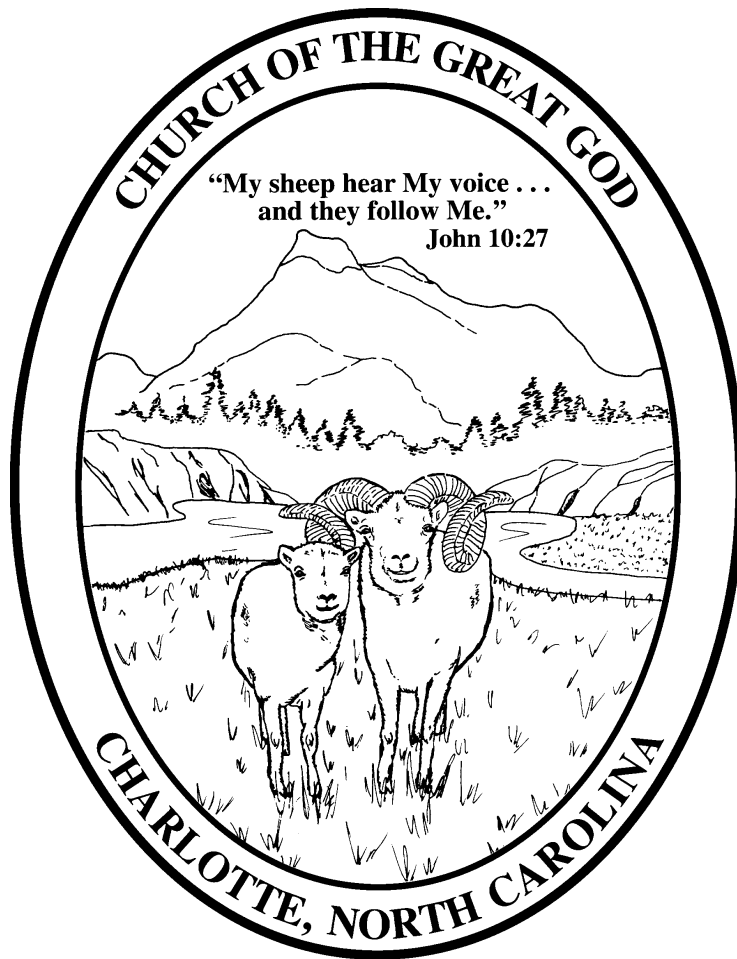




Forerunner
Bible Study Series

The Ten
Commandments

The Ten Commandments



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The Ten Commandments

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Introduction

In the past half century, the church of God has had a productive history of using the question-and-answer format in its Bible study materials. Not only does this method spur our curiosity about biblical teachings, but it also **MAKES US** dig into God's Word to find the answers to the great—and the mundane—questions of life. We are pleased to continue this tradition in the *Forerunner Bible Study Series*.

These concise lessons, though primarily basic material, can be helpful to both beginners and veterans of Christianity. Beginners can learn the fundamentals of doctrine, prophecy and Christian living, while old-timers can quickly refresh their knowledge of these things. They can be a valuable resource.

The Bible studies will be more profitable if you

set aside a convenient block of undisturbed time in which to concentrate on them. Read the questions carefully, looking up—and even writing down—the verses that provide God's answers. You may wish to keep a notebook just for this purpose so your work will be accessible anytime you need to refer to it.

And do not forget the other tools of successful Bible study: prayer and meditation. Ask for God's help to open your mind to understand His teaching, and as He reveals it to you, think deeply about its meaning to you, your family, the nation and to all mankind. This will help it become a vital part of you in your walk toward God's Kingdom.

We hope these studies of God's Word profit you and enlighten your life!

The Ten Commandments

The spiritual law of God works much like the physical laws of the universe. Like the invisible law of gravity, the law of God is always in effect, working at all times. When we keep it, God blesses us. If we do not, we bring its penalty upon us. To think that God has abolished His inexorable spiritual law is like telling people the law of gravity has been done away, so they may freely jump off tall buildings with no ill-effects!

