

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

I THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER
GODS BEFORE ME

II THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO
THEE ANY GRAVEN IMAGES

III THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME
OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN

IV REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY,
TO KEEP IT HOLY

V HONOUR THY FATHER AND THY
MOTHER

VI THOU SHALT NOT KILL

VII THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT
ADULTERY

VIII THOU SHALT NOT STEAL

IX THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE
WITNESS AGAINST THY
NEIGHBOUR

X THOU SHALT NOT COVET



The Ten Commandments, along with other associated statutes, were given by Jehovah roughly 3,500 years ago, making this one of the earliest systems of law in the history of man. From the beginning, mankind appears to have been accountable to a kind of natural law from the Creator, where actions like murder were condemned (else why was Cain punished?) and interpersonal relationships like marriage (Lu 17:26-27) were addressed, but there was no comprehensive, codified body of law until early in the 2nd millennium B.C. There have been other legal canons, such as the Code of Hammurabi, but these focused primarily on civil matters and stipulated punishments commensurate with a given infraction. Jehovah's Law was unique in many ways, for instance, it was given by Jehovah Himself and first and foremost, addressed the relationship Israel was to have with Him; the first four commandments addressed this. It was also a moral law with six commandments addressing civil interaction.

The Ten Commandments were the cornerstone of the broader Law of Moses, given to the emerging nation of Israel, to accomplish a very special purpose. Paul wrote, *"Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor."* Gal 3:24-25 The Law accomplished its purpose to usher forth the Messiah for the salvation of all mankind. When that work was done, the Law was nailed to Jesus' cross. Remarkably, nine of the original Ten Commandments were incorporated into the New Covenant and still govern our spiritual lives today.

Ten Commandments

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No Other Gods Before Me

Aaron Lumpkin

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”

Exod 20:2 God reminds His people as He prepares to reveal His law to them at Mount Sinai (Exod 20:2). Only a short time before, as Israel languished under harsh Egyptian bondage, God had taken notice of their plight and sent Moses to tell His people of their coming salvation. *“Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.”* Exod 6:7 That deliverance has now come, as Israel is just a few months removed from their exodus from Egypt. God reminds the children of Israel that He has proved unequivocally that He is indeed their God by freeing them from slavery, as He promised. Because of what He has just done for them, the Lord now lays out His law for Israel by carving in stone what He hopes they will write on their hearts.

“You shall have no other gods before Me.” This first of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:3 is intended as the conclusion to the reminder just mentioned in Exodus 20:2 regarding Israel’s great deliverance from Egypt. God’s reasonable expectation is that the children of Israel recognize His power and serve Him only. Although we’re likely all familiar with the story of the Exodus, it may be impossible for us to grasp just how great a feat it was to rescue an entire people from the hands of what was probably the most powerful nation in the world at that time. A simple reminder (vs 2) might have sufficed for those who endured that cruelty of Egyptian captivity and saw for themselves the salvation of the Lord, but only a generation later Moses, thought it necessary to explain the significance of this incomparable event to the children of those who had escaped Egypt: *“Indeed, ask now concerning the former days which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and inquire*

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from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything been done like this great thing, or has anything been heard like it? Has any people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, as you have heard it, and survived? Or has a god tried to go to take for himself a nation from within another nation by trials, by signs and wonders and by war and by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm and by great terrors, as the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? To you it was shown that you might know that the Lord, He is God; there is no other besides Him.” Deut 4:32-35 The exodus of Israel from Egypt is unparalleled in human history and God uses it as irrefutable evidence of who He is and His commitment to His people! Scripture points to the Exodus over and over again, more than any other sign in the Old Testament, to demonstrate God’s power and authority. In other words, *because* God has just rescued Israel from bondage (Exod 20:2) *therefore* Israel must serve only the One who rescued them (Exod 20:3).

“You shall have no other gods before Me.” The fact that this is the first commandment is no accident. Since God has chosen only Israel to be His people, then it stands to reason that the children of Israel must choose only the Lord to be their god. It may seem strange to us (at least on the surface) to imagine a culture where man has devised countless gods, each with their own particular manner of worship. Yet these Israelites were not merely exposed to polytheism, but were actually serving these Egyptian gods! (Jos 24:14) And just as the Lord had called their father Abraham from serving false gods to follow Him alone (Jos 24:2), Israel is now being told in no uncertain

terms that the God of Abraham is to be their sole deity. This required a fundamental, but necessary change in their way of thinking and living, because the covenant relationship between the Lord and Israel hinges *entirely* on their acceptance of Him as the only true and living God. Many, if not all, of Israel’s subsequent moral struggles result from their failing to properly and consistently follow this first and most basic command.

“You shall have no other gods before Me.” It’s worth noting that this commandment is one of exclusivity, not priority. Which god would the Lord have permitted the Israelites to serve after they first worshipped Him? Baal? Asherah? Any of the Egyptian gods? No, He alone is to be their God. The word usually translated as “before” in English can be confusing, especially if we neglect the context. What the Lord is telling Israel is that *besides* Me, you will have no other gods. The Creator is not simply asking to be first of many gods in their lives, but instead is rightfully demanding to be the *only* god in their lives.

