- Ex 32:1,8,23 Ex 34:17 Lev 19:4 Lev 26:1 De 4:15-19,23-25 Dt 5:8 Dt 27:15 1Ki 12:28 2Ch 33:7 Ps 97:7 115:4-8 135:15-18 Isa 40:18-20 Isa 42:8,17 44:9-20 45:16 46:5-8 Jer 10:3-5,8,9,14-16 Eze 8:10 Ac 17:29 19:26-35 Ro 1:23 Rev 9:20 13:14,15 14:9-11 Rev 16:2
- Exodus 20 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**THE SECOND COMMANDMENT:
HAVE NO IDOLS**

Paul explains the pathology of our heart disease which **impels us to pursue idols**..

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth (**ACTIVELY HOLD DOWN THE TRUTH - THIS IS THE ROOT PROBLEM**) in unrighteousness, 19 because that (**SPEAKING OF TRUTH**) which is known about God is evident within them (**INTERNAL CONSCIOUSNESS THAT GOD EXISTS**); for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse (**CREATION CALLS FOR A POWERFUL CREATOR**). 21 For even though they knew God (**READ THAT AGAIN - NO "ATHEISTS" HERE!**), they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations (**DENIAL OF GOD COMPELS "INVENTION" OF GODS**), and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 (**THE RESULT OF DENYING GOD IS TO MAKE "GODS"**) and exchanged (**A BAD EXCHANGE**) the glory of the incorruptible God for an image (**IDOLS**) **in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures**. 25 For they **exchanged the truth of God** for a (**LITERALLY "THE"**) **lie**, and **worshiped and served** (**THE VERY PATTERN YAHWEH WARNS ABOUT IN Ex 20:5**) the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. (Ro 1:18-25+)

When we pursue idols, we are in effect ascribing the glory and praise of God to those who are no gods at all! Hear the word regarding God's glory...

God Himself declares...

I am the LORD, that is My Name; **I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images.**
(Isaiah 42:8)

John writes...

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God....14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw **His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father**, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-2, 14+)

John MacArthur points out that "Total censure of artistic expression was not the issue; the absolute censure of idolatry and false worship was the issue." (Borrow [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

Guzik - The second commandment doesn't forbid making an image of something for artistic purposes; God Himself commanded Israel make images of cherubim (Exodus 25:18, 26:31). It forbids the making of images as an aid or help to worship....In John 4:24 Jesus explained the rationale behind the second commandment: God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. The use of images and other material things as a focus or help to worship denies who God is (Spirit) and how we must worship Him (in spirit and truth). ([Enduring Word Commentary - Exodus 20](#))

Phillip Ryken - This commandment is about worshiping the right God in the right way. God refuses to be worshiped by means of images. This shows that he is spirit, that he does not have a physical form. The mention of the heavens and the earth also shows that he is the Creator. One problem with idols is that they confuse the Creator with his creation. (See [Exodus: Saved for God's Glory](#))

Alan Cole - "If the making of cherubim was permitted, then the prohibition of the 'image' will refer only to the making of direct objects of worship." (See [Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

John Currid rightly reminds us that "After having been in Egypt for four centuries, the Hebrews would have been greatly affected by Egyptian religious practice. Now, however, God disallows any such polytheistic and pagan worship....We are not to make an image of God, according to the Second Commandment. However, it is our inclination to do so. We are drawn to such superstitions. But, as Calvin rightly says, 'God should be purely worshipped by us according to his nature and not according to our imagination.' When we make images of God we are re-creating Him in our own image." (EPSC-Ex)

Alan Cole on idol - Graven image (NEB carved image): the Hebrew means something hacked or chiselled into some 'likeness'. These are primitive days; such idols are normally of wood (though the word could cover stone carving as well), usually with some precious metal covering. The 'cast metal' image is also implicitly forbidden (Exod. 34:17), but it is not mentioned here because it belongs on the whole to a later age (yet cf. the golden calf, Exod. 32:4). (See [Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

You shall not make for yourself an idol(carved image, graven image) - Note first that this command does not forbid all art or sculpture. Even the tabernacle had the cherubim hovering over the Ark of the Covenant. On the other hand if we begin to worship or pray to the art form, that is idolatry! As Paul explains above, men have a built in consciousness of God and when they deny His

Sa 5:2; 1 Sa 5:3; 1 Sa 5:4; 1 Sa 5:5; 1 Sa 5:7; 1 Chr. 10:10). The Egyptians worshiped the fish goddess [Hatmehit](#).

Related Resources:

- [What are some modern forms of idolatry?](#) -- **READ THIS ONE! ESPECIALLY IF YOU THINK IDOLATRY IS A THING OF THE PAST!**
- [Why is idol worship such a powerful temptation?](#)
- [Do Catholics worship idols / practice idolatry?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about eating food/meat that has been sacrificed to idols?](#)
- [Why was the worship of Baal and Asherah a constant struggle for the Israelites?](#)
- [What is a graven image?](#)
- [What should we learn from the golden calf incident in Exodus 32?](#)
- [What sort of pagan revelry did the Israelites indulge in \(Exodus 32:6\)?](#)
- [Why did people keep family idols?](#)
- American Tract Society [Idol, Idolatry](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Idol, idolatry](#)
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary [Idol, Idolatry](#)
- Charles Buck Dictionary [Idolatry](#)
- CARM Theological Dictionary [Idol, idolatry](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Idolatry](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Idolatry](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Idolatry](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Idolatry](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Idolatry](#)
- King James Dictionary [Idolatry](#)
- Vines' Expository Dictionary [Idolatry](#)
- Webster Dictionary [Idolatry](#), [Idolatrical](#), [Idolatry](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Idolatry](#)
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Idolatry](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Idolatry](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Idolatry](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Idolatry](#)
- The Nuttall Encyclopedia [Idolatry](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Idolatry and Idols](#)

UNSEEN MAJESTY

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image." -- Exodus 20:4

The Encyclopedia Britannica describes Marcus Terentius Varro (116-27 BC) as "Rome's greatest scholar." He wrote more than 600 books on many subjects. Among his writings is this statement: "They who first introduced images of the gods removed fear and added error."

This profound statement helps us understand why Moses reminded Israel at Sinai, "You saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire" (Dt. 4:15). It also underscores the reason behind God's command prohibiting any physical representations of Him.

We cannot love and serve the Lord in an acceptable manner unless we have an accurate understanding of His character. Any physical portrayal, however, whether with pictures, icons, or statues, distorts our perception of His true character and lessens a healthy respect for His awesome holiness and power.

If Rome's greatest secular scholar, guided only by the light of nature and reason, could see the dangers of misrepresenting deity, how much more should we who have special revelation carefully attend to every word God has spoken.

Let's ask the Lord to instill in us a healthy respect of Him and help us grow in our knowledge of His character. -- Dennis J. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,

Almighty, victorious -- Thy great name we praise.

-- Smith

God made us in His image; don't try to make Him in yours

Rod Mattoon on the **Bronze Serpent** in Numbers 21 - What about the brazen serpent Moses made? Was that wrong? Who gave the command to make it? God did.

Numbers 21:8 a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live."

God had a special purpose for the brazen serpent. It was not for worship, but for the healing of rebellious people bitten by snakes. Later in history, when Israel looked upon it with too much reverence and began to burn incense, Hezekiah defaced it and called it [Nehushtan](#) which means "only a piece of brass."

2 Kings 18:4- He removed the high places and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah. He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called [Nehushtan](#).

Related Resources:

- [Why is a bronze serpent used to save the Israelites in Numbers 21:8-9?](#)
- [What was Nehushtan?](#) - Excerpt = Interestingly, the word Nehushtan appears to simply mean "piece of brass." Perhaps Hezekiah named it "Nehushtan" to remind people that it was only a piece of brass. It had no power in it. Even in the Numbers 21 incident, it was God who healed, not Nehushtan. [Nehushtan should be a powerful reminder to us all that even good things—and good people—can become idols in our lives.](#) Our praise, worship, and adoration are to be directed to God alone. Nothing else, regardless of its amazing history, is worthy.

Question: ["What is the definition of idolatry?"](#)

Answer: The definition of idolatry, according to Webster, is "the worship of idols or excessive devotion to, or reverence for some person or thing." An idol is anything that replaces the one, true God. The most prevalent form of idolatry in Bible times was the worship of images that were thought to embody the various pagan deities.

From the beginning, God's covenant with Israel was based on exclusive worship of Him alone (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7). The Israelites were not even to mention the names of false gods (Exodus 23:13) because to do so would acknowledge their existence and give credence to their power and influence over the people. Israel was forbidden to intermarry with other cultures who embraced false gods, because God knew this would lead to compromise. The book of Hosea uses the imagery of adultery to describe Israel's continual chasing after other gods, like an unfaithful wife chases after other men. The history of Israel is a sad chronicle of idol worship, punishment, restoration and forgiveness, followed by a return to idolatry. The books of 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, and 1 & 2 Chronicles reveal this destructive pattern. The Old Testament prophets endlessly prophesied dire consequences for Israel if they continued in their idolatry. Mostly, they were ignored until it was too late and God's wrath against idol-worship was poured out on the nation. But ours is a merciful God, and He never failed to forgive and restore them when they repented and sought His forgiveness.

In reality, idols are impotent blocks of stone or wood, and their power exists only in the minds of the worshipers. The idol of the god Dagon was twice knocked to the floor by God to show the Philistines just who was God and who wasn't (1 Samuel 5:1-5). The "contest" between God and His prophet Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel is a dramatic example of the power of the true God and the impotence of false gods (1 Kings 18:19-40). The testimony of Scripture is that God alone is worthy of worship. Idol worship robs God of the glory that is rightfully His, and that is something He will not tolerate (Isaiah 42:8).

Even today there are religions that bow before statues and icons, a practice forbidden by God's Word. The significance God places upon it is reflected in the fact that the first of the Ten Commandments refers to idolatry: "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me" (Exodus 20:3-5).