This study will show that the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5) are not laws devised by Moses and given only to Israel. They were binding before Moses' time, as well as during and after Jesus Christ's life. In fact, the Ten Commandments have been in full force and effect since Creation. They are still binding on us today! We will see also that they are not just "church rituals" or "good suggestions" but the very code of conduct of our God!

1. What is the difference between commandments, statutes, and judgments? Psalm 19:7-9.

COMMENT: A *commandment* is a specific instruction or law from God that we are to obey forever. Commandments have no precedents because they establish original, divine law.

A *statute* designates a law that one engraves, meaning a lawgiver establishes it unchangeably unless he alone changes it. A religious statute sets rules for worship. Secular statutes have the force of a royal decree. A statute is formulated like a law: "You shall (not) do so-and-so" (Exodus 22:18-23:33). A synonym for statute is "oracle."

A *judgment* is a decision based on another established law. A judge takes associated factors into account to decide appropriately for the specific situation. It takes the form of a case law: "If you do so-and-so, you will pay so much" (Exodus 21:1-22:15). A synonym for judgment is "precedent."

2. What is sin? I John 3:4. What is the effect of sin? Romans 6:23. For how long has sin been a factor in human existence? Romans 5:12-14.

COMMENT: Because His law was in effect, God has ascribed sin to man from the beginning. Without law, there is no sin.

3. To whom did God first make known His law? Genesis 2:15-17. Were others guilty of sin before the time of Moses? Genesis 3:1-11; Genesis 4:6-12. Did people commit the sin of idolatry before Abraham? Joshua 24:2. Do other examples show that breaking the commandments was sin before the time of Moses? Leviticus 18:3, 21, 27; Exodus 16:4-5, 22-30; Genesis 9:21-26; 39:7-9; 30:33; 20:1-9; 6:1-6.

COMMENT: Law defines sin, so for sin to exist there must be law. Since Adam sinned, God must have given him His law, which certainly included the Ten Commandments, the basic law of God's Kingdom. Thus, it was sin to break any of them before the time of Moses.

4. Did Abraham, the father of the faithful, keep the commandments? Genesis 26:5. Was David, a man after God's own heart, concerned about keeping God's commandments? Psalm 119:97-100, 105.

COMMENT: By faith Abraham and David obeyed God (Hebrews 11:8, 32-33).

5. Did Jesus Christ keep the Ten Commandments? Luke

4:8; John 15:10. Did He teach others to do likewise? Matthew 19:17-19. How did He elaborate on keeping them? Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28.

COMMENT: Jesus emphatically says, "If you want to enter into [eternal] life, keep the commandments." Could anything be clearer? John writes, "He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (I John 2:4). Paul instructs Timothy, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ [calls himself a Christian] depart from iniquity" (II Timothy 2:19).

6. Are the commandments found in the words of the apostles? Romans 1:18-25; 13:9; I Corinthians 10:7; Ephesians 6:1-2; Colossians 3:8; Hebrews 4:9.

COMMENT: Paul, apostle to the Gentiles, mentions the commandments frequently in his writings. He summarizes the keeping of the last six as how to love our neighbor (Romans 13:10). If it is sin to break any of the last six that show love toward fellow man, most certainly it is sin to violate any of the first four that show love toward God.

7. Would the church that Christ built teach obedience to the Ten Commandments? Revelation 12:17; 14:12.

COMMENT: A sign of God's church, symbolized as a woman, is the keeping of the Ten Commandments. A church that does not teach and keep all of them is a church of the world.

8. Does having love nullify God's law? John 14:15; 15:9-14; I John 5:2-3; II John 5-6.

COMMENT: John, an apostle and close friend of Jesus Christ, emphasized love. However, not once did he say that love nullifies or supersedes the Ten Commandments. Indeed, by keeping the commandments, the love of God is perfected in us (I John 2:5). The Ten Commandments constitute a spiritual law that is inexorable and eternal, producing faith and happiness and righteous character that pleases God.

9. Will God's law still be kept once His Kingdom is established? Revelation 21:8; 22:14-15.

COMMENT: Even after the Millennium, when New Jerusalem comes down, no lawbreaker will be allowed in the city. In Revelation 22, the last chapter of the Bible, obedience to God's law is the central issue. This is very clear proof that the law of God, which reflects the holy conduct of the Almighty, will be the standard for all eternity!

