


# THE TEN COMMANDMENTS:

SPINAL CORD OF CIVILIZATION



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DAN BETZER



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Dan Betzer is speaker on  
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the Assemblies of God.

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## **Part One**

### **MAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO GOD**

#### **1**

he 20th chapter of Exodus is by any standard one of the most historic and important chapters in the entire Word of God. Try to imagine the scene: 500,000 tents scattered as far as the eye can see! The plain itself, some 5,000 feet above sea level, remains cool in the evenings. Mount Sinai rises another 2,000 feet above the plain. That's all. Hardly the Matterhorn.

On that plain with its half-million tents, 3 million Jews watch Mount Sinai. Their eyes open like saucers as they behold the wonder on the top of the mount. It is a stunning view, indeed, for Sinai is smoking and fiery. That vast, isolated mountain ridge, some 2 miles in length and 1 mile wide, appears to be a veritable volcano. The whole structure quakes mightily, its shaking punctuated by lightning and accompanying thunder. Then comes the shrill call like that of a trumpet, piercing and unbelievably

loud. One could not avert his stare at the mountaintop for love nor money. The zenith comes with the rumble of the higher elevation that sounds something like a human voice ... the rumble forming a single word:

"M-O-S-E-S-S-S-S!"

The grand old statesman of God, nearing his 81st birthday now, leaves the Israelites behind and walks alone, firmly and resolutely, toward the inferno. Other men would have quailed to stride this pathway, but not Moses. He had walked tough roads before, and walked them successfully. Forty years earlier he had

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been exiled from his native land of Egypt. The Pharaoh had sent Moses packing into the sands, a condemned killer and outcast from Egyptian society. Israel's enemies meant the situation to be the end of this strange figure, but God meant it for good!

Into the blistering wilderness of Shur walked the man who had walked with kings. Now he walks alone. Torn from the pinnacle of royal power, stripped from all earthly wealth, he is a forsaken man, without a country, without a hope. His soul is in

turmoil, like the hot winds and raging sands that lash him with the fury of a taskmaster's whip. He is driven forward, always forward, by a God unknown toward a land unseen. Into the molten wilderness of Zin, where granite sentinels stand as towers of living death to bar his way ... each night brings the black embrace of loneliness ... in the mocking whispering of the wind he hears the echoing voices of the dark ... his tortured mind wondering if they recall the memory of past triumphs or if they wail of forboding disasters yet to come ... or whether the desert's hot breath has melted his reason into madness. He cannot cool the burning kiss of thirst from his lips, nor shade the scorching fury of the sun. All about him is desolation. He can neither bless nor curse the power that moves him, for he does not know from where it comes. Learning that it can be more terrible to live than to die, he is driven onward, into the burning crucible of the desert, where holy men and prophets are cleansed and purged for God's great purpose. Until at last, at the end of human strength, beaten into the dust from which he came, the metal is ready for the Maker's hand (Cecil B. DeMille Film: Ten Commandments). Now, 4 decades later, the grand old man ascends the mountain

alone for a rendezvous with God. The Creator will set in stone the backbone for all civilization to come, the Ten Commandments. Moses will receive them and transmit the divine code to a waiting world.

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**"I'm not O.K. You're not O.K."**

*And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage (Exodus 20:1,2).*

The "new morality" is neither new nor moral. It began in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. This "new morality" is best translated "rebellion," open warfare against God's moral law.

Man's rebellion began in the Garden and increased in momentum during the days of Noah. Following the cresting of the ark on Ararat, the "new morality" continued to increase until today's deterioration of values is a frightening phenomenon to behold.

Society loves to feel as if it is sophisticated, urbane, refined.

In truth, however, it is really none of the three. The Bible indicates, and our actions prove, that we are really crude sinners in



the raw, natural state. Our self-professed "new morality" is neither new nor moral, and just as it destroyed Adam and Eve it will destroy us now if unchecked and not covered by the blood of Christ.

One writer recently wrote, *I'm O.K.; You're O.K.*

Unfortunately, we are not O.K. Except for the covering of the blood of Jesus Christ we are as lost as we possibly can be. We are not dealing here with Hollywood's standards of morality; nor are we dealing with the standards imposed by the U.S. Supreme Court, right or wrong. We are not dealing with standards imposed by the Assemblies of God or any other church group. We are dealing instead with moral absolutes long since established by God. These absolutes have not and will not be put to human vote. They are ordained by the Creator.

You may protest, "Well, now, I have broken God's laws and I'm just fine, thank you! Nothing has happened to me!"