We are not bound by the same covenant which God cut with Israel at Mount Sinai, the covenant which Israel broke. But as God’s covenant people today (Heb 8:7-13) we must still heed our God’s unchanged expectation to honor and serve Him exclusively. Like His people from ages past, our salvation from bondage can only be realized by following the one and only God, the God of Israel, as He leads us through this wilderness of life and home to the land of promise! *“Remember the*

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things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done.” Isa 46:9 “Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the Lord? And there is no other God besides me, a righteous God and Savior; there is none except me. Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.” Isa 45:21-22

No Idols

Carol Fertig

At every stage in the Israelites’ history they were tested and tempted by idols and idolatry. There were gods in the lands the Israelites traveled through, and even God’s people had representative objects in their households. They may not have bowed down to these household gods, but they held them in great esteem, as we see when Rachel’s took her father’s household gods as Jacob was returning with his family and possessions to Canaan. (Gen 31:30-35) They apparently trusted these gods-that-were-not-God for protection and prosperity.

The Israelites were becoming a nation when God brought them out of Egypt, but they had many trials to go through to become established. Idols and the worship of them were a major obstacle at every crossroads the Jews approached. They would have witnessed idol worship in Egypt, so when they were delivered, God made His

feelings known concerning idols. Ironically, while Moses was up on mount Sinai receiving the tablets of stone, with the second commandment, *“You shall not make an idol,”* the people were busy at the base of the mountain fashioning an idol and plunging headlong into idolatry. Moses had been on the mountain a long time and the people wanted something tangible, so Aaron created a golden calf for them. God told Moses that the people had *“turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshipped it and sacrificed to it . . .”* Exod 32:8 God’s response is recorded in Exodus 32:35: *“Then the Lord sent a plague on the people, because they made the calf, the one that Aaron made.”*

The next major step in the history of God’s people came as they prepared to enter the Promised Land. Idolatry again caused a major problem between the Lord and His people when Israel *“yoked himself to Baal of Peor.”* Num 25:3 God was so angry that He had the chiefs of the people hanged and once again sent a plague on His people. 24,000 died, and the plague was only removed when Phinehas killed an Israelite man and a Midianite woman. Several times in Deuteronomy Moses warns against idolatry, reminding them at least once of what happened at Baal Peor: (Deut 4:2-3; 12:29-31 and others)

The time of the Judges was a constant struggle against idolatry. We read of Gideon tearing down the Baal idol and Samson’s victory over the Philistine god Dagon. Moving into the time when kings ruled Israel, we see idolatry persisting as a block between God

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and His people. Even the wise Solomon was pulled into idolatry by his foreign wives. When the kingdom divided, Jeroboam in the north built idol calves for the people to worship to keep them from going to Jerusalem to perform true worship as God had prescribed. Many times they attempted to blend idol worship with worship of God, thus trying to please man rather than God.

We tend to think that in New Testament times idolatry was no longer a problem. Paul certainly acknowledged that was not so in his letter to the Romans. Hear what he says in Romans 1:22—25.

“Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.”

In addition to images, idols can be anything a person exchanges for God’s supremacy, anything he/she desires to please himself/herself instead of serving and pleasing God. The editor of Smith’s Bible Dictionary puts it like this: “Whatever of wealth, or honor, or pleasure is loved and sought before God and righteousness becomes an object of idolatry.” In Colossians 3:5, Paul says: *“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”* He has been discussing the new life we

live in Christ, instructing us to set our minds on heavenly, rather than earthly things.

Paul readily recognized the idols in Athens. They were everywhere! We remember his lesson concerning the “unknown god” the Athenians were worshipping to cover their bases in case they missed one of their multiple gods. The images made by artists in silver, gold, stone, wood, etc. were dead and ineffective and were of value only to the artisans who crafted them. It is somewhat harder for us to recognize idols in our lives today. The term workaholic became popular a few years ago, meaning that someone was addicted to his/her work, career, or job. If that career causes one to slight one’s service to God, it has become an idol. This might take the form of missing services in favor of extra work. We must all work, and sometimes during the hours of church services, but that is not what is being considered here. It could be taking time away from Bible study in favor of writing/studying business material. It might be slighting my helping brothers or sisters who truly need our help in favor of entertaining work acquaintances. This paradigm works in considering other areas, too.

I have to be careful of too much television-watching, reading or other entertainment. If I engage in those activities rather than study God’s word or help in evangelism, I have made an idol of those activities. Apply this to relationships, as well as many other areas I’m sure you can think of, and you’ll identify what might be idolatry in your life. To find it is the first step to dealing with it and giving to God the honor, trust, obedience, time, love, and glory that is due to Him.

Don't Take The Lord's Name In Vain

Mark Gray

The third commandment is: *"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."* Exod 20:7 Together we will look at what "vain" means to us. We will look at who God is, why His name should have importance, and finally we'll look at the application of this commandment in our lives.

Typically when we hear the word vain we think of someone who is obsessed with how they look or how they are perceived by others, like the subject of Carly Simon's song "You're So Vain." In this commandment, however, vain is used to connote something without significance, lacking substance, or being worthless. Whenever God's name is used in vain, it is treating Him as insignificant and worthless. God issues a similar command, *"You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD."* Lev 19:12 In this instance, God sheds some light on the reasoning behind this law. If you swear to do something invoking God's name to seal the deal, but have no intention of following through, you are showing that God is worthless to you. This is a misrepresentation of Almighty God.

In his play Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare wrote, "What is in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." Perhaps it is this line of reasoning that led to this commandment. We generally put little stock in the meaning of names in our era, but we need to think

about who God "IS" when we use His name.