The First Commandment

The Bible reveals God not only as the Creator, but the One who sustains and rules His creation, intervening in the affairs of His servants to guide, bless and deliver us. Scripture gives us as complete a revelation of God and His nature as we need for salvation. Jesus instructs us in Matthew 4:4 to live by every word of God, for these words “are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). The written Word of God is the entire Bible, both the Old and New Testaments.

Obedying their Master’s command, the apostles lived by and referred to the only Scriptures they had—the books of the Old Testament. They frequently quoted or expounded upon the Ten Commandments in the writings they left for us. The first commandment, “You shall have no other gods before Me,” (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7) presents the essence and basis of commandment keeping. God says, “If you love me keep My commandments” (John 14:15).

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment.” (Matthew 22:37)

1. How does Jesus Christ summarize the spiritual intent of the first four commandments? Matthew 22:36-38; Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

COMMENT: We must love God with all our being. Keeping the first four commandments shows love toward God. Keeping the last six shows love toward our fellow man.

2. Should we fear the Creator above all else? Psalm 96:4-5; 100:3.

COMMENT: Idolatry is an interwoven aspect of breaking the first commandment. Anything we hold as more important than God is an idol and a god other than the Eternal God.

3. Is what we serve our god? Romans 6:16; Galatians 4:7-9. Do we commit ourselves to what we value? Matthew 6:21; Romans 8:5. What should we seek first? Matthew 6:33.

COMMENT: We either delight in God and His law and serve Him all day long, or else we serve and obey our own lusts. A fundamental part of keeping the first commandment is seeking first God’s Kingdom and His righteousness.

4. Can we serve two masters? Luke 16:13. Can we please man and God? Galatians 1:10; I Thessalonians 2:4. Is worshipping God according to the traditions of men worshipping in vain? Mark 7:7.

COMMENT: Split or divided loyalty is no loyalty at all. We can be loyal to only one master at a time. We can be enslaved to career, car, home, spouse, children, medicine, hobbies, television, novels or many other things. In doing so, however, we please them or ourselves, and fail to give pure devotion to God.

5. Can we have other gods and still worship God in spirit and in truth? Joshua 24:14-24; Romans 1:25. To whose will should we submit? Luke 22:42.

COMMENT: Joshua reaffirmed the Israelites’ commitment to God after they had spent years sporadically worshipping other gods. This wavering “commitment” is incompatible with the fear of God and serving Him in sincerity and truth. God desires unswerving devotion to Him alone.

6. Who originally broke the first commandment? Isaiah

14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:14-19. What was the first lie told to man? Genesis 3:4-5. When the Devil tried to tempt Jesus, how did He respond? Luke 4:6-8.

COMMENT: This great archangel broke the first commandment when he tried to usurp God’s throne. He became his own god, worshipping himself rather than the true God, and for this, God cast him from heaven, renaming him Satan, “the Adversary.” Later, taking advantage of human nature’s proclivity for self-exaltation, he enticed Eve into sinning by lying to her, saying, “You will be like God.” Satan tried the same trick on Jesus, who rebuked him for it. Jesus showed plainly that this commandment was and is still in effect. We are to serve and worship only God.

7. How did God punish the Israelites for repeatedly breaking the first commandment? Judges 2:11-15; 10:6-14; I Samuel 12:10.

COMMENT: God causes calamity to come upon those who break the first commandment. When we break God’s law, curses are inevitable. Israel continually suffered the effects of putting other gods before God.

8. How do we commit idolatry in, say, the area of healing? Exodus 15:26; Psalm 103:2-3; 118:8.

COMMENT: Our society has been programmed to rely on and even revere the medical profession with their knives and drugs. Although trained medical specialists can do certain procedures without interfering with the natural workings of the body, true healing comes from God, our Creator and Sustainer. God inspired Isaiah to write, “Besides Me there is no God” (Isaiah 44:6). Do we completely rely on God for healing or is our faith in something else? Whatever is not from faith is sin (Romans 14:23).