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I often hear that. And it always reminds me of the fellow who climbed to the top of the Empire State Building and leaped. As he

plummeted to the ground, passing about the 50th floor, someone saw him and hollered, "How's it going?" And the plunging fellow replied, "So far, so goooooooooood...."

Well, for 50 floors or so it may be "good." But upon hitting the ground, the reality will be impressed quite vividly! Now whether it's the law of gravity or the law of morality, God's codes cannot successfully be broken.

The Ten Commandments are divided into two different divisions. The first deals with *man's relationship to God*. The second deals with *man's relationship to man*.

### **Commandment Number One**

*Thou shalt have no other gods before me (Exodus 20:3).*

God condemns polytheism—that is, multiple gods. It's interesting, isn't it, that there is no commandment against atheism.

God does *not* say, "Thou shalt not *not* believe in Me." Why not?

Because such a commandment was not needed. Is God going to say to 3 million Jews who have just seen the 10 plagues, who have just witnessed the death angel take out the firstborn of Egypt, who have just seen God back up the waters of the Red Sea, who have just seen the smoke and fire that very day, who have just picked up

manna from the ground and quails off the bush, who have just seen water gush from a solid rock—is God going to have to say to these people, "You have to believe in Me!"?

Of course not! Why? Because they were too close to the reality of God not to believe in Him. They were still too close to the Creation. Too close to the Flood. Too close to the Red Sea experience. Only a mentally deficient individual would have

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denied a God in those days. Or—as David put it— *"The fool hath said in his heart there is no God."*

So the problem in early man was *not* that he did not believe in God. It was obvious he did. But the problem was that the people *believed in more than one god*. It was popular to worship a multiplicity of deities. Paul described the collapse of true worship in his marvelous treatise to the Romans:

*Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory*

*of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever (Romans 1:21- 25).*

Let me ask you a question: Why are there so many concepts of God in the world today? If you listen to the talk shows on television you will often hear it said, "Well, one person's concept of God is as good as another's. That fellow's idea is as good as your idea, so his idea is all right, too, and it doesn't really matter *what you* believe as long as you believe ..." And on and on it goes. Why does such a concept exist today? Why this multiplicity of gods?

Early in sociology the student learns the term "totem." The earliest tribes wanted to be unique from other tribes. No matter how primitive they might be, they wanted something that made them different. Some of those tribes chose to be represented by animals. They used lions or eagles or apes or whatever. The

animal became the symbol.

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We have somewhat the same value system. Of course, we do.

You have heard the expressions "strong as an ox" or "wise as an owl" or "swift as a deer." So far so good. But now we learn that the tribes went a step beyond this and made their symbols not only their "differing emblem" but their objects of worship. And the deterioration quickly followed for soon they were worshipping not just a god who was as swift as a deer— *but an actual deer*. Paul said it in Romans: *"to worship the creature ... to worship the image ..."*

You have seen totem poles—or at least pictures of them. A totem, remember, is a characteristic given to some symbol by which it becomes "divine." Now if man began to worship traits of things that were very special to him, the next step had to follow. He began to worship himself, for he saw himself as "swift as a deer," or "sly as a fox." And in worshipping his symbol, he worshiped that thing that made him unique. Today we call it humanism.

It has been a penchant of mankind right through history to refuse to be elevated to where he could comprehend God a bit better and instead attempt to pull God down to his level.

Remember this:

The essence of idolatry is not the little plastic Jesus on the dashboard of an automobile or some fetish in a corner of a jungle hut. The essence of idolatry is rather the consideration of God to be anything other than what He truly is. Remember that! When you and I start to think of God as being anything other than who He really is, that's idolatry!

So how do we know what and who God truly is?

We are given the revelation of God in His Word. The Scripture gives us the clear definition of God's nature, attributes, etc. And the more we realize who He is, the more seriously we

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take His Words, His commandments. If God says to us, "*Don't commit adultery*," we don't commit adultery.

But today's generation which does not recognize God or His mastery over our lives argues, "Well, I know that the Bible says I

shouldn't commit adultery, but everyone else is. And who is God to tell me what to do anyhow? I'll do my own thing. Come on, God, bend a little!"

At that point the person is not only an adulterer but an idolator. He thinks he is dealing with a God with whom a person can negotiate morality. However, you can no more negotiate morality with God than you can take your car on a sharp curve at 150 miles per hour. You say, "Now, God, I know you've made a law of physics called 'centrifugal force' that says I can't make this curve. But come on, God, loosen up a little! You can't be that arbitrary with my life. I want to speed around this curve, so I will! Bend a little!"

Oh, something's going to bend, all right. Your car, the tree ... your spine ...