Jesus tells the Jews, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."* John 8:58 I have always loved this verse just for its "word play." As a youth I thought this was speaking more toward Jesus being eternal (without beginning and without end). While this is true, this is not exactly what He is conveying here. Right after Jesus says this *"they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple."* John 8:59 What did the Jews gather from the statement that would incite them to stone Jesus? These Jews were not ignorant of the Law, nor of their history. They knew when God tasked Moses to return to Egypt to lead the people out of slavery, that he was worried about the reception he would receive from his own people. He asked God whom should he say had sent him? *"God said to Moses, 'I AM who I AM.' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"* Exod 3:14 Therefore, the Jews of Jesus' day understood that Jesus was using this name of Himself and took it as blasphemy. They knew Jesus was calling Himself deity by using this name of God. Jesus knew the importance of this name. He did not use it by accident as a clever play on words, and the Jews in the temple understood the significance of the name as well. Their violent reaction would have been well placed had Jesus not been the Christ.

God's name is special because He is special. He is not a kindly old man who lives in the clouds as some artists have shown. He is not a human man and should not be treated as such. Some of the greatest chapters in scripture (in my opinion) are from Job chap-

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ters 38—41. God Himself rebukes Job and his friends with questions and statements about the deity and majesty of God the creator. God begins His rebuke by asking Job, *“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements- surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”* Job 38:4-7 We need to remember that this is the same God that SPOKE the universe into existence! David understood this as he wrote, *“O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!”* Psa 8:1 God reminds His creation in Isaiah's era, *“for my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.”* Isa 55:8-9 God is not our peer and we would do well to remember that.

As we go about our lives as Christians we should remember that we wear the name of Christ and reflect God to the world. What sort of reverence do we show Almighty God if we casually throw His name about? If we say, “Oh my God,” then we had better be in prayer to Him, not using it as an expression of shock or disgust. Remember that Jesus was nearly killed for using God's name. How dare we use it as a diminutive or euphemism (gosh, golly, etc). If we “swear to God” it needs to be a solemn vow, not an expression to get a point across. We need to recognize that Jesus is God as well. As a much younger man I never heard anyone yell out “Jesus

Christ” outside a sermon. Now it is common to say on sitcoms. The world tries to tear down the deity of God and using His majestic name as a euphemism or just an expression adds to that tearing down. We need to keep at the forefront of our minds that God is the God and our speech should reflect that. He is holy and we cannot use His holy name as a substitute for profanity or as profanity.

Remember the Sabbath

Steven D. Baxley

The fourth commandment reads: *“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”* Exod 20:8-11

This commandment was a great blessing in a world where typically people worked 7 days a week with very little time for rest. Not only were the people as a whole to rest, but specific instructions were given that servants, livestock, and even foreigners living among the Israelites were to rest.

As given, the commandment recalls the fact that God had created the universe in 6 days, and then rested on the 7th. His rest was not out of need (Isa 40:28) but rather set an example for what He would do later

for the People of Israel. God blessed the 7th day and made it holy (Gen 2:1-3; Exod 20:11), but there is no record of any commandment for mankind concerning the Sabbath prior to the exodus of Israel out of Egyptian slavery. It would be for Israel, the people of the Covenant, to observe and keep the Sabbath as a day of rest. In fact, it was a sign of this Covenant. As God explains in Exodus 13:12-17, the Sabbath was a sign between Himself and Israel that would last throughout Israel's generations.

This idea was so important that violating God's instructions concerning the Sabbath was one of the capital crimes under the Old Law. This punishment was carried out, as one unnamed man found out when he was caught gathering sticks and was brought to Moses and Aaron until instructions could be received from God. God ordained that the man should be executed by stoning outside the camp of Israel, with the whole congregation participating. (Num 15:32-36) There were various rules concerning how the Sabbath was to be observed, and explanations given to govern its observance. For example, it was specifically spelled out for the farmer that the Sabbath was a day of rest, even during times of plowing and harvesting (Exod 34:21). Goods were not to be transported, nor bought and sold on the Sabbath (Jer 17:27; Neh 13:15-22). No fires were to be kindled on the Sabbath, which would have a distinct effect on normal household activities (Exod 35:2-3), whether in the wilderness or once settled in the Land.

Interestingly, there was also a "Sabbath year" during which the fields of the Israelites were to lie fallow (Exod 23:10-11, Lev 25:1-

7). The idea of the Sabbath year was clearly linked to the idea of weekly sabbaths. This 7th year followed six years where agriculture was carried out as normal. During this year, what produce grew on its own was to be particularly food for the poor (Exod 23:11). Also, during this year, debts were to be forgiven among the Israelites, but not in regard to debts owed by foreigners (Deut 15:1-3). In regard to agriculture, it was clear that Israel did not always obey this command, and so God would let the land make up for it while Israel was in captivity (Lev 26:34-35).

In the New Testament, the Sabbath was clearly an appropriate day for worshipping God, as is evidenced by Jesus' frequent visits to synagogues on this day (Lu 4:16; Lu 13:10). However, Jesus rejected the traditions that had built up around the Sabbath, including the idea that plucking grain was equivalent to harvesting grain (Mk 2:23-26). He made it clear that the idea of mercy trumped that of their tradition-bound observance of the Sabbath (Mt 12:9-14) by healing the man with a withered hand on that day. His explanation also called His accusers to recognize that even THEY would rescue a stranded sheep, even if that had to be done on the Sabbath.