By His example, Jesus Christ shows us what our attitude should be in obeying the first commandment. When God called upon Him to give His life, He placed total trust in God: “Father, if it is Your will, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42).

The Second Commandment

The basis of all idolatry is that self-centered, rebellious human beings refuse to surrender themselves to worship the true God as He commands. The people of this world do not understand how to worship God because they lack His Spirit. Without God's help, human nature tries to limit God to the confines of physical objects that he understands. Men fabricate images or representations to aid them in worshipping a god that they themselves have concocted. These images are called idols, icons, symbols or objects of devotion.

The first commandment expresses that it is a sin to place a higher value on anything than what we place on God. Building upon the foundation of the first commandment, the second forbids the use of physical "aids" in worshipping the invisible God. Such aids include statues or paintings of "Jesus" or "Mary," nativity scenes, crucifixes, steeples, stained-glass pictures of God or Christ and many other things. Living in such a "visual" age, we need to be aware of such common idols in the society around us.

**"No fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolator, has any inheritance in the kingdom of God."
(Ephesians 5:5)**

1. Does the second commandment condemn art or sculpture? Exodus 20:4-6; I Kings 6:23-29.

COMMENT: God does not condemn every picture or image, but as the command states, "You shall not bow down to them nor serve them." It is the use of art or sculpture in worship that God condemns. Solomon had God's blessing to build a Temple, where he erected golden forms of two cherubim inside the Holy of Holies. On the walls of the sanctuary were carved figures of angels, trees and flowers, none of which Israel worshipped.

2. Did God want to destroy the Israelites for their idolatry? Exodus 32:2-10. Is it a shameful thing to make and worship an idol? Isaiah 44:9-12.

COMMENT: The Israelites' lack of faith while Moses was on Mount Sinai made them feel insecure. Moses was gone less than 40 days when the Israelites fashioned a calf of molded gold to substitute for the invisible Creator God. In their own minds, they had reduced God to something they could control and call upon when convenient. Those who repented were ashamed at what they had done.

3. Can a manmade image truthfully represent the Eternal God? Isaiah 40:12-31. Is making and worshipping an idol foolishness and a lie? Isaiah 44:13-20; Habakkuk 2:18-19.

COMMENT: For a begotten son of God, worshipping idols is irrational (Acts 17:29); to look to something physical as important or more important than God defies all wisdom. The way the world looks to physical objects is superstition (e.g., good luck charms, religious crosses, shrines).

4. Can we make an idol of another individual or group? I Corinthians 1:10-13; 2:5; 3:3-4, 20-21.

COMMENT: Dictionaries define an *idol* as "any object of ardent or excessive devotion or admiration." If we obey the dictates of a person, church or some other group contrary to the direct commands of God, we are guilty of idolatry. The individual or group becomes the idol, replacing God.

5. Does idolatry have an impact on later generations?

Deuteronomy 5:9. Does it matter if we associate closely with idolaters? I Corinthians 5:11; II Corinthians 6:14-18; I John 5:21.

COMMENT: Children learn by example, and if their parents set the example that physical objects have excessive importance, then their children will pass down the same values. When we socialize with idolaters, we share in their ways. If we are not careful, we may also begin to share their idols.

6. Is covetousness idolatry? Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5.

COMMENT: Covetousness is a strong desire for, and a seeking after, material things that become objects of our worship if we hold them as more important than God. Someone else's house or car can be an idol if we covet them. This attitude is identified with idolatry because it replaces God with self-interest and visible things.

7. Does God want us to worship Him directly—not through an idol? Romans 1:22-23. To what do we sacrifice when we set up an idol? I Corinthians 8:4-5; 10:19-21. Does God want us to worship Him humbly rather than the way the world worships idols? Isaiah 66:1-3; 57:15.

COMMENT: It is degrading to worship an idol. Conversely, God calls us into His own spiritual presence to worship Him directly. Whenever we stop short of our face-to-face relationship and worship of our Sovereign God by placing a visible entity before Him, we break the second commandment. God looks to those who worship Him in humility and respectful fear and despises those who choose their own ways.