You say, "Well now, Dan, that's rather stupid. Nobody's going to chance the law of physics."

Then why do it with God's law of morality? I spoke to a person about this very thing only this week. His response to me was, "Now Brother Betzer, you quote God's Word to me. But God's gonna understand...."

Not a chance. God's moral laws are inflexible. And one of them is this: "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*"

"Well," you counter, "I do worship. Yes, indeed."

Not unless you worship *the* God of the universe. If you are worshiping a god you have created, one who makes you comfortable, then you are worshiping "another" god and violating

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the first commandment. To worship God is to worship the God revealed in Scripture. That is why I insist on *Revivaltime* broadcasts that the Word of God is our sole authority for doctrine and conduct. Everything must measure up to Scripture.

You see, if I preach anything else, if I preach a relative gospel to you, if I present God as anything other than what Scripture says, then what I have done is to present another in man's endless totem poles. If I even intimate to you that God's laws can be violated with impunity, that God is such a good God that He'll understand, then I have become a witch doctor. A preacher cannot so violate Scripture. We must preach the Word as it is.

So the first commandment is, "*Thou shalt have no other gods*



*before me."*

How essential it is then that you know God. It is hopeless to think that you can stand before God someday and say, "Well, I just didn't understand, Father God. I just didn't 'get it,' you see?" And the Bible says that God's response will be, "*Thou art inexcusable, O man!*"

That's not hard to grasp, is it? You tell the state trooper, "I'm sorry, officer, I just somehow didn't grasp that 55 MPH sign back yonder, you see?" And he'll respond, "Tough! Here's your ticket!" And so you and I have no excuse in the violation of the first commandment. Yet how often we smash that eternal law to pieces!

### **Commandment Number Two**

*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. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God (Exodus 20:4,5).*

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That *jealousy* is an attribute of God that we hear very little of

today. Sir, suppose you go home to dinner today and your wife has prepared you a fabulous meal. And you say to her, "You're going to have to have five or six more chairs around the table, dear."

And she responds, "Oh? Who's coming to dinner? And you answer, "Well, I have invited my ... my girlfriends." Well, that is not going to be a happy-time meal, I can tell you right now! Your wife is going to be jealous! And rightly so.

God is jealous, too. And that's what He confirms in this second commandment. Now I want you to see the whole dimension of God's statement here—especially if you have bought the concept that you can sin and that it's nobody's business but your own:

*"I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation!"* (Exodus 20:5). Think about that for a few minutes.

"Come on, now, Brother Betzer! It's my own life and I'm only hurting myself."

The Bible says that such is not so. You cannot violate God's laws with impunity.

Now why such a lengthy commandment about a graven

image? First of all, note that this is not a commandment against art or sculpture. It is a commandment against anything that might take God's rightful place in Israel's understanding. It is a prohibition against substituting anything for the reality of God. Yet we do exactly that today by accepting explanations of God that are not true and accepting them as true. These things become our graven images.

### **Commandment Number Three**

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*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain:*

*for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain (Exodus 20:7).*

I believe this may be the least understood commandment of all. You say, "Well it just means that 'damn' is not God's last name." No, there is really far, far more to this commandment than that. This third commandment is a prohibition given to you and me by God himself to cause us to refrain from living unfruitful, unspiritual lives.

Follow me closely on this: The commandment states, "Thou

shalt not *take* . . . " The word *take* here means to carry or to lift up or to bear. And the words *in vain* have the connotation of emptiness or "for nothing." So the third commandment really says to us: "*Thou shalt not carry the name of the Lord thy God for nothing ... or in emptiness of life. Thou shalt not glibly claim God's name without a life that backs it up.*" That's very strong, isn't it?

You see, if you link yourself to the Creator God, by an act of your will you have plugged into the source of all eternal life. You have identified yourself with the giver of everything worthwhile. You have said, by an act of your own volition, "I am now connected to the God who will one day be my Judge, the Creator of all things that exist." Having made that claim, you have allowed to the public that God's laws are inviolable and that you will obey them. You cannot do otherwise if you claim His name. Thus when God says, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery ...*," you acquiesce to that. When God commands, "*Honor thy father and mother,*" you honor your father and mother, without question. It no longer matters what anyone else in the world does with their lives. You have claimed God as a part of your life. Therefore it is required

that you do as God says. If you don't, you have taken God's name

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in vain.