Idolatry extends beyond the worship of idols and images and false gods. Our modern idols are many and varied. Even for those who do not bow physically before a statue, idolatry is a matter of the heart—pride, self-centeredness, greed, gluttony, a love for possessions and ultimately rebellion against God. Is it any wonder that God hates it?

God, responding to the transgression of fathers by dealing with children to the third and fourth generations of those who reject me,

NLT Exodus 20:5 You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected-- even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me.

ESV Exodus 20:5 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,

LXE Exodus 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor serve them; for I am the Lord thy God, a jealous God, recompensing the sins of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generation to them that hate me,

KJV Exodus 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

NIV Exodus 20:5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,

ASV Exodus 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them, for I Jehovah thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me,

CSB Exodus 20:5 You must not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the fathers' sin, to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,

NKJ Exodus 20:5 you shall not bow down to them nor 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 fourth generations of those who hate Me,

NRS Exodus 20:5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me,

YLT Exodus 20:5 Thou dost not bow thyself to them, nor serve them: for I, Jehovah thy God, am a zealous God, charging iniquity of fathers on sons, on the third generation, and on the fourth, of those hating Me,

NAB Exodus 20:5 you shall not bow down before them or worship them. For I, the LORD, your God, am a jealous God, inflicting punishment for their fathers' wickedness on the children of those who hate me, down to the third and fourth generation;

NJB Exodus 20:5 'You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God and I punish a parent's fault in the children, the grandchildren, and the great-grandchildren among those who hate me;

GWN Exodus 20:5 Never worship them or serve them, because I, the LORD your God, am a God who does not tolerate rivals. I punish children for their parents' sins to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.

- **You shall not worship them** - Ex 23:24 Lev 26:1 Jos 23:7,16 Jdg 2:19 2Ki 17:35,41 2Ch 25:14 Isa 44:15,19 Mt 4:9
- **for I** - Ex 34:14 De 4:24 6:15 32:21 Jos 24:19 Ps 78:58 Pr 6:34,35 Eze 8:3 Da 1:2 Na 1:2 1Co 10:22
- **visiting** - Ex 34:7 Lev 20:5 26:29,39,40 Nu 14:18,33 1Sa 15:2,3 2Sa 21:1,6 1Ki 21:29 2Ki 23:26 Job 5:4 21:19 Ps 79:8 109:14 Isa 14:20,21 Isa 65:6,7 Jer 2:9 32:18 Mt 23:34-36
- **of them** - De 7:10 Dt 32:41 Ps 81:15 Pr 8:36 Joh 7:7 15:18,23,24 Ro 1:30 Ro 8:7 Jas 4:4
- Exodus 20 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

DO NOT BOW DOWN TO IDOLS

You shall not worship them or serve them - **Worship** can mean to bow down, in this case to graven or carved images. Note that what you "worship" or bow down is linked with serving the idols. Be careful what you bow down to! You may end up serving it! In the Septuagint the Hebrew verb for **worship** ([shachah](#)) is translated with [proskuneo](#) which gives us the picture of a person bowing down to kiss someone's feet! How sad to do this to a lifeless, worthless idol! What a picture of the subservient nature associated

John Currid on **take** (which he translates it "*pronounce*") "is literally 'to lift up', and it is a synonym for taking an oath (cf. Ex 6:8; Nu 14:30; 1 Ki 8:31). Often used in legal cases, it signifies that no one should invoke the Name of Yahweh frivolously in a court of law. But the commandment is much broader than merely the Hebrew judicial system—it applies to all of life. The reason why this act is considered so sinful may partly be understood because of the Hebrews' conception of the meaning of a name. A name often represents the nature and character of a person...Yahweh is the personal name that God himself revealed to his people. When someone insincerely or thoughtlessly invokes God's name, that person is proclaiming that God's being, nature and essence are worthless. On the positive side, the Third Commandment means that the Hebrews are to revere and honour the name of Yahweh." (Ibid)

MacArthur - To use God's Name in such a way as to bring disrepute upon His character or deeds was to irreverently misuse His name. To fail to perform an oath in which His name had been legitimately uttered (cf. Ex 22:10, 11; Lv 19:12; Dt 6:13) was to call into question His existence, since the guilty party evidently had no further thought of the God whose name he had used to improve his integrity. For the believer in the church age, however, the use of the name of God is not a needed verification of his intention and trustworthiness since his life is to exhibit truth on all occasions, with his "yes" meaning "yes" and his "no" meaning "no" (Mt 5:37; Jas 5:12) (Borrow [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

Considering that Jesus taught His disciples to pray "Our Father (GOD'S NAME) Who art in heaven,**hallowed** ([hagiazō](#) = set apart from all that is common and profane) by Thy Name." (Mt 6:9+). The idea of **hallowed** is "May Thy name be held in reverence." To misuse His Name is to profane it, in effect expressing contempt and irreverence for His Holy Name, His Name of course represents the totality of all that God is - His character, His attributes, His grace, His mercy, His holiness, etc. And so in effect by misusing His Name we make Jehovah to be nothing of value! Thus we begin to get a sense of why profaning rather than hallowing (using/treating as holy) His Name is such a serious sin!

NET Note - The command prohibits use of the name for any idle, frivolous, or insincere purpose (S. R. Driver, Exodus, 196). This would include perjury, pagan incantations, or idle talk. The name is to be treated with reverence and respect because it is the name of the holy God.

Vain (worthless, deceitful, empty, false) ([07723](#))([shav](#)) is a "masculine noun meaning emptiness, vanity, evil, ruin, uselessness, deception, worthless, without result, fraud, deceit. The primary meaning of the word is deceit, lie, or falsehood. The word is used to describe prohibition of a **false** witness" (Dt. 5:20). The most familiar use of shāṽ' is in the third commandment, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain" (Ex 20:7; Dt. 5:11).

Here are just a few passages that describe God's Name...

Psalm 8:1 For the choir director; on the Gittith. A Psalm of David. O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth, Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!

Psalm 111:9 He has sent redemption to His people; He has ordained His covenant forever; Holy and awesome is His name.

For - Term of explanation. It explains why taking the Name of God in **vain** is such a serious matter.

The LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain - "Will not hold guiltless" (NET) The main idea is that there will "pay day, some day" for every misuse of the Name of the LORD! How many today use the great Name of Jesus as a curse word, which makes me cringe every time I hear the Name above every name used as an "**expletive**!"

Guzik - The strength of this command has led to strange traditions among the Jewish people. Some go to extreme measures to avoid violating this command, refusing to even write out the word God, in the fear that the paper might be destroyed and the name of God be written in vain. ([Enduring Word Commentary - Exodus 20](#))

As **Gotquesrtions** explains "In the Old Testament, bringing dishonor on God's Name was done by failing to perform an oath or vow taken in His name (Leviticus 19:12+). The man who used God's name to legitimize his oath, and then broke his promise, would indicate his lack of reverence for God as well as a lack of fear of His holy retribution. It was essentially the same as denying God's existence. For believers, however, there is no need to use God's name to legitimize an oath as we are not to take oaths in the first place, letting our "yes be yes" and our "no be no" (Mt 5:33-37+). There is a larger sense in which people today take the Lord's name in vain. Those who Name the name of Christ, who pray in His Name, and who take His Name as part of their identity, but who deliberately and continually disobey His commands, are taking His Name in vain. Jesus Christ has been given the Name above all names, at which every knee shall bow (Philippians 2:9-10), and when we take the Name "Christian" upon ourselves, we must do so with an understanding of all that signifies. If we profess to be Christians, but act, think, and speak in a worldly or profane manner, we take His name in vain. When we misrepresent Christ, either intentionally or through ignorance of the Christian faith as proclaimed in

Scripture, we take the Lord's name in vain. When we say we love Him, but do not do what He commands (Luke 6:46), we take His name in vain and are possibly identifying ourselves to be among those to whom Christ will say, "I never knew you. Away from me" in the day of judgment (Matthew 7:21-23). The name of the Lord is holy, as He is holy. The name of the Lord is a representation of His glory, His majesty, and His supreme deity. We are to esteem and honor His name as we revere and glorify God Himself. To do any less is to take His name in vain.

THOUGHT - Every misuse of the Great Name of God (and Jesus) will one day be paid back in full! How sad that now our entertainment (if you can call it that) prides itself of permeation of the presentation with perverse speech! If you cannot find a show to watch that is free of cursing and taking God's Name in vain (and it is becoming more difficult), you might consider using [Vidangel](#), a service you can subscribe to monthly, which blanks out the bad language and bad scenes (and you can choose what to eliminate).

Related Resource:

- [What does it mean to take the Lord's name in vain?](#) Excerpt - Although many people believe taking the Lord's Name in vain refers to using the Lord's Name as a swear word, there is much more involved with a vain use of God's name.
 - [Name of the LORD is a Strong Tower: Summary](#) - Studies on many of the LORD's great names, all of which reveal some aspect of His character or attributes.
-

Exodus 20:7 Word Watch

Good grammar matters to me. As a writer and former English teacher, I'm bothered when I hear the wrong word used by people I think should know better. For instance, using "I" instead of "me" or "who" instead of "whom." There's a proper way to use the language, and it makes me cringe when the standard is violated.

There's another kind of incorrect word usage that is far worse. It happens when Christians utter words that fall short of the standard God expects. Whenever we use words that are considered crude, profane, or obscene, we violate God's clear standards.

Anytime we speak any form of God's name irreverently or in a way that doesn't honor Him, we displease Him (Exodus 20:7). If we joke about sinful practices, we are speaking in a way we shouldn't (Ep 5:12). Or if we participate in coarse talk (Ep 5:4), we bring dishonor to the name of Christ.

James said, "Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. . . . These things ought not to be so" (James 3:10). Such speech is hypocritical.