There is, however, no Scriptural support for the idea that the Sabbath was incorporated into Christ's new covenant. In fact, the command to observe the Sabbath is never enjoined upon people living under the New Covenant. In Acts 15, where the question of whether or not Gentile Christians had to observe circumcision was settled, there were four commands given that they needed to specifically observe (abstain from what had

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been sacrificed to idols, from blood, from what had been strangled, and from sexual immorality). The Sabbath was not listed, and from the record of Acts 15, or that it was even discussed! Jewish Christians clearly understood that the Sabbath had been part of the covenant of God with Israel, not with the Gentiles, and since Christ had not commanded it for Gentile Christians, it was certainly not binding on them. Not only did these Christians understand this, since the commands came from the Holy Spirit, He must have understood this as well! To argue otherwise is simply to argue with God himself.

Christians in the New Testament met to worship and observe the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Sunday did not become the "Christian Sabbath" (as is often claimed by people today) since there was no command for them to rest on this day. They worshipped on Sunday, and perhaps if they were able to, they rested on this day as well. But, given that many of the first Christians were slaves, and that Sunday was a day of work like any other in the Roman world, they would have worked that day just like any other. This may explain the references both in the New Testament and outside the New Testament to Christians gathering to worship either very early in the morning or late at night (before the work day began and after the work day concluded). Christians today who claim tiredness as an excuse for forsaking the assembling together (Heb 10:25) would do well to remember what our early brothers and sisters in Christ often had to do in order to worship God and remember His Son Jesus Christ.

There is one other aspect in which the

Sabbath has relevance to Christians today. The writer of Hebrews draws a clear parallel between the Sabbath of the Old Covenant and eternal rest promised to God's faithful people (Heb 4:1-11). Although Christians today do not observe the seventh-day Sabbath rest, they can look forward to the day when they will be given eternal rest from the Lord whom they have faithfully served.

Honor Father & Mother

Gary Mangus

When I think about the first 4 of the Ten Commandments, it is clear to me that God wanted the children of Israel to put Him first, to only worship Him, to speak His name with reverence, and to remember Him—that God loves us, wants us to love Him and to keep His commandments—that God our Father desired a relationship with His children. It is fitting that the next commandment (as quoted from Exodus 20:12) is: *"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you."* In doing so God sets up the basis for a proper family relationship, one in which the child honors his parents all their life and is the key to all relationships.

Let's take a look at the relationship between Jesus, the Son, and His Father, God. The Lord announced His Son to the world by saying, *"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."* Mt 3:17 From that point on there would be no doubt, to Whom Jesus belonged. Jesus, knowing Who His Father was, honored and glorified Him by living in

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ultimate submission to Him. And correspondingly, we have the example of Jesus also being submissive to his earthly parents in Luke 2:49-52. When Jesus was twelve, He stayed behind at the Temple in Jerusalem to “*be in his Father’s house*” instead of sticking with His earthly family. Yet He willingly returned with them and was “*submissive to them.*” And He continued to honor His mother, even as He was dying (John 19:26-27).

What does it mean to honor your father and mother? Honoring your father and mother is being respectful in word and action and having an inward attitude of esteem for their position. The Hebrew word for **honor** means “to be heavy” or “to give weight.” 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**.

Thus, we are to **honor** God and those in authority over us and to require the children in our lives to respect us. God loves us in this command by showing us how to live together in close family units, which in turn affects every relationship outside our homes. There is no ending point for this commandment—we are to **honor** our parents in childhood and adulthood, for we owe them a debt of **honor** that never ends. We also see our parents **honoring** their own parents by taking care of them in their old age with love. When we have the proper **honor** relationship with our parents, our grandparents, and others in

authority, this respect for authority will help us stay out of trouble. Ephesians 6:2-4 states, “*Honor your father and mother (this is the first commandment with a promise), that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.*” Those who **honor** their parents are blessed (Jer 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 (Rom 1:30; 2 Tim 3:2).

Phases of Honoring: In our youth we **honor** our parents through obedience, even when we disagree. We should say yes. And then just do it. “*My son, keep your father’s commandment, and forsake not your mother’s teaching.*” Prov 6:20 “*Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.*” Prov 23:22

Many of us think we know more and are smarter than our parents? I sure did when I was young! However, the older I became, the wiser they became! Trust me! Listen to this; Get over it, YOU are NOT! **Honor** them by your obedience and respect them for what they tell you and who they are. Really listen to them! The only time we are justified in not obeying is if our parents tell us to do something that God has forbidden (Acts 5:29).

Perhaps the most important way we can **honor** our parents is to forgive them. The fact is, there are no perfect parents. Our parents may have sinned against us, made unwise decisions, had unrealistic expectations, or said and done things that have left you deeply wounded. For such reasons, many children enter adulthood controlled by anger and bitterness. They find themselves unable

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or unwilling to move past their parents' mistakes or sins. Pray and ask for God's help. We honor our parents by extending grace and forgiveness to them. Deep down you know you love them. Tell them you love them! Ask them to forgive you for times you were not being respectful, for the things you have said and done that were hurtful also. This is true for all relationships! We have to work at all relationships; doing so with sincere submissive behavior will lead us to the promise, *"that it may go well with you."*

As a young adult we **honor** our parents by recognizing their wisdom. We show them respect. We let them know we are going to be home late out of respect for them. We ask them for their advice often. We give them time to talk and do not interrupt. We do not sit in their favorite place. We never say things that diminish their role as parent or embarrass them in public. We show respect for their world and preferences (they probably are not up with the times). As we age our roles with our parents change. Now even though we may not see them as often, we keep in contact to say hello and ask how they are doing and let them know we love them.