Of course, it is a sin to swear. But it is also a sin to claim God's life and yet insist upon living your own. Martin Luther used to say that Christians don't *tell* lies; they *sing* them. How many times have people lifted their voices in:

*He is Lord! He is Lord!*

*He has risen from the dead and He is Lord!*

*Ev'ry knee shall bow,*

*Ev'ry tongue confess that*

*Jesus Christ is Lord!*

But outside the sanctuary God is *not* Lord for we have not taken our hands off the controls. This is a violation of the third commandment. This is taking God's name in vain.

### **Commandment Number Four**

*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it, thou shalt not do any work,*

*thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it (Exodus 20:8-11).*

I don't know of any place that Christianity is more vulnerable than on this commandment. If you would ask Joe or Mary Christian if he or she had any other gods, the reply would be, "Absolutely not!" They would rise up with "righteous indignation!" Or: Do you have any little gods, any fetishes adorning a corner of your home?

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"No, I would never do such a thing!" Or: Do you take God's name in vain? "Never, never, never!"

Or: Do you keep the Sabbath Day holy?

Silence.

This is our Achilles' heel. Perhaps because of our culture, the Sabbath Day is grossly violated. But regardless of the reason, our

guilt is inexcusable to God.

If you have traveled at all in the Middle East you know that the Sabbath Day is kept. It does not matter if you are a religious Jew or secular, the Sabbath Day is kept. You will not find anyone in Jerusalem engaged in commerce after sundown Friday. If you are a Muslim, Friday is kept in the same way. It is strictly, rigidly so. The day is *kept!*

But in Christianity one has to wonder about our commitment.

What is our problem in keeping the Sabbath Day?

Why Sunday instead of Saturday?

That's a legitimate question that deserves a legitimate answer.

I have friends who are Christian who feel that Saturday must be observed as the Lord's Day. I do not feel under any obligation to contend with them, even though I do not agree with their conclusion.

Let's go back to the beginning:

*On the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it (Genesis 2:2,3).*

"Sanctify" means "to make holy." God made the Sabbath a holy day because on that day He rested from all His work which He had accomplished. We receive a further insight in the Book of

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Leviticus, chapter 23, verses 2 and 3:

*Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them,  
Concerning the feasts of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim to be  
holy convocations [note that word], even these are my feasts.  
Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath  
of rest, a holy convocation.*

That word "convocation" is a key to our understanding of the fourth commandment. A convocation is *not* a fishing trip nor a golf match. It is *not* a family picnic or reunion. The dictionary lists the word *convocation* to mean "an assembly of people for a holy gathering." So God says to us in His Word, "This day [the Sabbath] is set apart for a holy gathering together of God's people for a sacred purpose." "Convocation" is the key here. Remember that. And God says: "[On that Sabbath day], *ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.*"



Now we see a not so subtle turn of events in the New Testament. The switch is in "the day" rather than "the emphasis."

First, John 20:1:

*"The first day of the week [that would be Sunday] cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.*

Jesus was raised in triumph and victory from death and the grave on a Sunday morning. Now in the same chapter of John, verse 19:

*The same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.*

One of the results of the resurrection of our Lord becomes obvious in the Book of Acts, the pattern book for Christian

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churches. In chapter 20, verse 7, we read:

*And upon the first day of the week [that's Sunday], when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto*

them ...

One more biblical reference, this one in 1 Corinthians 16:2:

*Upon the first day of the week [Sunday] let everyone of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered h i m . . .*

So in the New Testament we see that Jesus was raised from the dead on a Sunday morning. We know that Christ came to meet the disciples for the first time (post-Resurrection) on the first day of the week, a Sunday. We know that Paul preached to the believers on a Sunday. They had breaking of the bread—Communion—on Sunday. We know also that the first Christians received their offerings to support the ministry on Sunday. So the New Testament church observes Sunday as the Lord's Day, the day of worship. And that is why most Protestant churches today follow suit.

Speaking personally, I would not get "hung up" on this issue.

For while we have reasons for observing Sunday as the Lord's Day, those very reasons have to do with *a person*, rather than an *observance* alone. It is because of Christ that we set aside Sunday for worship. And we keep that day in the same proportion, I feel, that we honor the One it represents. I want to repeat that because

this is the essence of the fourth commandment. *To the degree that we honor the One whose day it is, we honor the day*\ If a person observes Sunday with a lethargic attitude, that is a reflection of that person's attitude about Christ.

Now, how should the Lord's Day be observed?

*It is a day of rest from labor; but it is not a day for idleness.*

Sunday is consecrated to God and spiritual matters. Secular and

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materialistic pursuits, even though legitimate, must be set aside on this day. This is *not* a legalistic concept. "Dan, ease up; we don't live in the law any longer!" But wait a moment: Jesus said, "I didn't come to *destroy* the law, but rather to *fulfill* it." So while we do not "buy" the Pharisee concept of the Sabbath, we do honor this day because of Christ.