8. Is idolatry a work of the flesh? Galatians 5:19-21. What is the fate of idolaters? I Corinthians 6:9-10; Revelation 21:8; 22:15.

COMMENT: Every one of these sins has idolatry as its base because it is rebellion against God and is valued as more important than God. Idolaters will not inherit the Kingdom of God and will be cast into the Lake of Fire unless they repent.

The Third Commandment

The third commandment deals with God's name, His character, His office, His position as the great sovereign Ruler of the universe: "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain" (Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11). In biblical terms, personal names have a meaning, for they usually describe some aspect of the person's character. So it is with God's name. The Bible reveals Him under different names, each given with a purpose: to set forth some distinct virtue or characteristic of His nature.

In this commandment, the Hebrew word rendered "guiltless" may also be translated "clean." A person is clean or unclean according to how he uses the name of God, whether in truth or in vanity. A person who continually talks about God but denies Him in his daily life is unclean; he is guilty of breaking the law of God, a sinner. If we use God's name in a way that denies the true meaning and character of God, we break the third commandment. As we can easily see, God is greatly concerned about how we use His name.

1. What is one of the abominations practiced by the heathens who possessed Canaan before the Israelites arrived? Leviticus 18:1-3, 21b. Did these nations defile themselves and the land because of this? Verses 24-27. Does God warn Israel not to repeat this sin? Verses 28-30.

COMMENT: God says these other nations defiled themselves and the land by violating the third commandment, "taking the name of God in vain." We break this commandment, not only in speech, but also by using or bearing His name in an unworthy, profane way in our conduct.

2. How has Israel profaned God's name? Malachi 1:11-14. Should we pray for humility and for God to do His will in our lives to avoid profaning His name? Proverbs 30:7-9. How can we properly fear His name? Deuteronomy 28:58.

COMMENT: Israel profaned God's name by giving offerings in a lying and deceitful attitude, as Ananias and Sapphira did (Acts 5:1-11). They kept the best animals for themselves while offering blemished ones to God. We fear God's name, not only by keeping all of God's law—including the statutes and judgments—but also by giving God our best effort in doing His will.

3. Should we hallow God's name when we pray? Matthew 6:9.

COMMENT: To hallow God's name means to make it holy or set it apart for holy use, respecting it greatly. We hallow His name by obeying Him in all our conduct. Conversely, prayer without obedience is a form of blasphemy (Matthew 7:21, Mark 7:6-7), as is praise offered to God in the attitude of rebellion against His way. It is vain or vanity—useless and contemptible.

4. Should we exalt, praise and love God's name? Psalm 34:3; 54:6; 69:36; 92:1. Do the faithful put their trust in Him or just His name? Psalm 9:10.

COMMENT: The attributes that God's names express reveal His character and affect the way we worship Him. God names Himself what He is. The faithful do not trust in what God is called, for this would be mere superstition. Their faith is in what He is, His character and nature, which they have experienced by seeking to live His way.

5. What happens if we blaspheme or curse God's name? Leviticus 24:16. Is it appropriate to swear by His name? Matthew 5:34-35. Is it enough to mention God's name at our convenience? Isaiah 48:1-2. Will frequent repetition of God's name help us to enter His Kingdom? Matthew 6:7; 7:21.

COMMENT: God's name is so sacred and holy that Jesus commands us not to invoke it to back up our words or our oath. A simple affirmation by a God-fearing Christian is far more reliable than thousands of oaths by a liar. Those to whom this prophecy in Matthew 7:21 applies use God's names, but fail to obey His revelation of Himself contained in them.

6. Did Jesus come to reveal and declare the name of the Father? John 17:6, 26. What role does God's truth play regarding His name? Verses 11-19.

COMMENT: Notice that Jesus never mentions how to pronounce the Father's name. Salvation is not based on its pronunciation! Far more important is doing the will of God, an absolute necessity in truly fearing His name. The Father's name guards us from evil by the Word of God, which is truth.