Controlling our tongue is difficult because it is an "unruly evil" (Jas 3:8). For the glory of God, and with respect for His standards, let's watch our words. —Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

A wise old owl sat on an oak;
The more he saw, the less he spoke;
The less he spoke, the more he heard—
Why aren't we like that wise old bird?
—Richards

Every time you speak, your mind is on parade

The Name

It's not easy to keep up with the shorthand that accompanies today's fast-paced, youth-oriented electronic communication. In IM-speak (Instant Message talk) or text-message language, "laughing out loud" becomes "lol." "By the way" is "btw." And regrettably, some people use "omg" for "Oh, my God!"

This last phrase seems to be on the lips of many who receive startling news. But as Christians, we need to stop before we utter this or any other phrase that flippantly uses God's name.

In Matthew 6, when Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, the first thing He told them to say was this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name" (Mt 6:9). Clearly, God's name itself is special. It encompasses His nature, His teachings, and His moral authority. To speak the name of God is to call on the Creator and Sustainer of the universe.

In every way possible, we should honor and protect God's holy name, preserving its use for those occasions when we are speaking

of Him or addressing Him in faith.

Let's be careful never to turn the hallowed name of our awesome and mighty God into just another flippant phrase on our lips or in a text message. —Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

May all I am and do and say
Give glory to my Lord alway;
And may no act of mine cause shame
Nor bring reproach upon His name.
—Anon.

God's name: handle with care.

Holy Is Your Name

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God. Exodus 20:7

One afternoon I was having a discussion with a friend I considered my spiritual mentor about misusing God's name. "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God," says the third commandment (Ex. 20:7). We may think this only refers to attaching God's name to a swear word or using His name flippantly or irreverently. But my mentor rarely missed an opportunity to teach me about real faith. He challenged me to think about other ways we profane God's name.

When I reject the advice of others and say, "God told me to go this way," I misuse His name if all I am doing is seeking approval for my own desires.

When I use Scripture out of context to try to support an idea I want to be true, I am using God's name in vain.

When I teach, write, or speak from Scripture carelessly, I misuse His name.

Author John Piper offers this reflection on what it means to take God's name in vain: "The idea is . . . 'don't empty the name.' . . . Don't empty God of His weight and glory." We misuse His name, Piper says, when we "speak of God in a way that empties Him of His significance."

My friend challenged me to honor God's name and to pay closer attention to using His Word carefully and accurately. Anything less dishonors Him.

Heavenly Father, help me to glorify Your name and to honor You always in what I say and do.

God's name: handle with care.

INSIGHT: The Ten Commandments are divided into two sections—vertical and horizontal. The first section (Ex. 20:1-11) deals with the response of the people to God (vertical). These laws have to do with God's exclusive right to worship, an admonition against idols, honoring God's name, and setting aside the Sabbath for worship. The remaining commands (Exodus 20:12-17) deal with how we relate to one another (horizontal). This includes honoring parents, life, and marriage; respecting the property of others; being truth-speakers; and not coveting what isn't ours. This two-fold set of instructions mirrors the Great Commandment (Matt. 22:37-40), which calls us to love God with all our being and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Both vertical and horizontal elements are again in view in this commandment. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The Third Commandment EXODUS 20:7 "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" (v. 7).

Now that we have considered the three uses of the Law and have briefly considered the comprehensiveness of the Ten Commandments, we will examine two of these statutes and their applications today. The first commandment we will study is probably the most widely broken law in the society at large and perhaps in the church as well. We are speaking of the third commandment, which forbids us from taking the name of the Lord in vain (Ex. 20:7).

The term vain is a synonym for futile; thus, the third commandment is warning us not to use God's name in a futile or trivial manner. This is something our Creator takes very seriously, for the commandment adds a special note that He "will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain" in order to make us pause before we use the Lord's name flippantly. If the commandments enjoin the opposite of what they forbid, this law mandates that we set apart the name of God as holy. Jesus Himself indicates this is the case when He tells us the very first thing we should pray for is that the Lord's name be hallowed (Luke 11:2).

Outright blasphemy is an obvious transgression of this commandment, but it can be violated in other ways as well. A common violation of this law occurs in the swearing of oaths. When we ask the Almighty to bear witness to a vow, we testify that He is omniscient and able to see every point at which we break or keep an oath. Moreover, we witness to His omnipotence, confessing that He can and will deal with us even if no one else disciplines us for breaking a promise. To swear an oath by anything besides the Lord attributes these qualities wrongly to something created and makes us guilty of idolatry. For example, we might casually swear on our mother's grave to affirm the truth of our words, but what can our mother's grave do to us if we do not keep our promise?

Christians can misuse God's name in saying things like "the Lord moved me to tell you ..." when we feel that a friend needs to hear a special word. Yet this intuition does not necessarily find its origin in God's prompting, and we should not attribute words to the Lord unless they are found in Scripture. Otherwise we might put false words in His mouth and inadvertently make Him a liar. (Tabletalk)

Commandment 3—Respect God's Name

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. —Exodus 20:7

The third commandment was taken so seriously by Israel that at one time the scribes wouldn't even write the name Yahweh (Jehovah) until they had first taken a bath and changed their clothes. Then after they had written it, they would take another bath and change their clothes again.

Their focus on the word itself, however, often overlooked the broader implications of the commandment. J. I. Packer says, "What is forbidden is any use or involvement of God's name that is empty, frivolous, or insincere." This includes any kind of irreverence, because it fails to take seriously God's character and reputation which is represented by His name. Nor are we to use the name God or Jesus Christ as profanity, because this expresses neither praise, worship, nor faith.

The commandment also relates to breaking a promise when God's name is used to back one's word. But even when no reference is made to God, every promise we make to another is done in God's presence and is therefore as binding as if we had invoked His name.

How the third commandment condemns us all! But thank God for the name Jesus, which means Savior. He provides the forgiveness and help we need to keep the third commandment and become men and women known for being true to their word. ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

- In what ways do I hear people misusing God's name?
- How am I guilty of breaking this command?

If you care about God, handle His name with care.

Exodus 20:8 "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."

- Ex 16:23-30 31:13,14 Ge 2:3 Lev 19:3 23:3 Isa 56:4-6
- Exodus 20 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

FOURTH COMMANDMENT: KEEP THE SABBATH

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy - Note this command is not prohibitive (begin with a negative) but is a positive call to **remember** and then it explains that reason the Israelites needed to remember was that they needed to keep it as a set apart **day**. In other words, if they did not **remember** it, they would not treat it as a holy day. The mental process of **remember** energizes the action necessary to **keep** the Sabbath holy. Stated another way, the purpose of remembering the day is that one might keep it holy. **To keep it holy** means to treat it as a special day, to celebrate it as a day which is distinct, a day that is considered "separated" (meaning of holy) from the other six days.

[John Currid](#) on the verb **remember** - The force of the order is underscored by the first word, **Remember**, which is an infinitive absolute. An infinitive absolute in Hebrew may, at times, serve as a legislative command. The Sabbath day is not a new concept. It was already in effect in Exodus 16 and as early as Genesis 2:1-3. It is, in fact, a creation ordinance. The purpose of its appearance in the Decalogue is to fix it formally into the written code of covenant law. In other words, the Sabbath was established earlier, but now it is definitively inscribed in stone. (Ibid)

God in giving Israel manna for 6 days had already taught the sons of Israel the principle that the seventh day, the Sabbath day, was

a special day...

Now on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, 23 then he said to them, "This is what the LORD meant: Tomorrow is a **sabbath** observance, a **holy sabbath to the LORD**. Bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning." 24 So they put it aside until morning, as Moses had ordered, and it did not become foul nor was there any worm in it. 25 Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is a **sabbath to the LORD**; today you will not find it in the field. 26 "Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the **sabbath**, there will be none." 27 It came about on the **seventh day** that some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. 28 Then the LORD said to Moses, "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My instructions? 29 "See, the LORD has given you the **sabbath**; therefore He gives you bread for two days on the sixth day. Remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the **seventh day**." 30 So the people rested on the **seventh day**. (Ex 16:22-30+)

NET Note on **remember** - The text uses the infinitive absolute זָכַח (zakhor) for the commandment for the Sabbath day, which is the sign of the Sinaitic Covenant. The infinitive absolute functions in place of the emphatic imperative here (see GKC 346 §113.bb); the absolute stresses the basic verbal idea of the root—remembering. The verb ([zakar](#)) includes the mental activity of recalling and pondering as well as the consequent actions for such remembering. (**COMMENT** - The Septuagint translate **remember** with the verb [mimnesko](#) in the [aorist imperative](#), a command to "Just Do It!")

NET Note says "To set this day apart as holy taught Israel the difference between the holy and the profane, that there was something higher than daily life. If an Israelite bent down to the ground laboring all week, the Sabbath called his attention to the heavens, to pattern life after the Creator (B. Jacob, Exodus, 569–70)."