*Sabbath observance is obedience.* It is a duty we owe God.

Christianity is not a religion of "convenience." When we take the name of Christ, we take on a sense of obligation and duty to God. I don't know what it does to you when you see people shown on newscasts burning the flag. It makes me want to throw a shoe right

through the screen. I believe it is a terrible thing to desecrate the flag. To the degree that a citizen honors his country, he reveres its symbols. That's only logical! Thus to the degree that we honor God, we honor His symbols. We have a duty to our faith. Yes, in Christianity there is duty! We take on spiritual obligations when we link ourselves through God's grace to Christ's life.

What is this propensity of modern-day Christians to think that Sunday is a day to do whatever you want to do? I have a tremendous burden on my heart regarding this! In my own church denomination, I believe we are extremely vulnerable in two categories: Sunday school and Sunday evening service. These Achilles' heels have caused the demise of more than one denomination. May the Lord give us a deliverance from our lethargy concerning God's work!

### **Commandment Number Five**

*Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee (Exodus 20:12).*

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What a uniquely stated commandment! There is a provisional clause in it: *obey the law ... have a longer life*. (Perhaps because your parents will kill you if you don't obey them! Comedian Bill Cosby said his father once told him that if he didn't do what "Dad" said, "Dad" would kill him and "make another one that looks just like you.")

In all seriousness, this provisional commandment goes beyond a physical punishment. Honoring your father and your mother is the understanding that *your parents are the representatives of God himself*. Your treatment of your parents is an indication of your concept of God. God is our Heavenly Father. We pray, "*Our Father, which art in heaven ...*" We honor God; and we honor our earthly father and mother as well.

*Honoring means giving your parents the dignity and respect God says they are to have.*

Now this also puts great responsibility on Mom and Dad! A parent who betrays a child's trust has done a dastardly thing. We who are parents have incredible responsibility because we are representative of the relationship of God to His children. Yes, it's a

mutual relationship: parent to child, and child to parent.

This "honoring" of parents shows an understanding that the parents are the symbols of the state. A child must not grow up thinking he can flaunt the laws of the land. He will think that, however, if the parent has allowed him to grow up thinking he can flaunt *parental* law. If that child believes he can violate the laws of the household with impunity, why should he not believe he can do the same with civic authority?

Honor involves *obedience*. Jesus said, "If you love me, do what I tell you to do."

One little sidebar on this commandment: It is not restricted to

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little children. It also means grown-ups. If your parents are still living, you will always have responsibility to them. Our society does not always deal well with aging parents. We have worshiped at the shrine of youth for a long time now. Those who build a society in which old age is honored may themselves expect to enjoy similar treatment in their later years.

If you are blessed to have living parents, do something this

very day to show them your love. How many times I have longed that I could hug my mom and dad and tell them I love them! But they have been in eternity for many, many years so I cannot express my love to them any longer. If you can— *do it!* You'll be obeying the fifth commandment!

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## **Part Two**

### **MAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO MAN**

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he second half of the decalogue contains God's requirements of us in our dealings with each other. Earlier, I referred to the Ten Commandments as "the spinal cord of civilization." If the following five commandments are scrapped by mankind, universal chaos will be the result.

#### **Commandment Number Six**

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

This is not an injunction against war. It is my opinion that using the sixth commandment as an objection to war is a misuse of the Scripture. I have no quarrel with anyone who is a conscientious objector; but the sixth commandment has to do with

individual murder, not national war. Many people exercise personal conscience in the matter of military service requiring battle action. Perhaps they are justified, depending upon one's point of view of world history and theological persuasion. Nor does the sixth commandment have anything to do with capital punishment. As a college student in the early 1950s, I opposed capital punishment on philosophical grounds. However, in my subsequent decade as a newsman, watching the practical application (or misapplication, as the case may be) of justice changed my opinion 180 degrees. I covered 17 first-degree murder cases during that decade in which the defendant was found guilty in every case. However, the most time any of those convicted

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murderers actually spent in prison was less than 10 years. In my interviews with each convicted man not even one of them expressed any remorse for the killing. However, whether your personal conviction is pro or con regarding capital punishment, the sixth commandment does not concern that particular issue.