Honor by sharing the joy in our lives. Now we have a child or children. You are now a parent, so continue to **honor** our own parents by sharing the joy of our children with their grandparents and always showing respect and honor so that your children see the examples of honor being shown to your parents. You now raise your own children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, while still showing honor to your parents, by visits, calls, and checking on their health and needs.

Our parents need our support! When we were children our parents took care of us. Now it is our turn to **honor** them by providing loving support for their needs as they grow older. Even if we did not get along with our parents or had a recent disagreement, we still need to do this. It could be a good time to repair the relationship, ask for forgiveness, and show true **honor** to your parent in need. It is also the right thing to do.

I think of David at a particularly low point in his life, weighed down by cares and attacked by enemies. In this context he cried out to God and said, *"Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent."* Psa 71:9 David feared the combination of age and isolation, of being old and alone. So too do our elderly parents.

When we are young we gain strength and long for independence. Our parents raise us to be strong and free! But there is a trade-off here, a passing of the baton, for as our parents age they become feeble, they begin to lose their independence (Eccl 12:1-8). We honor our parents by giving them the assurance that we will not forsake them in their old age. Just as they cared for us, we will care for them. This is our responsibility and it ought to be our joy.

At a time when millions of elderly adults are living alone, consigned to nursing homes and hospitals, cared for by professionals rather than family members, Christians have the opportunity to display special honor. Even if parents have no financial needs, there is still a Christian obligation for hands-on, loving care. Nurses may be employed, but there must be more—we need to be

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personally involved in their care. Emotional neglect and abandonment is not an option, for such conduct, *“is worse than an unbeliever.”* 1 Tim 5:8

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.

Do Not Murder

Jon Hall

Exodus 20:13 – *“You Shall Not Murder.”* This is a very short and straight-forward commandment. Merriam-Webster defines “murder” as the act of unlawfully killing another person, especially with malicious forethought. The first murder happened early in the history of mankind when Cain killed Abel, his brother. From this event to today, murder has continued to be a problem for mankind. We have accounts recorded throughout the Bible of mankind killing one another for any number of reasons and unfortunately, you will find no shortage of stories of murder in the news today. In this article we’ll take a deeper look into how God views murder and what this means to us today, as Christians.

Proverbs 6:16-19 is a listing of 7 things God hates; and *“hands that shed innocent blood,”* is second on the list. The accounts

of Cain and Abel, David and Uriah, and the most well-known, mankind and Jesus, are perfect examples of the thing God hates. Abel, Uriah and Jesus were all innocent victims, unworthy of death, yet due to jealousy, pride, arrogance, etc., all were murdered.

This brings me to what I consider an unavoidable tangent. This is the debate as to whether it is right for a government to have the death penalty. Opponents of the death penalty might use Exodus 20:13 to prove that all killing is wrong, however, they overlook at least two principles when doing so. First, the commandment, as well as several other scriptures, make it clear that what is in consideration is the “unlawful killing of an innocent party.” Second, they overlook many other passages that teach about the role of government and the punishment that God Himself outlined for the murderer. You don’t have to go far in the scriptures to get clarification on this. For as God continues to talk to Moses in Exodus 21, He tells Moses in verse 1 that what follows are the ordinances he was to set before the people. Reading further in verse 12, you find the following ordinance from God. *“He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death.”* This text is straight-forward, like the original commandment prohibiting murder. Additionally, God even established the process to follow before one was put to death for any offense, *“whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness.”* Deut 17:6 Finally, Paul teaches Christians to respect governing authorities: *“For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. For he is*

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God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil." Rom 13:3-4 Some may reason that a loving God who hates murder would not approve of capital punishment for any crime. I would argue that it is God's love for us that provides for the death sentence. How better to prevent additional murders than to not only stop those who practice murder, but to also provide an appropriate deterrent for others who may entertain such an action. God indeed hates murder, and with perfect wisdom has set forth the appropriate punishment for it.

As we continue to look into this subject, I'd like to explore the question: "where does murder come from?" Or put another way, "why would someone murder another person?" We might try to answer this question by looking for actual reasons such as anger, jealousy, etc., however, I'd like to look at the root cause of this problem. While anger and jealousy might indeed explain what finally motivates a person to commit such an offensive act, there is something deeper at work. Not everyone who becomes angry or jealous resorts to murder. Let's look at a couple of scriptures in this regard. First, look at 1 John 3:11-12, *"For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous."* Here we see Cain described as being one who was *"of the wicked one."* When Cain became angry and jealous of Abel, he did not see the simple fact that it was he who needed to

change, instead, being evil (of the wicked one) he determined that the solution was to murder Abel. While difficult to accept, all who practice murder are *"of the wicked one."* That's not to say that they need to stay this way. We only need to look at the example of David and Uriah to see this. Although David was *"of the wicked one"* during his sinful behavior, when approached about his sin, he repented and turned back to God. Not unlike many who were convicted by Peter on Pentecost. Secondly, let's look at Matthew 15:18-20. Here, Jesus answers Peter regarding his statement in verse 11, *"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man."* Simply put, murder comes from within a person. As hard as someone may try to rationalize their actions, killing an innocent person is an action that God hates and it defiles a man.

What do we take away from these teachings as Christians today? First, murder always has been and always will be something that God hates. If we love God, we will love what He loves and hate what He hates. By extension, we will not practice that which we claim to hate. Second, we must guard our hearts. David is described as a "man after God's own heart." Yet his actions during the encounter with Bathsheba and subsequent events leading to Uriah's murder, were inconsistent with who

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David was. We must not let our guard down as we move through life. When we stop growing in our Christian walk, we risk falling to the temptations of Satan and eventually being described as “*of the wicked one*” as Cain is depicted. When we guard our hearts and strive to follow our Lord and Savior each and every day, we will not find ourselves struggling with jealousy or uncontrolled anger, etc. Instead, we will avoid those evil thoughts within us that lead to evil actions.