Guzik - In their traditions, the Jewish people came to carefully quantify what they thought could and could not be done on the Sabbath day, in order to keep it holy. For example, in Luke 6:1–2, in the mind of the Jewish leaders, the disciples were guilty of four violations of the Sabbath every time they took a bite of grain out in the field, because they reaped, threshed, winnowed, and prepared food. Ancient Rabbis taught that on the Sabbath, a man could not carry something in his right hand or in his left hand, across his chest or on his shoulder. But he could carry something with the back of his hand, his foot, his elbow, or in his ear, his hair, or in the hem of his shirt, or in his shoe or sandal. Or on the Sabbath Israelites were forbidden to tie a knot—except, a woman could tie a knot in her girdle. So, if a bucket of water had to be raised from a well, an Israelite could not tie a rope to the bucket, but a woman could tie her girdle to the bucket and pull it up from the well. In observant Jewish homes today, one cannot turn on a light, a stove, or a switch on the Sabbath. It is forbidden to drive a certain distance or to make a telephone call—all carefully regulated by traditions seeking to spell out the law exactly. ([Enduring Word Commentary - Exodus 20](#))

Practically speaking the celebration of the Sabbath was a divine lesson that would help reenforce in the minds of the Hebrew the essence of the meaning of the word holy. Ultimately God was far more interested in Israel "internalizing" this truth, so that their lives all week would be like the Sabbath day on the seventh day. In other words the keeping of the Sabbath was pointing to the holiness of God, a holiness that He desired for His people to demonstrate. In this way the pagan nations would see a difference in the lives of the people of God and some might be attracted to examine Jehovah and even to come to know Him. One thinks of the pagan Moabitess Ruth who saw a difference in her mother-in-law Naomi prompting Ruth to declare "where you (NAOMI) go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me." (Ru 1:16-17)

THOUGHT - Today while believers are not required to keep the Sabbath, nevertheless they are called to a lifestyle to which the Sabbath pointed, a separated life, a distinct life, a holy life. Peter picked up this thought even commanding his readers to live set apart lives "**Sanctify** ([hagiazō](#) [same verb used in Lxx of Ex 20:8 "keep...holy"]) in the [aorist imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#) Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence." (1 Peter 3:15+). We see this same principle of the attractive power of a separated, distinct life in Php 2:14-15+ where our supernaturally enabled ability "**Do** ([resent imperative](#) see [need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#) = Php 2:13NLT+) all things without grumbling..." would result in us appearing "as lights in the (DARK, GODLESS) world." Is the light of Christ's life shining in your life?

Remember (02142)([zakar](#)) speaks of the mental activity of recalling and [meditating](#) on the truth as well as the consequent actions which emanate from the act of remembering.

Sabbath (07676)([sabbat](#) from verb [shabath](#) = desist from exertion, cease) means intermission, the Sabbath (day), the day of rest, the holy seventh day; a week, the sacred 7th year, a sabbatical year. It was not until the

could apply (cf. Dt 21:18–21). One of the reasons for the Babylonian exile was a failure to honor parents (Eze 22:7, 15). The Apostle Paul individualized this national promise when he applied the truth to believers in his day (cf. Mt 15:4; Mk 7:10; Eph 6:1–3). (Borrow [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

Question: ["What does it mean to honor my father and mother?"](#)

Answer: Honoring your father and mother is being respectful in word and action and having an inward attitude of esteem for their position. The Greek word for honor means “to revere, prize, and value.” Honor is giving respect not only for merit but also for rank. For example, some Americans may disagree with the President’s decisions, but they should still respect his position as leader of their country. Similarly, children of all ages should honor their parents, regardless of whether or not their parents “deserve” honor.

God exhorts us to honor father and mother. He values honoring parents enough to include it in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:12) and again in the New Testament: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother which is the first commandment with a promise, so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth” (Ephesians 6:1-3). Honoring parents is the only command in Scripture that promises long life as a reward. Those who honor their parents are blessed (Jeremiah 35:18-19). In contrast, those with a “depraved mind” and those who exhibit ungodliness in the last days are characterized by disobedience to parents (Romans 1:30; 2 Timothy 3:2).

Solomon, the wisest man, urged children to respect their parents (Proverbs 1:8; 13:1; 30:17). Although we may no longer be directly under their authority, we cannot outgrow God’s command to honor our parents. Even Jesus, God the Son, submitted Himself to both His earthly parents (Luke 2:51) and His heavenly Father (Matthew 26:39). Following Christ’s example, we should treat our parents the way we would reverentially approach our heavenly Father (Hebrews 12:9; Malachi 1:6).

Obviously, we are commanded to honor our parents, but how? Honor them with both actions and attitudes (Mark 7:6). Honor their unspoken as well as spoken wishes. “A wise son heeds his father’s instruction, but a mocker does not listen to rebuke” (Proverbs 13:1). In Matthew 15:3-9, Jesus reminded the Pharisees of the command of God to honor their father and mother. They were obeying the letter of the law, but they had added their own traditions that essentially overruled it. While they honored their parents in word, their actions proved their real motive. Honor is more than lip service. The word “honor” in this passage is a verb and, as such, demands a right action.

We should seek to honor our parents in much the same way that we strive to bring glory to God—in our thoughts, words, and actions. For a young child, obeying parents goes hand in hand with honoring them. That includes listening, heeding, and submitting to their authority. After children mature, the obedience that they learned as children will serve them well in honoring other authorities such as government, police, and employers.

While we are required to honor parents, that doesn’t include imitating ungodly ones (Ezekiel 20:18-19). If a parent ever instructs a child to do something that clearly contradicts God’s commands, that child must obey God rather than his/her parents (Acts 5:29).

Honor begets honor. God will not honor those who will not obey His command to honor their parents. If we desire to please God and be blessed, we should honor our parents. Honoring is not easy, is not always fun, and certainly is not possible in our own strength. But honor is a certain path to our purpose in life—glorifying God. “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord” (Colossians 3:20). (Source: [Gotquestions.org](#))

Honoring Your Parents

Honor your father and mother. —Ephesians 6:2

Today’s Scripture: Exodus 20:1-17

My dad recently turned 90 years old and his physical capabilities are fading. He can still move around with his walker, but he needs someone to cook his meals and help him with other tasks.

My older brother Steve and his wife Judy lived close to him, so they decided to move in with Dad to care for him. Wanting to help in some way, my wife and I flew across the country to help out a bit by watching Dad while my brother and his wife had some time away together. We enjoyed our time with my father and were glad to ease Steve and Judy’s load—even if it was only for a few days.

The Bible says to “honor your father and mother” (Eph. 6:2). One New Testament commentary says that to honor someone is to “treat him with the deference, respect, reverence, kindness, courtesy, and obedience which his station in life . . . demands.”

For young children, this means obeying parents. For teenagers, it indicates showing respect for Mom and Dad even if you think you know more than they do. For young adults, this means including your parents in your life. And for those in middle-age and beyond, it

means making sure that parents are cared for as they move into old age or their health declines.

How can you honor your parents this week? By: Dennis Fisher ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Sign in to track your progress!

Don't miss the opportunity
To honor and obey
The parents God has given you—
For they'll be gone someday.
—Sper

Honoring our parents has no age limit.

The Gift Of Family

Through her books and lectures, Edith Schaeffer has become much appreciated for her insights into the value of life's ordinary days. When she and her husband Francis were first married, both sets of parents lived nearby. The newlyweds divided each Sunday afternoon and evening between the Schaeffers and the Sevilles.

After a few years, Edith and Francis moved to Switzerland, where they could talk with their parents only once a year in a brief phone conversation.

Looking back half a century later, Edith wrote of being glad for the way they had used those Sunday afternoons. She noted that "proximity of loved ones is not an endless situation." She concluded that a package labeled "time to care for parents and exhibit love" doesn't just arrive someday. We must show love while we can.

The fifth of the Ten Commandments says: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you" (Exodus 20:12). The command to love and respect our parents applies equally to children living at home, newly independent young couples, and empty-nesters.

Seize each moment you have to love and honor your family. The opportunity won't last forever. —David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Putting It Into Action

- Plan a regular time to call a family member.
- Help an aged relative with a project or housework.
- Write a letter to someone you love but cannot visit.

Time is one of the greatest gifts we can give each other.

Long Life

AN old man who lived to be one hundred attributed his longevity to booze, black cigars, beautiful women—and never going to church. "That kind of impious longevity may be the exception, not the rule," says Dr. George W. Comstock of Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health.

In a study of the relation of the social and economic factors to disease, Comstock and his colleagues made an incidental but fascinating discovery. Regular churchgoing and the clean living that often goes with it seem to help people avoid "a whole bagful of dire ailments and disasters." Comstock concludes, "Nice guys do seem to finish last."

The Bible also has something to say about how to have a long life. It admonishes children to honor their parents so that they may live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:2, 3). Harold W. Hoehner, in The Bible Knowledge Commentary, says, "This states a general principle that obedience fosters self-discipline, which in turn brings stability and longevity in one's life."

Of course, there are exceptions. Some very disciplined Christians die young, and some wicked people live long. But the general principle applies: Living right not only pleases God, it can also add years to your life.—R W De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Honoring Your Parents

Honor your father and mother. —Ephesians 6:2

My dad recently turned 90 years old and his physical capabilities are fading. He can still move around with his walker, but he needs someone to cook his meals and help him with other tasks.

My older brother Steve and his wife Judy lived close to him, so they decided to move in with Dad to care for him. Wanting to help in some way, my wife and I flew across the country to help out a bit by watching Dad while my brother and his wife had some time away together. We enjoyed our time with my father and were glad to ease Steve and Judy's load—even if it was only for a few days.

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How can you honor your parents this week?

Don't miss the opportunity
To honor and obey
The parents God has given you—
For they'll be gone someday.
—Sper

Honoring our parents has no age limit.

Commandment 5—Honor Your Parents

Read: Ephesians 6:1-4

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land. —Exodus 20:12

It was a sad, unsigned letter from an elderly mother. “I have an only son,” she wrote, “who does all sorts of things for other people but hates to do anything for me. He rarely visits me although I live only 8 minutes away. He seldom even phones.”

God puts a high priority on family relationships throughout life—so says the fifth commandment. On the surface it seems directed exclusively to children, but parents must set the example. Children learn to honor, respect, and obey their parents when they see Mom and Dad honoring one another, when they feel respected, affirmed, and loved by their parents, and when they observe their obedience to God. This commandment to children actually touches us all.

How many of us have been as thoughtful of our parents as we could have been? And who of us as parents have been to our children all that we should have been? Although we've broken this commandment, our guilt has been removed by Jesus' death on the cross. He gives the courage to ask forgiveness of our children and our parents. And if they are not living, we can show the sincerity of our repentance by strengthening our other family relationships. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

We honor our Father when we honor our parents.