The divine injunction "*thou shalt not kill*" is written for



individuals regarding other individuals and it speaks of murder, either premeditated or otherwise. It is my feeling that the commandment also speaks to the issue of abortion, for abortion is an individual decision to take a life. Recently, the news reported a march on the nation's capital to protest an execution of a condemned murderer in our state. It is amazing how some people can get truly tearful about someone who has purposefully aimed a loaded gun at a law officer and killed him in cold blood—and yet have little feeling at all about 20 million or more babies who have been dispatched in the womb.

In my state of Florida there is fervent concern over a creature called the manatee—a walrus-kind of mammal. Now I'm all for saving these wondrous beasts and support the environmentalists most of the time. We ought to save our eagles. We ought to conserve nature. *But where are the people who mourn for the life of babies?* Isn't a child at least as valuable as a fish or mammal? Or tree?

Now murder does not have to be a physical act. Jesus taught that murder can also be done with the heart or mind. Our Lord taught that whosoever hates his brother is a murderer. Jesus did

*not* say, "Listen, if you really have a good reason to hate the guy, hey! I understand that." He just said that hating equates killing in His eyes. Murder can be committed with the tongue, according to the Book of James. Verbal assassination.

I don't recall ever preaching a sermon against television, *per*

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*se*. Much of TV in our day is junk and should be avoided.

However, there is also much on TV that I thoroughly enjoy, especially news, sports and some of the specialized channels. I have never seen a church destroyed by television. However, I *have* seen churches decimated by *telephones*. I've never heard a sermon preached against telephones; however, I am thinking about it ....

What horrendous things we do with our words! A friend of mine bought his first tape recorder in the late forties (when they were still quite an innovation). He hid the recorder behind the sofa, turned it on, and recorded an entire conversation with some guests in his home one night. The visiting lady verbally ripped into someone, and, of course, it was all captured on the tape. When my friend sprung his "surprise" and replayed the tape, the woman was

horrified to hear her words destroying another human being. She tearfully asked her husband to buy the tape.

"Please," she begged, "give him \$10 and get that tape."

"Oh," said my friend, "I don't want any money. Here—the tape is yours."

She was so relieved. She grasped the tape to her bosom and said, "Now, you don't have any copies of it, do you?"

"No," he assured her.

"Oh," she responded, "I'm so thankful there are no copies of this terrible tape!"

To which my friend responded, "Now I didn't say there were no copies. I only said that I don't have any copies. There is, however, another copy. God has it. And I don't think He'll sell it to you."

Anything that diminishes the value of human life is immoral.

Our society is now facing the enormous issue of euthanasia. Can a physician assist in the taking of a life? Does the individual have

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the right to take his own life when he faces certain death? What

does the Bible teach concerning the subject?

The Bible teaches that it is a terrible thing to take human life.

One morning, while preaching in the church I pastor, my eyes caught the face of a visitor. I recognized him immediately. This fellow had been the Israeli government-appointed chaplain for Adolf Eichmann when that Nazi stood trial in Jerusalem for mass murder. This gentleman had been with Eichmann any number of times to attempt giving him spiritual help. And he was with the German when he was hanged. He accompanied the death party when they took Eichmann's ashes far out into the Mediterranean and scattered them to the waves. My friend recounted that on the day of the execution, Eichmann appeared quite calm and collected. He stood on the trap door of the gallows. He was bound securely. The thick rope, covered with rubber so it would not cut the throat, was placed around Eichmann's neck. The condemned man refused a hood. His last words were, "Long live Germany! Long live Argentina! Long live Austria!" Then the executioner pulled a lever, the trap door was sprung, and Eichmann dropped into the darkness below—into eternity.

One day, at the Great White Throne Judgment, you and I will

stand as spectators as Eichmann is called to a final hearing—this one before the God of the universe who made the Jews His chosen people. Talk about drama! What will Eichmann say on that day? My chaplain friend told me that Eichmann refused to commit his life to Christ. Thus he committed the ultimate murder—the murder of his soul. Jesus asked, "*What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*" I believe there are those who will read this little book who have been confronted with multiple opportunities to give their lives to Christ. However, those people have backed off, desiring some "more convenient" time. And with each refusal,

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the heart has grown increasingly resistant to the Spirit's wooing. They have committed a sort of spiritual suicide. Someday they will answer to the God who commanded, "*Thou shalt not kill.*"

### **Commandment Number Seven**

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

The term "adultery" has to do with any kind of sexual activity outside of the heterosexual marriage bed.

Pastors today report a growing problem of men and women

living together without benefit of marriage. One such woman told me recently, "Well, Pastor, my friend and I consider ourselves married in the eyes of God." What blatant disregard for legal responsibility and commitment! Living together outside of marriage is a sin. "Well, it is convenient! It gives us a tax break ... *et cetera ad nauseum!*" It does not matter how convenient it is or if it saves you a pile of tax money; it is still sinful in the sight of God!