Do Not Commit Adultery

Ephriam C. Davis

Among the multitude of bible topics to be studied and within the broad spectrum of those who profess to be “Christians,” sin is probably the topic that is most avoided. Yet sin is the greatest problem man has, because sin separates us from God. (Is 59:1-2) Perhaps since the lives of so many have been adversely impacted by the sin of adultery, some of the more “popular” preachers just avoid the topic. (Act 20:27, 2 Tim 4:2-4) “It is estimated that 30% to 60% of all married individuals in the United States will engage in **adultery** at some point.”¹ Furthermore, as with other sins, people create euphemisms or alternative words to use in an attempt to avoid the stigma created by the actual words of truth used in the bible. For example, “they had an affair” is used instead of “they committed adultery.” In this article, we will: 1) provide a biblical definition; 2) analyze an OT example; and 3) review some NT teaching.

Adultery Definition: The Merriam-

Webster definition of adultery is the voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and someone other than that person's current spouse or partner. The word adultery occurs in 33 bible verses of the KJV, the first of which is found in the account of God giving the Ten Commandments, “*You shall not commit adultery.*” Exod 20:14 Additionally, the man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death. (Lev 20:10) From these verses and the dictionary definition we conclude that adultery consists of a voluntary or consensual heterosexual act or even an on-going relationship between 2 people with at least 1 person being married to another. The sin of adultery: is first against God, second against the innocent non-participating spouse, and third punishable by death. However, please note that the dictionary use of the modern word “partner,” helps us to acknowledge the possibility that adultery could also take place when 1 spouse from a heterosexual marriage gets into a homosexual (Rom 1:26-27) relationship, or a relationship with more than one person. At least 1 person must be married to have the sin of adultery. Otherwise it would be the more generic sin of fornication, involving only un-married persons.

OT Adultery Example: The bible account of adultery between David and Bathsheba is perhaps the most familiar. (2 Sam 11:1-5) This scripture, as well as passages found elsewhere, provide more than sufficient explicit evidence of David's mindset and subsequent deliberate planning that lead up to this adulterous encounter. Note that the

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setting was spring time when kings went out with their armies to battle. King David's army was out fighting the Ammonites, while he decided to remain in Jerusalem. On this particular evening, David rose from his bed to walk on his roof. As one would imagine, he likely had clear visibility to adjacent rooftops, so it is no surprise that a woman bathing would have caught his eye. At this point, David had made at least 2 key decisions that led to this temptation circumstance: first, as king of Israel, he should have been out with his army at war; second, and perhaps more importantly, at the moment he saw the bathing woman, he decided not to turn his head to look the other way. Instead he paused to dwell on the fact that *"the woman was very beautiful to behold."* The entire narrative from this point forward details David's efforts to plot out and commit adultery, as well as his subsequent futile efforts to cover it up. (2 Sam 11:3-27) Very little is said about Bathsheba's thinking or motivation. Other than the fact that she was bathing on her rooftop, there is only room for speculation about her. Was she completely a willing and voluntary participant, or an innocent victim? We know that God always provides a way for us to avoid sin. (1 Cor 10:13) She could have resisted King David's pursuit, at the risk of being wrongfully executed under the authority of the King, but at least her soul would have been ultimately spared. The interesting observation here is that this scripture narrative concludes with the statement, *"But the thing that **David** had done displeased the **LORD**."* The LORD then sends Nathan the prophet to explicitly confront **David**. (2 Sam 12:1)

NT Teaching on Adultery: David's second key decision as noted above has been described as "Every Man's Battle," and Christian men are not automatically immune to this daily struggle. (Jas 1:14-15) It has been scientifically proven that most men are much more susceptible to visual stimulation than women.² That is probably why Jesus used male rather than female pronouns when He addressed the motivations to commit adultery in the Sermon-on-The-Mount to help us recognize that the physical act of adultery is a consequence of a man pausing to *"look at a woman to lust for her in his heart (mind)."* Mt 5:27-30

God's design for marriage is one man for one woman for life. (Gen 2:18-24, Mt 19:4-8) Adultery erodes and destroys trust, in a marriage. As with any other sin, God can and does forgive us when we respond in the manner of David, (Psa 51) who is described as *"A man after God's own heart."* 1 Sam 13:14 God's preference is that we be reconciled in every relationship, including marriage based on biblical principles. *"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men."* Rom 12:18 However, adultery still brings severe earthly consequences, as we can read about in the case of David. (2 Sam 12:1-14) While God hates divorce, (Mal 2:16) He still recognizes that at some point, that it may not be possible to continue to live together so He allows for separation or divorce, due to the hardness of the heart of some individuals. (Mt 5:31-32, Mt 19:8-9, 1 Cor 7:10-16) Regrettably, many people misunderstand and misinterpret these passages in various attempts to justify re-marriage to someone else in every cir-

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cumstance. Therefore, we must be extremely careful to recognize that God knows the intents of the hearts of all men. (Heb 4:12)

References:

1 <https://www.truthaboutdeception.com/cheating-and-infidelity/stats-about-infidelity.html>

2 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2739403/>

Do Not Steal

Kelly Johnson

What do we know about God's view on theft? Certainly, from His earliest commandments we see His prohibition of stealing. In the Old Testament it is stated several times (Exod 20:15, Lev 19:11, Deut 5:19) Stealing is also referenced in a number of other verses in connection with evil acts. The prohibition against stealing is also repeated in the New Testament, *"Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor doing honest work with his own hands . . ."* Eph 4:28

God states, *"You shall not steal"* (Deut 5:19) as one of the foundational commandments He provided to His people to direct their actions. There is no ambiguity about this, stealing is a sin. It is something that God's people are to avoid.