Children who honor their parents
Are doing what's good in God's sight;
Parents who love and admonish
Are teaching to do what is right.
—Sper

Honoring our parents is learned by example.

- Ex 21:14,20,29 Ge 4:8-23 9:5,6 Lev 24:21 Nu 35:16-34 De 5:17 De 19:11-13 2Sa 12:9,10 2Ki 21:16 2Ch 24:22 Ps 10:8-11 Pr 1:11,18 Isa 26:21 Jer 26:15 Mt 5:21,22 Ac 28:4 Ro 13:9 Ga 5:21 1Ti 1:9 Jas 2:11,13 1Jn 3:12-15
- Exodus 20 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT: DO NOT MURDER

You shall not murder - Two terse words in Hebrew "No murder!" **KJV** says "Thou shalt not kill. This is straightforward. Just as straightforward was the penalty imposed for murder - "He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death." (Ex 21:12, cf Nu 34:17-21).

Murder (07523)(**ratsach**) means to murder or slay, all 47 uses (in 40v) speaking of one human being killing another and never of a person killing an animal. Ratsach is never employed in contexts of war, capital punishment, or self-defense. The taking of a human life is the primary concept behind this word. It refers to the premeditated (Dt. 5:17; 1 Kgs. 21:19; Jer. 7:9), or accidental taking of the life of another human being (Nu. 35:11; Josh. 20:3) and includes any unauthorized killing. The word is used for the punishment of a murderer, but that would not be included in the prohibition. This commandment teaches the sanctity of all human life. The first use is in the commandment "Thou shalt not kill." (Ex 20:13) Unpremeditated killing, known as manslaughter in English common law, is also prohibited (Nu 35:11). **Ratsach** also includes an act of revenge (Nu 35:27) and death from animal attack (Pr. 22:13). **MacArthur** adds that "Careful appraisal of the word (**ratsach**) Moses used (one of 7 different Hebrew words for killing) suggests a broad translation of "to kill, slay" but denoting the taking of life under a legal system where he would have to answer to the stipulations of a legal code, no matter whether he killed unintentionally or intentionally. By this command, men would be reminded and exhorted to strive after carefulness in the affairs of life so that on the person-to-person level no one would die by their hand." (Borrow [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

John Currid comments "It should be noted that the verb does not specify any particular person(s) as its direct object. The form is thus not qualified in that way. Consequently, it is likely that suicide is included in the prohibition." (Ibid) (See also [What does the Bible say about suicide?](#)).

Steven Cole - Sinful actions always begin with unchecked sinful thoughts. Thus while most of us think that we are incapable of murdering someone, if we don't deal with bitterness and anger, we're feeding the root that grows into murder. (See my message [5/4/08], ["Taming Your Temper."](#)) This command does not prohibit nations from armed conflicts or wars to protect their citizens from outside aggression. It does not prohibit governments imposing capital punishment for serious crimes after a fair trial with conclusive evidence. It does not forbid law enforcement officers from using deadly force when necessary to protect the innocent. And, it does not forbid self-defense or defense of one's family or of innocent victims if law enforcement officers are not on the scene. It does prohibit killing babies in the womb unless the physical life of the mother is at stake. (See my messages [1/25/04], ["What the Bible Says About Abortion"](#); and [4/21/96], ["The Sanctity of Human Life."](#))

Recall that Moses was a murderer who had been forgiven and restored by God. Moses knew what it meant to connect with God on the ground of grace, not what one deserved.

Genesis 1:26-27 says man was made in the image of God

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Genesis 9:5-6 explains that one who murders should be killed and gives as the reason that man is made in the image of God

"Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man. 6"Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man.

Jesus addressed the deeper meaning of this commandment in His Sermon on the Mount taking murder well beyond the physical act, in effect forbidding "murder of the heart" (John Calvin). As **John Currid** says "Indeed, it is the hand that gives birth to murder, but it is the heart infected and inflamed with hate and anger that conceives it! (cf. 1 John 3:15)."

"You have heard that the ancients were told, **YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER**' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.'"But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty

First, God established the institution of marriage as being between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24; reiterated by Jesus in Matthew 19:5 and parallel passages). God created marriage to be the building block of His creation and of society. Even after the fall (Genesis 3), marriage is still a sacred union and the foundation for society. In marriage, the full expression of the image of God is made manifest as the man and the woman complement and complete each other. The Bible also teaches us that marriage is the vehicle through which God designed the procreation of the human race and the preservation of godly offspring (Genesis 1:28, 9:1; Malachi 2:15). With such a premium placed on marriage, it's no wonder God would seek to protect this union from defilement (Hebrews 13:4), and thus prohibit adultery, which is the violation of the sacred marriage union.

The **second** reason for the commandment is found in Leviticus 18:1-5. As God's chosen people, the Israelites were to reflect God's character in the Promised Land. God commanded His people to be holy for He is holy (Leviticus 11:44), and part of holy living is sexual purity. God did not want His people emulating the behavior of the Egyptians from whom He delivered them, nor did God want His people copying the behavior of the people into whose land He was bringing them. The implication was that adultery (and other sexual sins) was commonplace in the lands where the Israelites had been and were going to.

So now we know what adultery is and why God instituted this command. Finally, we need to learn what God meant by the command itself. As with all of the Ten Commandments, there are things we need to avoid doing (the negative part of the command) and things we need to be doing (the positive part of the command). The negative part of the command is self-explanatory: Do not commit adultery. However, there is more to this command than the simple avoidance of extramarital relationships. One can make the argument that wrapped up in this prohibition are all sorts of sexual sin (e.g., incest, fornication, homosexuality, etc.), and that argument can be made on the basis of chapters such as Leviticus 18. Also important is avoiding things that would lead or tempt one to consider adultery, such as the unnecessary withholding of conjugal rights (1 Corinthians 7:1-5). Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, made further clarification of this command (Matthew 5:27-30) by including all kinds of lustful thoughts. Fantasizing about having sexual relations with someone is the same, in God's eyes, as actually committing adultery. Therefore, we must avoid all things that would create within us lustful thoughts (e.g., suggestive songs, sensuous movies, pornography, etc.). We should also avoid immodest clothing or anything that might cause a brother or sister in the Lord to stumble in this area (1 Timothy 2:9; 1 Peter 3:3).

The positive part of the command would entail doing the opposite of what the command prohibits: chastity in body, mind, words and action; keeping watch over what we take in with our eyes and the other senses; an attitude of temperance and self-control (i.e., moderation); being discerning over the company we keep; dressing modestly; and fulfilling our marriage vows in regards to sexual relations and cohabitation. Regarding sexual sin, the Apostle Paul said, "Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18). When it comes to sexual sin, the best course of action is to remove ourselves from temptation and avoid such situations altogether.

Adultery is the complete corruption of God's good creation of marriage. Through the sin of adultery, Satan tempts us to seek sexual fulfillment in avenues other than the one God has ordained—within the bounds of monogamous, heterosexual marriage. Adultery rips at the fabric of society because it tears apart marriages and families which are the building blocks of society. God's law in general, and the 7th commandment in particular, is held up as the standard for Christian behavior. (Source: Gotquestions.org)

Exodus 20:15 You shall not steal.

- Ex 21:16 Lev 6:1-7 19:11,13,35-37 De 24:7 25:13-16 Job 20:19-22 Pr 1:13-15 11:1 Am 3:10 8:4-6 Mic 6:10,11 7:3 Zec 5:3,4 Mt 15:19 19:18 21:13 Lu 3:13,14 Joh 12:6 1Co 6:10 Eph 4:28 1Th 4:6
- Exodus 20 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT NO STEALING

You shall not steal - Two words in Hebrew - "No stealing." In simple terms this commandment had as its purpose the protection of the property of individual Israelites. **Criswell** adds this commandment "underscores the importance of human boundaries, responsibilities, and limitations." The commandment to not covet is clearly related to this commandment. We see something we want and we take it.

An excellent, tragic example of stealing is **Achan** who in effect stole from God, for God had instructed Israel to take nothing under the ban (the **devoted things**). Jericho was **devoted to destruction** as described in Joshua 6:17ESV, which reads "And the city and all that is within it shall be **devoted to the LORD** for destruction ("all that is in it belongs to the LORD" = Josh 6:17NASB)" But Achan disobeyed that clear command. Here is the summary of why it happened and you will see the pivotal role of the tenth

commandment coveting that led to stealing...

Joshua 7:20-21 So Achan answered Joshua and said, "Truly, **I have sinned against the LORD**, the God of Israel, and this is what I did: 21 when I **SAW** among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, **THEN I COVETED THEN** and **TOOK THEM**; and behold, they are concealed in the earth inside my tent with the silver underneath it. (For the punishment of Achan read Joshua 7:22-26).