Homosexual activity is a sin in His sight as well. Regardless of what people may claim on the various TV trash talk shows, men with men and women with women in sexual activity is an abomination to the Creator. It does not matter how Hollywood or the TV networks attempt to glamorize or rationalize this smut. God says such sexual activity is a sin in His eyes.

*Ask yourself a question:* "What do motion picture producers care if they glamorize infidelity? Or homosexuality?" They don't care! See, they don't have to clean up the mess when the sinning is done. The clergy do! Innocent victims do! Those show biz types don't have to worry about the little children who no longer have a mommy and daddy in one united home. No, they made your seven

bucks at the box office, which is all they wanted from you in the

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first place. They didn't make their films to improve humanity or raise society a level or two. They made the films to increase their riches.

But God, who truly loves you, and does not want you hurt, nor does He want you to be a victim of lethal sin, warns you against immorality. He tells you clearly that sex outside of marriage is lethal!

You say, "Well, I just don't agree with that!"

With all due respect, your opinion (and mine) plus 50 cents will purchase a cup of coffee in a very cheap restaurant. Our opinion in matters of morality does not matter. It is what God says . . . not what you and I *think*. We live in a society where morality is considered relative and the final value is whatever makes the individual happy at the moment. If it feels good ... do it! Or to quote the pop song of a few years ago, "This can't be wrong ... it *feels* so right ..."

*Hmmmm*. Then Hitler must have been a moral man because he

felt so good about what he was doing to the Jews and to Poland and to Austria and to the whole world. His machinations caused the deaths of nearly 60 million people. But he *felt* good about it, so it must have been *OK*. Is *that* what you are telling me? If it *feels* right, it *is* all right?

There are terrible penalties that come with adultery. That's why God hates it so! He tries to warn us about the danger of such potent activity and ways: "Listen! There are boundaries! Don't go beyond those boundaries! If you do, if you involve yourself in this sin, there are penalties that will result!"

*But whoso committeth adultery ... lacketh understanding: he [or she] that doeth it, destroyeth his own soul (Proverbs 6:32).*

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Hear it clearly! Adultery destroys your soul! Since your soul is eternal, that's a brutal price to pay for time spent between the sheets.

And there is much, much more! Adultery destroys a person's name and family. "*A wound and dishonor shall he [the adulterer,*



*male or female] get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away"*

(Proverbs 6:33).

Here's the sting! Yes, God forgives confessed sin. *But* the wages of that sin *still have to be paid!* Many preachers today declare a "gospel" of cheap grace. And society truly believes that it can live any way it wishes, then come to God for a bountiful provision of grace, and then everything will be just as it was.

Listen! Salvation may be returned to your life and fellowship with God established once again; *but the terrible destruction, the dry rot that has set into your soul, will never be taken away! Never!*

You say, "But God won't remember my sin against me any longer." No, He won't. But you will. And the one you sinned against will. And the ripple effect of your transgression goes on and on. The Bible says that your sin continues to be paid for by your children—clear to the fourth generation thereafter. The Bible says that while your sin *may* be forgiven ... *the reproach will never be wiped away!*

Adultery involves others in the guilt and the penalty. No person is an island unto himself. The old saw, "It's nobody's business," just is not true. Of course, it's somebody else's business.

Virtually everything a person does involves somebody else.

Adultery excludes the unforgiven, unrepentant sinner from heaven. Adultery pollutes entire families and generations.

Adultery often spawns venereal disease. Adultery shatters values and trust. Nobody else's business? You must be joking!

A young lady was asked what fortune she would give her

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husband on Father's Day. She replied, "I'm going to give my husband something that is more valuable than any treasure: a heart unspotted, a virtue without a stain, which is all that descended to me from my parents." That is the ultimate dowry!

### **Commandment Number Eight**

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

There is a sanction that God gives to private property. Stealing is an offense. Appropriating a person's property against his will is a sin. The motive behind it is beside the point.

**"But I needed that object ..."**

*Thou shalt not steal.*

Some wag once said, "My mother and father were in the iron

and steel business. My mom took in ironing and my father stole."

Stealing can involve more than burglary or filching. Stealing can mean borrowing without any intention of returning or repaying. Stealing can involve leaving bills unpaid. I have it said to me, "Well, I do have a lot of unpaid bills. But you know, I speak in tongues!" That means you are a thief who speaks in tongues.

The gospel has no credibility when the moral law is shattered for any reason. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are invalid unless they are predicated on the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The fruit equate *character*.