There are many reasons people steal. Sometimes it is because of envy, they want something that someone else possess. Sometimes it is from need, they lack the basic necessities to survive and do not have the resources to acquire what they need. Stealing can also be driven by jealousy or

even anger. Regardless of the motive, it is wrong in God's eyes.

Sometimes I think we have too narrow a view of what we think stealing is. We say to ourselves "I don't take things that don't belong to me." However, I would like to suggest that stealing can have a broader application than we might think. Most of us are not inclined to walk into a grocery store and take food without paying for it. We won't pick up someone's purse and walk away with it and we will not just get in some stranger's car and drive away with it. All of these actions would be sin.

Let's think about other applications of stealing. I can see more than one way that we can "steal" that involves our relationship with God and with others. When we turn our affections to things other than God, are we not stealing from God? Is that not what idol worship is all about, taking the respect, affection and gratitude that belongs to God and bestowing it on some other object, person or belief? Scripture tells us that our God is a jealous God (Deut 4:23-24). He wants our commitment to Him to be the center of our being and all other commitments to fall below that. Any time we get these priorities out of order and God falls in below other things or activities, we are stealing God's rightful preeminence from Him.

Another area where we may be stealing and not really thinking about it is in our relationship in our family. This applies to both our physical family and our spiritual family. In our physical families we are given specific responsibilities as spouses and as parents.

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We are instructed to raise our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This is an obligation that God has given parents. Christian parents should be aware of this obligation before starting a family. We see in the world around us the failure of the family and that is attributable in large part to the failure of the parents to meet their obligation. When parents ignore their responsibility to their children and spend their time fulfilling their own desires without regard for the children, they steal the time and opportunity that should be going to the children.

As spouses we are commanded to give honor and give preference to our mate. The marriage relationship is used repeatedly in the New Testament to model the relationship between man and God. If we neglect the marriage relationship, are we not taking the comforts and privileges God outlines in scripture from our spouse? In a very real sense, we are stealing from our spouse what God has promised them.

Within the body of Christ, as members of our spiritual family, we are commanded to love one another, to support one another and to watch out for one another (Gal 6:1-2, 5:13; John 13:34, 15:17; Rom 12:10, 13:8). We have the God ordained opportunity to love one another in a way that reflects God's love for each of us. When we do not fulfill our responsibility to our spiritual family, we steal from them what God has promised.

As Jesus was preparing to leave the physical realm and reenter the spiritual realm, He gave His disciples a command to go and take the gospel message to the world (Mt 18:19, Mk 16:15). We are the messengers today of the good news, the gospel. We are to take

the message to all the world. We work at that both collectively through the funds that come from our offerings on Sundays and we do it individually through personal evangelism and personal support of preachers. This is an obligation that we should not take lightly. Regardless of our method of participation, we should all be participating. If we do not, we may be depriving a lost soul of the opportunity to hear the gospel and respond. The opportunity to be saved is not something we want to steal from the lost.

Stealing may be as simple as physically taking something that is not yours. It can also be an act of omission in the spiritual world. It is up to us to be sincerely reflective about all of our actions to insure that we are not "stealing" from God or man. As followers of God through Christ Jesus we want to do our very best to honor the commandment "*You shall not steal.*"

Do Not Bear False Witness

David Parks

There are two aspects of bearing false witness that we will look at in this article. The primary one that the Ten Commandments deals with, is perjury. Then we will address lying in general. The ability of a society to rely on its citizens to bear truthful accounts in legal matters is the foundation of all justice. It is no wonder it is among the foundational commandments. Here are some examples of how this command was applied in scripture. "*You shall not spread a false report. You shall not*

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join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. You shall not fall in with the many to do evil, nor shall you bear witness in a lawsuit, siding with the many, so as to pervert justice, nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit.” Exod 23:1-3 First, spreading a false report, to willingly telling things about another you know are untrue is condemned. I think it would also include telling what you don't know is true, as if you did know it was true. Two, a malicious witness has bad intent, by trying to show your witness in the worst possible light. It is working for an outcome other than Justice. Three, good people by not speaking up to the crowd, has cost many innocent people their lives throughout history. As a follower of God, we are to stand for the truth even when the majority will not. Four, we are to be only on the side of truth. If we bear witness, race or social status cannot influence us. We must be truth tellers.

The commandment not to bear false witness is part of loving your neighbor as yourself. To have a just and orderly society we must be able to depend on each other to be truth tellers. Under the old law it took two or more witnesses to convict and a false witness would suffer the fate he sought to inflict. (Deut 19: 15-21) That would mean the death penalty for false testimony about a capital crime.

The commandment against bearing false witness is reaffirmed by Jesus in Matthew 19:18, Mark 10:19, Luke 18: 20 as needing to be obeyed to obtain eternal life. So as a Christian we should take very seriously what we testify to in word or in writing.