Related Resources:

- [Who was Achan in the Bible?](#)
- [Why did God judge the sin of Achan so severely?](#)
- [What is the significance of the Valley of Achor in the Bible?](#)
- [What is the significance of Ai in the Bible?](#)

MacArthur - Any dishonest acquiring of another's goods or assets greatly disturbs the right to ownership of private property, which is an important principle for societal stability. (Borrow [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

Ryken - The God who gave this commandment is our Creator and Provider. To keep it is to recognize that ultimately everything belongs to Him, and that therefore we do not have the right to take what He has given to someone else. (See [Exodus: Saved for God's Glory](#))

Currid comments that "The Torah requires the thief to return double the amount stolen (Exod. 22:7). Thus, in an ironical turn of events, the criminal loses the exact sum he had hoped to gain. It is the concept of restitution, in which not only is the original condition restored, but a payment is made for time and trouble." ([John Currid](#))

Steven Cole - This command acknowledges the right to own private property. It forbids all theft, robbery, extortion, embezzlement, and taking bribes. It prohibits cheating on your income taxes, as well as welfare and Medicare fraud. You violate this command if you steal intellectual property through plagiarism or copyright violations. It's wrong to steal office supplies or equipment, or to steal time from your employer. It's sin to incur debt that you know you are unable to pay back. While sometimes bankruptcy is unavoidable, Christians should do their best to pay creditors what is owed. (See my message [4/6/08], ["To Cure a Thief."](#)) ([Obeying The Big Ten Exodus 20:1-17](#))

Steal (01589) (ganab) means to carry away, to take that which belongs to another and generally signifies taking something that belongs to another secretly, without consent. Thus to steal is a nuance distinguished from the concept "to rob" in the sense that stealing is done in secret. There are other Hebrew verbs for violent aspect of theft. Kidnapping (2 Ki. 11:2) or selling one into slavery without legal right (Ge 40:15) is conveyed by this verb. Thus, taking anything, human, animate or inanimate, without legal right, is described by this verb. It is surprising that the penalty for stealing was milder than in other societies of the time. While death was the penalty for stealing humans, in all other cases of theft, restitution with interest was the penalty (Ex 22:1ff). Death was the penalty for a number of types of theft in most other Ancient Near East societies. Ganab has the sense of deceiving when used with the word for heart, as when Jacob literally stole Laban's heart (Ge 31:20, 26). With storm as its subject, the word means to carry away quickly and violently (Job 21:18), especially the wicked (Job 27:20).

Gilbrant adds - The theft at Jericho by Achan, who took some of the booty which was declared to be devoted to Yahweh by its destruction, caused Israelites to die in the next battle at Ai. Achan and his family were stoned to death. The crime was not simple theft; it was a case of theft against the consecrated property of Yahweh. Death resulted from a cultic, rather than a civil, violation.

There are usages of the verb that are extensions of the basic meaning of "to steal." There are two instances of the word appearing in the Piel (intensive) stem. Both usages are figurative. In 2 Sa 19:3, Absalom "stole the hearts of the men of Israel," or usurped the loyalty of the subjects from his father. Yahweh indicts false prophets for "stealing my words," or performing slander, in attributing statements to Yahweh which were not his, stamping them with a falsely authoritative, "Thus says Yahweh" (Jer. 23:30).

"A word came stealing to me" is an expression underscoring the secret nature of the arrival of a thought for Job (4:12). The lone Hithpael occurrence of this verb conveys the same sense, "to steal into," meaning "to quietly enter" (2 Sa 19:3).

Stealing is prohibited by the eighth commandment (Exo. 20:15). One may assume that all nuances of the verb were prohibited by this statement. The punishment for this transgression went beyond civil law

codes. The flying scroll of Yahweh in Zechariah's vision was an embodiment of judgment, a written source for indictment (5:3ff). A curse will enter the house of the thief by means of this scroll. The reward of theft is a hollow one, as only a fool following the teachings of personified foolishness (contrasted to personified Wisdom) subscribes to the adage "stolen water is sweet, and bread that is eaten in secret is pleasant" (Prov. 9:17). Civil and divine penalties negate the financial gain one reaps from this act.

Gānab when occurring with *l'iv*, "heart", means "to deceive." Jacob deceived Laban (Ge 31:20, 26) when he fled to Gilead without telling Laban of his intentions. *Gānav* also means "to deceive" in Ge 31: 27, even though it does not repeat the word "heart." (Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary)

Ganab - 36v - actually stolen(1), brought to me stealthily(1), carries away(1), deceive(1), deceived(1), deceiving(1), fact kidnapped(1), kidnapping(1), kidnaps(1), steal(9), steal away(1), stealing(1), steals(3), steals him away(1), stealth(1), stole(3), stole away(1), stolen(8), stolen you away(1). - Gen. 30:33; Gen. 31:19; Gen. 31:20; Gen. 31:26; Gen. 31:27; Gen. 31:30; Gen. 31:32; Gen. 31:39; Gen. 40:15; Gen. 44:8; Exod. 20:15; Exod. 21:16; Exod. 22:1; Exod. 22:7; Exod. 22:12; Lev. 19:11; Deut. 5:19; Deut. 24:7; Jos. 7:11; 2 Sam. 15:6; 2 Sam. 19:3; 2 Sam. 19:41; 2 Sam. 21:12; 2 Ki. 11:2; 2 Chr. 22:11; Job 4:12; Job 21:18; Job 27:20; Prov. 6:30; Prov. 9:17; Prov. 30:9; Jer. 7:9; Jer. 23:30; Hos. 4:2; Obad. 1:5; Zech. 5:3

Paul repeats this command in the NT and gives the alternative...

He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. (Eph 4:28+)

Related Resources:

- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Robbery](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Robbery](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Robbery](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Robbery](#)
- King James Dictionary [Robbery](#)
- Vines' Expository Dictionary [Robbery](#)
- Webster Dictionary [Robbery](#)
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Robbery](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Robber](#); [Robbery](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Robbery](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Steal](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Stealing](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Stealing](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Stealing](#)
- Vines' Expository Dictionary [Steal](#)
- Wilson's Bible Types [Steal](#)
- Webster Dictionary [Stealing](#) [Stealer](#) [Steal](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Stealing](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Steal](#)

Commandment 9—Tell The Truth

Read: Zechariah 8:14-17

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. —Exodus 20:16

How prone we are to lying! With a stroke of exaggeration here, an omitted detail there, or a misleading silence we distort the truth. Yet truth is the foundation and superstructure of all relationships. Remove the girders of truth, and society crumbles in on itself. This moral absolute is so self-evident that even criminals punish their own who lie to them.

The ninth commandment forbids purposeful deceit against our neighbor and underscores the sacredness of truth in all our dealings. The two Hebrew words used for "false" in Exodus 20:16 and in Deuteronomy 5:20 mean "untrue" and "insincere." Any expression of insincerity and untruthfulness, therefore, is bearing false witness against our neighbor.

testimony to the validity of God's commandment, most societies say something like this "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, so help you God." (but not every culture would use "God" as we use the term).

Jesus identified this sin as coming from one's heart - "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, **false witness**, slanders." (Mt. 15:19)

Steven Cole - The command primarily focuses on bearing false witness against your neighbor in a legal setting, where lying or misrepresenting something about him would damage him or wrongly be to your advantage. But it also extends to lying to or about someone or spreading half truths about him in any setting. God is the God of truth who cannot lie (Isa. 65:16; Titus 1:2). Jesus is the truth (John 14:6). To be like Him, we must be people who speak the truth and do not bear false witness. This doesn't mean that we are required to tell everything we know about a situation. And, sometimes to be brutally honest is not the loving thing to do. We are to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). Love seeks the highest good of the other person. To bear false witness undermines your integrity, undermines relationships, and damages or destroys the other person. (See my message [3/16/08], "[To Tell the Truth](#)." ([Obeying The Big Ten \(Exodus 20:1-17\)](#))

False (08267)(**sheqer** from **shaqar** = to deal deceitfully) means a lie, vanity, without cause and in general describes words or activities that are "false," in the sense of being without basis in fact or reality. For example, David spoke of those who were his enemies without cause (Pss. 35:19; 38:19).deception, disappointment, falsehood, lie, vanity. Speaks of words or activities which are false in the sense that they are groundless, without basis in fact or reality (Ps 38:19). The **false** witness of Exodus 20:16 (Dt. 19:18) involves a false accusation, an accusation that is groundless, not based on fact. The first use is by Satan's tool the Pharaoh in Ex 5:9 where the Septuagint translates **sheqer** with the word kenos which means empty, without truth, futile, without result. **Sheqer** defines a way of life that goes contrary to the law of God. The psalmist, desirous of following God, prayed: "Remove the **false** way from me" (Ps 119:29; cf false way in Ps. 119:104, Ps 119:128). **Vine** says "As "faithfulness" is a relational term, "falsehood" denotes "one's inability to keep faith" with what one has said or to respond positively to the faithfulness of another being.

Ryken - This commandment comes from the God of truth, who is true in all he is, says, and does. As the Scripture says, "He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie" (1 Sam. 15:29a). (See [Exodus: Saved for God's Glory](#))

Currid - Several of the Hebrew words in this commandment are legal terms reflecting a judicial setting. Thus, it is forbidden to bear false witness against one's neighbour in a court of law. Perjury is condemned. The Torah takes this law so seriously that it requires at least two witnesses for evidence to be considered valid (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15). In addition, in capital punishment cases, 'The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people' (Deut. 17:7)....The Hebrew word shāqer means 'to give an empty promise'. To promise, to give one's word, to covenant with one's neighbour—all come within the scope of this law. To speak falsely about one's neighbour, to the prejudice of his or her character and reputation, is also forbidden. Such things as gossip, slander and unwarranted flattery are to be shunned. ([John Currid](#))

NET Note - The expression עֶד שֹׁקֵר ('ed shaqer) means "a lying witness" (B. S. Childs, Exodus [OTL], 388). In this verse the noun is an adverbial accusative, "you will not answer as a lying witness." The prohibition is against perjury. While the precise reference would be to legal proceedings, the law probably had a broader application to lying about other people in general (see Lev 5:1; Hos 4:2).

Related Resources

- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [False Witness](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [False Swearing, Witness](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [False Witness](#)

Question: "[Why is 'You shall not give false testimony' in the Ten Commandments?](#)"

Answer: Part of the Ten Commandments, also known as the Decalogue, this 9th commandment forbids the Israelites from bearing false witness or giving false testimony against one another (Exodus 20:16; Deuteronomy 5:20). To bear false witness against others is to lie about them, especially for personal gain. The Hebrew word translated "neighbor" in this commandment can mean an associate, a brother, companion, fellow, friend, husband, lover, or neighbor. In other words, the Israelites were commanded to be truthful in all things, but especially when speaking about another person. The people were not to lie publicly, as in a court of law by laying at another's feet any false charge that could injure him, nor were they to lie privately by whispering, talebearing, backbiting, slandering, or destroying his character by innuendos, sly insinuations, and evil suggestions.