I have said it many times on *Revivaltime*, and I'll repeat it here: God is not interested in your charisma; He *is* interested in your character.

Vandalism is stealing! Many times I see public buildings

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defaced, graffiti scrawled with spray paint, windows shattered, lawns torn up, etc. Christians do not do these things for they are stealing.

Now what is involved in the aftermath of stealing? A person

says, "Well, I'll go to the one I have wronged and ask forgiveness and that will be that!"

Wrong.

Or, I'll say "I'm sorry" and everything will be OK once again.

Nope!

Read the Book (the Bible!). If a person steals a cow, for example, the Bible says *you not only give the cow back, but you buy your victim a second cow!* That's a 100 percent penalty! Other biblical cases of restitution demand 500 percent payback.

Listen ... stealing is *bad business!* So if you have stolen a fellow's Corvette, you owe him two. Restitution!

Now no discussion of the eighth commandment would be complete unless we recalled Malachi's classic query, "*Will a man rob God?*"

How could I rob God?

*By failure to tithe.*

Tithe is 10 percent of your gross income. It is the firstfruit of your receipts. Uncle Sam is not the firstfruit, God is! Often I am asked, "Do I tithe before or after taxes?" God is the firstfruit. Now tithe belongs to your local church. It *does not* belong to

*Revivaltime* or any other media ministry. Tithe must not be paid to any parachurch organization. Tithe goes into your local spiritual storehouse. The church is not supported by bingo or flea markets. Strong churches are built by strong tithers. Failure to tithe is to rob. To rob whom? God.

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Thou shalt not steal.

#### **Commandment Number Nine**

*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor  
(Exodus 20:16).*

This commandment prohibits lying. There's a very interesting insight into the way God thinks in Revelation 21:8 in which we are informed that *all liars* shall have their part in the lake of fire. In that verse, God lumps liars with the heathen, abominable, murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, and idolators. Some company! God is really angered by lying (and I'm not lying!). Why does God feel so strongly about this sin? Because lying is the characteristic that most closely identifies with Satan. Satan is the father of lies. Nothing so closely links a person with the

enemy as lying. Lying is the sin most contrary to the nature of Christ. Jesus said to Pilate, "I am Truth!" A person cannot be indwelt by the Christ of God and be a liar. Lying is generally considered one of the loathsome character sins a person can commit.

### **Commandment Number Ten**

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

The history of this world has been stained and darkened by the crimes to which nations and individuals have been driven by the spirit of covetousness. This sin is spiritual corruption, the gangrene of the soul, an indulgence in unholy desires.

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Covetousness becomes a master.

How can this sin be overcome? The Bible says that we are to set our affections on things above, not on the things of the earth.

Earlier in this little treatise, I mentioned television. One of the

negative effects of TV, I believe, is that it raises the level of expectation beyond any normal bounds. The public watches commercials (and usually commercials are the best-produced part of that medium!). A properly executed commercial causes the consumer *to want* that product! Whether a person can pay for it or not.

A man said to his psychiatrist, "Doc, you gotta help me. Life has become intolerable to me. Here's my problem: My home is worth about \$400,000. I have a 6-month-old Mercedes 560. My wife drives a Porsche. We have a 32-foot boat in the harbor. We have two maids and a cook, plus a part-time gardener. I really have problems!" The doctor said, "With all those things, what's your problem?" The patient answered, "I only make \$62.50 a week!" It's not that easy to get credit, perhaps—but easy enough.

Thank God we can be set free from such terrible bondage.

Jesus taught us liberty from "things." Paul cried out that his great desire was to know Christ! May it be ever the same with us.

There it is—a brief look at the Ten Commandments. The spinal cord of civilization! Remove those commandments and society is reduced to anarchy.

How can a person live such a lofty ideal? He cannot—except through the indwelling Christ! Paul said it, "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!*" We live from His life, He who is truth, morality, light, and honor.

As we study God's Word, may the Holy Spirit cause us to have an insatiable appetite for spiritual truth, and a desire to grow in

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grace day by day!

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# THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

SPINAL CORD OF CIVILIZATION



**T**he Ten Commandments have aptly been described as "the spinal cord of civilization." Remove those commandments and society is reduced to anarchy.

Today's deterioration of moral values is a frightening phenomenon to behold. This "new morality" is best translated "rebellion"—open warfare against God's moral law. Just as it destroyed Adam and Eve, it will destroy us today if it continues unchecked.

True standards of morality are not determined by Hollywood, the U.S. Supreme Court, or any church organization. The only moral absolutes have not and will not be put to human vote. They are ordained by the Creator. ☐



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