The bible has a lot to say about lying and

liars in general. God hates liars. Consider Proverbs 6: 16-19, *“There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.”*

It takes years to develop trust and just one lie told in a moment to destroy it. If you fall into the temptation of lying remember who is the father of lies. Who is a liar acting like? John 8:44, *“You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the **truth**, because there is no **truth** in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”* The children of God are proclaimers of truth and called to be like their master, the bringer of truth. Truth in bodily form. John 1:14 *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and **truth**.”* If we desire to follow the master, truth must be a part of us.

Truth must be both in word and in deed. Let us be known for the truth we tell and live. John 14: 16 Jesus said, *“I am the way, and the **truth**, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”* If you are a follower of Christ, you will tell the truth. It may not always be convenient or even safe, but it is a key attribute of a Christian. We are not to lie *“Rather, speaking the **truth in love**, we are to grow up **in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.**”* Eph 4: 15

Thou Shalt Not Covet

Russ Ward

The sincerity of a child speaks to all people because it is so often open and honest, revealing the heart of the child at that very moment in time. I can remember my daughter at the age of 3 wanting to play with one of my wife's antiques on our bookshelf and being told "no" several times. She secretly and discreetly crept into the room when we weren't looking and removed the item to play with it. My wife of course found her in the living room behind the recliner playing with the forbidden object and she sheepishly responded when being disciplined, "but I want it." That is covetousness in its purest form—what I want and what I am not allowed to have. Interestingly enough it runs parallel with James 1:14-15, as sin is defined as occurring first in the heart, "what I want, not what God wants," and then manifested in the action of the individual based upon the choice that is made whether to life or to death. So is the final commandment given by God to Moses upon Mt. Sinai, "*Thou shalt not covet...*" *Exod 20:17*

Of all the Ten Commandments given, only covetousness was not accompanied with a physical penalty under the remaining portion of the Law given to Moses. That aspect prompts an initial question as to why and should also make us stop to consider the specific order of the Ten Commandments. Paul states in his argument about the validity of law "... for I had not known lust, except the law said, *Thou shalt not covet.*" *Rom 7:7* This insight from Paul through the

Holy Spirit tells us three important things: first, it is a condition of the heart at a moment in time (i.e. lust), two, by virtue of the location (the heart, i.e. our mind and thoughts) it can't be seen, and three, it becomes manifested in the action of another form of sin. If I were to covet my neighbor's wife, but never act upon those thoughts who is to know, but if I move towards and follow through with adultery, then by virtue of this action my sin is manifested for all to see. Therefore, there is no punishment for covetousness because it can't be seen, it must be revealed in the form of a law broken that can be identified and accompanied by a corresponding charge or penalty. I would suggest to you that covetousness is listed last because it is the root cause of any breach of the previous commandments given.

Look at some of the biblical examples of covetousness and how it is first manifested in the heart of the individual before they acted upon it and it became identifiable sin. Cain was angry with God because his sacrifice was not accepted, God exhorted him to obedience, yet Cain's reaction was to kill his brother Abel. (*Gen 4:3-8*) David first looked upon Bathsheba, then inquired, sent for, and committed adultery with the wife of one of his mighty men. (*2 Sam 11:2-4*) What more could be said of Balaam, King Ahab and Naboth's vineyard, or Haman and Mordecai? (*Num 22, 1 Kg 21, and Esth 3*)

Take mankind as a collective whole, if covetousness is not seen how can we identify its presence? We are not very good at judging the makeup of an individual until they have acted upon their thoughts. So

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often we judge the peripheral and the visual aspects of a person and we formulate a mental picture, in fact we judge, and we are poor at it. Think of the abuse that would be in effect if there had been a physical penalty associated with the last commandment. When Jesus revealed His betrayal, why didn't every apostle stand up and point at Judas Iscariot and say, "you are the man," rather than "...Lord, is it I?" Mt 26:22 Even in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ, Judas Iscariot did not stand out as the most likely candidate, yet when John records his Gospel account the Holy Spirit provides insight for the reader that the apostles themselves did not possess at the time. John 6:71, 12:4-6

What's worse is we can't be honest with ourselves in acknowledging the lust (covetousness) within our own hearts. For God through the Law of Moses provided a foundation upon which man could embrace the Law of Christ. Through the Gospel we can understand the heart of man as God views us and how important it is to recognize covetousness as it is forming. *"For as he thinks within himself, so he is..."* Prov 23:7 Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul as he addresses this concept of the heart on the inner man: *"...Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God...be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind ..."* Rom 12:1-2 *"... put off concerning the former conversation that old man which is corrupt according to deceitful lust; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind..."* Eph 4:22-23 We struggle to look inwardly with openness and honesty; would we not have the same struggle with others regarding covetousness and

doesn't the aspect of judging the heart truly belong to God? (I Sam 16:7, I Kg 8:39, Jer 17:10)

One other consideration is how idolatry and covetousness are separated under the Law of Moses in the second and the tenth commandments, while Paul through the Holy Spirit brings the two together, *"For this you know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath an inheritance in the kingdom of God."* Eph 5:5 People of God have always been people of the heart, that has not changed. Rather the freedom found in the Law of Christ is found in those who choose to recognize covetousness and deny this, the greatest of all idols, which is self. This brings us full circle to the example first given, what I want or what God wants? When the two coincide there is no friction, there is harmony and peace. Place them at odds with each other and the seed of covetousness is planted. We either choose to allow it to gather root, or we pluck it out in humility and in thankfulness of the rich blessings God has shown each of us.

The tenth commandment *"Thou Shalt Not Covet,"* simplistic words spoken—a lifetime of effort and devotion putting them into practice

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