The reasons for God's prohibiting lying and testifying falsely against one's neighbor are three-fold. First, God's people are to reflect

God's character. The Lord is a truthful God who does not and cannot lie. Numbers 23:19 says, "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" The people who were called by God's name and who represented Him in the heathen world were expected to accurately reflect His character. Lying to or about one another brought reproach upon His holy name, and this He would not tolerate. Second, bearing false witness against another was destructive to the individual who was the victim of the lie, and he suffered by it in his credibility and reputation, as well as in his trade and business. Leviticus 19:18 makes it clear that the Israelites were to love their neighbors as themselves, a command reiterated by both Jesus and Paul (Matthew 22:39; Romans 13:9). Loving our neighbors precludes lying about them.

Third, false witness was seen as so destructive to society that courts of law, both in the days of the Israelites and today, could function only if the witnesses who were called to testify could be trusted to tell the truth. Without a trustworthy judicial system, based on eyewitness testimony from reliable, truthful witnesses, societies are at risk of the breakdown of law and order. When this happens, chaos ensues and the innocent suffer.

As noted before, the New Testament is equally condemning of false witness. Colossians 3:9-10 explains the reason for the continued prohibition against lying. Christians are new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), and, as such, we reflect His nature. We have been released from our "old self" with its evil practices such as lying and bearing false witness. As the Israelites were to reflect the character of the Lord God, Christians are to reflect to the world the character of Christ that identifies us as His own. (Source: Gotquestions.org)

Exodus 20:16 Creeping Deception

IF television commercials are telling the truth, glamorous movie stars and athletes use products that everyone ought to buy. But, as Time magazine reports (and most viewers suspect), many celebrities don't use the products they endorse.

And what about autobiographies? According to the same article, they are not always written by the individuals whose names they bear but by writers who aren't mentioned.

This dishonesty, Time suggests, is a symptom of the deception that is creeping into our society. What will civilized life become as people increasingly ignore God's commands against lying? (Exodus 20:16; Leviticus 19:11; Ephesians 4:25).

Jesus had strong words for those who stood in the way of the truth. He said they were children of their father the Devil (John 8:44), and they were incapable of speaking the truth because they refused to hear it (John 8:43, 44, 45, 46, 47).

God's Word urges us to tell the truth (Proverbs 12:17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22). Only as we obey can we hope to prevent our society from being consumed by suspicion and mistrust.

We are to be truth-tellers like Jesus, of whom Scripture says, "Nor was deceit found in His mouth" (1Peter 2:22). He has the right to expect honesty from us because He has been honest with us.—Vernon C Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Tabletalk - The Ninth Commandment EXODUS 20:16 "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Ex 20:16).

As with most other technological advancements, the Internet has proven to be something of a mixed blessing. Resources that used to be available only if one was willing to drive several miles to a library are now readable in seconds if one connects to the World Wide Web. Communication with those who live thousands of miles away is far easier with the advent of tools like email. At the same time, ungodliness has yet one more way into our homes, not only in the form of pornography and anti-Christian websites, but also in the guise of irresponsible bloggers and gossip columnists who can destroy reputations with half-truths and lies.

Gossip, lying, and other such sins are all encompassed within the scope of the ninth commandment: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Ex. 20:16). Although we do not always take such transgressions seriously, gossip in particular being a frequently overlooked sin, Scripture is clear that God hates false witness. Christ is the very embodiment of truth itself (John 14:6), and imitating Him requires us to pursue what is true in our speech.

The ninth commandment is closely connected to the eighth commandment, which prohibits theft (Ex. 20:15). For example, merchants can lie about their weights and measures and thereby defraud those who want to purchase from them. This explains the Bible's concern for truthfulness in buying and selling (Prov. 20:10). Today, the truth is routinely stretched in advertising with ads that promise far more than any product invented by man can deliver.

Slander, libel, and other related matters are also prevalent in our day. Obedience to the ninth commandment means that we do not give ear to those who are clearly intent on maligning another's character for their own personal gain. Also, we must not repeat something if we are unsure of its veracity.

land. **Chamad** can be used in a good sense, e.g., describing the judgments of the Lord "are more desirable than gold." (Ps 19:10+) This verb had a major role in the fall of man in Eden for Eve - "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was **desirable** (chamad - unquenchable desire and unbridled passion) to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate." (Ge 3:6+) Notice that Eve's primary sin was craving for the fruit which led her to take the action to pick it and eat it.

The Septuagint translates **chamad** in Ex 20:17 with the verb **epithumeo** (**epí** = used intensively + **thumós** = passion) means literally to fix the desire upon (object could be good [Mt 13:17, Lk 22:15 used of Jesus] or bad [1Co 10:6]). Jesus used **epithumeo** with its evil connotation in Mt 5:28, where **epithumeo** describes a husband's lustful passion directly toward a woman who is not his wife. It means to have a strong desire to do or secure something. Note that the preposition **epi** can express motion toward or upon and thus one lexicon defines it as to set one's heart upon. In sum, **epithumeo** describes a strong impulse toward something so that one's passions or affections directed toward some object, thing or person.

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 belongs to your neighbor - Not only are we not to covet our neighbor's house, but what is in his house! (wife, servants, etc). The summary phrase "**anything** that belongs to your neighbor" takes care of **everything** else one might see and then desire to possess.

Guzik says to **covet** "is the itch to have and to possess what someone else has. It speaks of a dissatisfaction with what we have, and a jealousy towards those who have something better."

Paul links covetousness (greed) with idolatry in his command "Therefore (based on the truth in Colossians 3:1-4+) consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and **greed, which amounts to idolatry.** (Colossians 3:5+) In another passages Paul says " For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or **covetous man, who is an idolater**, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God." (Eph 5:5+)

Jesus warned against covetousness

Then He said to them, '**Beware**, and **be on your guard** (both verbs are in [present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.'" (Luke 12:15+)

Some people think that they can get right with God by keeping the Ten Commandments. Wrong! Many people think that God gave us the Ten Commandments to help us to be good. Wrong! In fact He gave them to show us that we are bad. A right understanding of the law demonstrates that we are all sinners and in need of grace and a Savior. James sums it up for all of us...

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all' (James 2:10+).

The **LAW**, therefore, elicits great fear and trepidation. In Bunyan's **The Pilgrim's Progress**,

Christian ventured to Mount Sinai, but he was afraid ... lest the Hill should fall on his head; wherefore there he stood still, and he wot [i.e. knew] not what to do. Also his Burden now seemed heavier to him than while he was in his Way. There came also flashes of fire out of the Hill, that made Christian afraid that he should be burned: Here therefore he sweat[ed] and did quake for Fear.' (**Read this entire section of Pilgrim's Progress - Beneath the High Hill**) [See the preceding notes](#) summarizing the purpose of the Law.

The Tenth Commandment basically has to do with contentment as well as trust in God as our faithful provider of everything we need (not everything we want!). Paul dealt with this important truth concerning contentment in his first letter to Timothy...

But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by **contentment**. 7 For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. 8 If we have food and covering, with these we shall be **content**. 9 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1Ti 6:6-10)

Related Resources:

- Torrey Topical Textbook [Covetousness](#)
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary [Covetousness](#)
- Charles Buck Dictionary [Covetousness](#)

- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Covetousness](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Covet](#), [Covetous](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Covetousness](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Covetousness](#)
- Vines' Expository Dictionary [Covet](#), [Covetous](#), [Covetousness](#)
- Webster Dictionary [Covetous](#), [Covetousness](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Covetousness](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Covetousness \(2\)](#) [Covetousness](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Covetousness](#)

BELIEVER'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAW

So what is the believer's relationship to the Ten Commandments today? Are we still under the Law? Are we free from the Law? Look through the following passages to give you a Biblical answer to this thorny question.

Matthew 5:17-20+ "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; **I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.** 18 "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. 19 "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Comment - So Jesus came to fulfill the Law which He did when He became a curse for us on the Cross as explained in the next passage.

Galatians 3:13+ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the **Law**, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"—

Comment - Before we believed in Christ, we were under the Law and we were subject to the curse of the Law. But Jesus fulfilled the Law and became a curse for us, that we would never have to fall under God's righteous, just curse.

Romans 8:1+ Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (IN OTHER WORDS THE LAW CONDEMNNS BUT AS PAUL GOES ON TO EXPLAIN GOD TOOK CARE OF OUR BIG PROBLEM BY SENDING HIS SON). 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For what the Law could not do (THE LAW WAS NEVER GIVEN TO SAVE US, BUT TO SHOW US WE NEEDED SALVATION IN CHRIST!), weak as it was through the flesh (MEANING THAT WE IN THE FLESH, IN AN UNREGENERATE STATE COULD NOT PERFECTLY KEEP THE LAW AND GOD'S STANDARD IS PERFECTION - see James 2:10), God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 so that the **requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us**, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Comment - Paul adds that God the Father "made Him (JESUS) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf ([IN OUR PLACE, AS OUR SUBSTITUTE](#)), so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (IN CHRIST - THE MOMENT WE BELIEVED WE WERE PLACED BY THE SPIRIT IN CHRIST WHO FULFILLED THE LAW PERFECTLY AND WE NOW IN EFFECT "RECEIVE CREDIT" FOR WHAT HE ACHIEVED BY DYING ON THE CROSS FOR SINS)." (2 Cor 5:21) So the moment we believed in Jesus Christ for our salvation, God reckoned us as righteous as Paul explained in Romans 4:3 "For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED ([RECKONED, IMPUTED](#)) TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS (QUOTING Genesis 15:6)."

Galatians 5:18+ But if (SINCE) you are led by the Spirit, **you are not under the Law.**

Romans 6:14+ For sin shall not be master over you, for **you are not under law but under grace.**

THOUGHT - So the question arises if we are **now in Christ** Who fulfilled the Law (Mt 5:17+, Ro 10:4+ = "Christ has accomplished the whole purpose of the law" NLT) and we are not under (the dominion, rule, reign of) the Law (Ro 6:14, Ro 6:12, Ro 8:2), are we now free to live lawlessly, even licentiously? And the Pauline

rise in Eden. When Eve saw that the forbidden fruit was good for food and that it was desirable to the eyes, she partook of it, and Adam with her. They were not satisfied with all that God had showered upon them, but coveted the wisdom of gods which Satan deceitfully told them might be obtained by eating the fruit. She saw,—she desired—then she took! Three steps from innocence into sin.

A SEARCHING COMMANDMENT

It would be absurd for such a law as this to be placed upon any human statute book. It could never be enforced. The officers of the law would be powerless to detect infractions. The outward conduct may be regulated, but the thoughts and intents of a man are beyond the reach of human law.

But God can see behind outward actions. He can read the thoughts of the heart. Our innermost life, invisible to mortal eye, is laid bare before Him. We cannot deceive Him by external conformity. He is able to detect the least transgression and shortcoming, so that no man can shirk detection. God cannot be imposed upon by the cleanness of the outside of the cup and the platter.

Surely we have here another proof that the Ten Commandments are not of human origin, but must be divine.

This commandment, then, did not, even on the surface, confine itself to visible actions as did the preceding commandments. Even before Christ came and showed their spiritual sweep, men had a commandment that went beneath public conduct and touched the very springs of action. It directly prohibited—not the wrong act, but the wicked desire that prompted the act. It forbade the evil thought, the unlawful wish. It sought to prevent—not only sin, but the desire to sin. In God's sight it is as wicked to set covetous eyes, as it is to lay thieving hands, upon anything that is not ours.

And why? Because if the evil desire can be controlled, there will be no outbreak in conduct. Desires have been called "actions in the egg." The desire in the heart is the first step in the series that ends in action. Kill the evil desire, and you successfully avoid the ill results that would follow upon its hatching and development. Prevention is better than cure.

We must not limit covetousness to the matter of money. The commandment is not thus limited; it reads, "Thou shalt not covet ... anything...." That word "anything" is what will condemn us. Though we do not join in the race for wealth have we not sometimes a hungry longing for our neighbor's goodly lands—fine houses,—beautiful clothes,—brilliant reputation,—personal accomplishments,—easy circumstances,—comfortable surroundings? Have we not had the desire to increase our possessions or to change our lot in accordance with what we see in others? If so, we are guilty of having broken this law.

GOD'S THOUGHTS ABOUT COVETOUSNESS

Let us examine a few of the Bible passages that bear down on this sin, and see what are God's thoughts about it.

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, NOR COVETOUS, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

Notice that the covetous are named between thieves and drunkards. "We lock up thieves, and have no mercy on them. We loathe drunkards, and consider them great sinners against the law of God as well as the law of the land. Yet there is far more said in the Bible against covetousness than against either stealing or drunkenness.

Covetousness and stealing are almost like Siamese twins—they go together so often. In fact we might add lying, and make them triplets. "The covetous person is a thief in the shell. The thief is a covetous person out of the shell. Let a covetous person see something that he desires very much; let an opportunity of taking it be offered; how very soon he will break through the shell and come out in his true character as a thief." The Greek word translated "covetousness" means—an inordinate desire of getting. When the Gauls tasted the sweet wines of Italy, they asked where they came from, and never rested until they had overrun Italy.

"For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."

There we have the same truth repeated; but notice that covetousness is called idolatry. The covetous man worships Mammon, not God.

"Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, HATING COVETOUSNESS; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens."

Isn't it extraordinary that Jethro, the man of the desert, should have given this advice to Moses? How did he learn to beware of covetousness? We honor men to-day if they are wealthy and covetous. We elect them to office in church and state. We often say that they will make better treasurers just because we know them to be covetous. But in God's sight a covetous man is as vile and black as any thief or drunkard. David said: "The wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord

abhorreth." I am afraid that many who profess to have put away wickedness also speak well of the covetous.

A SORE EVIL

"He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes? The sleep of the laboring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt."

Isn't that true? Is the covetous man ever satisfied with his possessions? Aren't they vanity? Does he have peace of mind? Don't selfish riches always bring hurt?

The folly of covetousness is well shown in the following extract: "If you should see a man that had a large pond of water, yet living in continual thirst, nor suffering himself to drink half a draught for fear of lessening his pond; if you should see him wasting his time and strength in fetching more water to his pond, always thirsty, yet always carrying a bucket of water in his hand, watching early and late to catch the drops of rain, gazing after every cloud, and running greedily into every mire and mud in hopes of water, and always studying how to make every ditch empty itself into the pond; if you should see him grow grey in these anxious labors, and at last end a thirsty life by falling into his own pond, would you not say that such a one was not only the author of his own disquiet, but was foolish enough to be reckoned among madmen? But foolish and absurd as this character is, it does not represent half the follies and absurd disquiets of the covetous man."

I have read of a millionaire in France, who was a miser. In order to make sure of his wealth, he dug a cave in his wine cellar so large and deep that he could go down into it with a ladder. The entrance had a door with a spring lock. After a time, he was missing. Search was made, but they could find no trace of him. At last his house was sold, and the purchaser discovered this door in the cellar. He opened it, went down, and found the miser lying dead on the ground, in the midst of his riches. The door must have shut accidentally after him, and he perished miserably.

A TEMPTATION AND A SNARE

"They that will be, (that is, desire to be), rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

The Bible speaks of the deceitfulness of two things—"the deceitfulness of sin" and "the deceitfulness of riches." Riches are like a mirage in the desert, which has all the appearance of satisfying, and lures on the traveler with the promise of water and shade; but he only wastes his strength in the effort to reach it. So riches never satisfy: the pursuit of them always turns out a snare.

Lot coveted the rich plains of Sodom, and what did he gain? After twenty years spent in that wicked city, he had to escape for his life, leaving all his wealth behind him.

What did the thirty pieces of silver do for Judas? Weren't they a snare?

Think of Balaam. He is generally regarded as a false prophet, but I do not find that any of his prophecies that are recorded are not true; they have been literally fulfilled. Up to a certain point his character shone magnificently, but the devil finally overcame him by the bait of covetousness. He stepped over a heavenly crown for the riches and honors that Balak promised him. He went to perdition backwards. His face was set toward God, but he backed into hell. He wanted to die the death of the righteous, but he did not live the life of the righteous. It is sad to see so many who know God, miss everything for riches.

Then consider the case of Gehazi. There is another man who was drowned in destruction and perdition by covetousness. He got more out of Naaman than he asked for, but he also got Naaman's leprosy. Think how he forfeited the friendship of his master Elisha, the man of God! So to day lifelong friends are separated by this accursed desire. Homes are broken up. Men are willing to sell out peace and happiness for the sake of a few dollars.

Didn't David fall into foolish and hurtful lusts? He saw Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, and she was "very beautiful to look upon," and David became a murderer and an adulterer. The guilty longing hurled him into the deepest pit of sin. He had to reap bitterly as he had sowed.

I heard of a wealthy German out west, who owned a lumber mill. He was worth nearly two millions of dollars, but his covetousness was so great that he once worked as a common laborer carrying railroad ties all day. It was the cause of his death.

"And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I COVETED THEM, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it."

I heard of a rich man who was asked to make a contribution on behalf of some charitable object. The text was quoted to him—"He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again." He said that the security might be good enough, but the credit was too long. He was dead within two weeks. The wrath of God rested upon him as he never expected.

If you find yourself getting very miserly, begin to scatter, like a wealthy farmer in New York state I heard of. He was a noted miser, but he was converted. Soon after, a poor man who had been burned out and had no provisions, came to him for help. The farmer thought he would be liberal and give the man a ham from his smoke-house. On his way to get it, the tempter whispered to him:

"Give him the smallest one you have."

He had a struggle whether he would give a large or a small ham, but finally he took down the largest he could find.

"You are a fool," the devil said.

"If you don't keep still," the farmer replied, "I will give him every ham I have in the smoke- house."

Mr. Durant told me he woke up one morning to find that he was a rich man, and he said that the greatest struggle of his life then took place as to whether he would let money be his master, or he be master of money, whether he would be its slave, or make it a slave to him. At last he got the victory, and that was how Wellesley College came to be built.

In the next place, cultivate the spirit of contentment. "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

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."

J I Packer - Be Content

In the tenth commandment, "you shall not covet," God's searchlight moves from actions to attitudes, from motions to motives, from forbidden deeds to forbidden desire. The word for "covet" conveys the thought of seeking dishonest and dishonorable gain. Coveting appears here as first cousin to envy: you see what someone else has, and you want to grab it for yourself, as Ahab wanted to grab Naboth's vineyard in 1 Kings 21. In Colossians 3:5, Paul calls coveting idolatry, because the things coveted become your god, controlling your life.

Coveting is a root of all social evil; desires that burst the bounds beget actions to match. David took Bathsheba (thus, by theft, breaking the eighth commandment) and got her pregnant (thus breaking the seventh) and then to avoid scandal arranged for her husband Uriah to be killed (thus breaking the sixth), and it all began with David coveting his neighbor's wife, in breach of the tenth (see 2 Samuel 11).

Similarly, Ahab's coveting of Naboth's vineyard next door led to the framing of Naboth by false witness (breaking the ninth commandment), his judicial murder (breaking the sixth), and his vineyard being forfeited to the crown—in other words, legally stolen (breaking the eighth).

Then there was Achan (Joshua 7; note verse 21), and also Judas, whose coveting led him to break first the eighth commandment (John 12:6) and then the sixth and ninth together as he betrayed Jesus to death by a simulated act of homage (Matthew 26:48–50), all for money (Matthew 26:14–16; cf. 27:3–5). Perhaps Paul had Achan and Judas in mind, as well as folk known to him directly, when he wrote that "the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs" (1 Timothy 6:10).