7. Is a good name important? Proverbs 22:1. What is our obligation regarding God's name? Isaiah 43:6-7, 10-12.

COMMENT: A good name can be a great asset. God often gives "for My name's sake" as the reason He acts (Isaiah 48:9-11). He is simply preserving His reputation. And since from baptism we bear His name (Matthew 28:19), we have a profound duty to uphold all that His name represents. We are witnesses that our God is God. If we fail to live up to that name's reputation, we break the third commandment and profane the name of God.

8. Will those who are faithful in obeying God receive the name of God themselves? Revelation 3:12.

COMMENT: When God resurrects us into His Kingdom, He will give us names to designate our existence, nature and responsibility in the Kingdom. We are assured of carrying God's own name if we overcome sin. What a tremendous reward to bear His name for all eternity!

The Fourth Commandment

A pivotal point of the Ten Commandments is the fourth: “Remember [observe] the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15). From this simple statement flows a stream of spiritual lessons and principles about God, humanity and our potential. Disregarding the Sabbath is like throwing away the key to a treasure chest, ignoring a vital area of understand-

ing that will open our minds to God and His purpose. The Sabbath is much more than a weekly day of rest. It is the one day each week that we devote totally to God, and thus it is a good regulator and barometer of our relationship with Him. The following study will rehearse the Bible’s basic information on the Sabbath, and will hopefully spur us to deeper study.

1. Who made the Sabbath and when? Genesis 2:2-3; John 1:1-3. Is the Sabbath a “sign”? Exodus 31:12-17. For whom was the Sabbath made? Mark 2:27; Isaiah 56:2, 6-7. **COMMENT:** It is Christ, as the God of the Old Testament, who actually created the Sabbath. The seventh day is a sign that identifies God’s people just as a sign identifies a business or a street. Notice also that this covenant, made after the ratification of the Old Covenant, bound the Sabbath as a “perpetual covenant” upon God’s people. Since the Sabbath has been in force from Creation, it is not just for the Jews, but for the foreigner and all mankind as well. All who keep the Sabbath properly are blessed.

2. What did God do on the seventh day of Creation that serves as an example of how we should keep the Sabbath? Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 20:11; Deuteronomy 5:12. How can we keep the Sabbath holy? Exodus 16:23-30; Leviticus 23:3; Deuteronomy 5:13-14; Matthew 12:12.

COMMENT: Because God rested after six days of labor, the Sabbath is also our day of rest and a memorial of Creation. He wants us to remember, not only what He did in the physical creation, but also that His spiritual creation continues in us now. When God blessed and sanctified the seventh day, He made it holy, set apart for God’s use! Only God can make a day holy, and He does this by putting Himself, through His Spirit, into it.

We are then instructed to “keep” it holy. These scriptures give a few examples of things God prohibits on His Sabbath: working, cooking, carrying burdens. God does not make a comprehensive list of “dos and don’ts” for us to follow. Instead, He gives us principles of what is proper and improper Sabbath behavior, and we then must use God’s Spirit to decide our actions.

3. Are whole cities or countries blessed or cursed according to what the inhabitants do on the Sabbath? Jeremiah 17:21-27; Nehemiah 13:15-22.

COMMENT: Jeremiah warns the people of Judah that if the inhabitants of a city do business on the Sabbath, the whole city is cursed. When Nehemiah returns from Persia to Jerusalem

after an absence of seven years (c. 425 BC), he finds the Judeans again breaking the Sabbath by carrying their burdens and selling their wares. Israelites seem to have a very short memory when it comes to keeping the Sabbath.

4. Did Jesus keep the Sabbath? Mark 1:21; Luke 4:16, 31; 6:6; 13:10; Matthew 12:5, 12. Who is Lord of the Sabbath? Matthew 12:8; Mark 2:27-28; Luke 6:5. Immediately following Christ’s death, did God conclusively show that Sunday is not the Sabbath? Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1-2; Luke 23:54-56; 24:1.

COMMENT: As the Creator of the Sabbath (John 1:1-3, 14; Colossians 1:16-18), Jesus is “Lord of the Sabbath.” As a man, He shows us the intent of this commandment in numerous accounts recorded in the four gospels. Jesus gives His church an example of how the whole Christian way of life is to be lived (I John 2:6). We are to do as Christ did (I Peter 2:21-22).

5. Did the apostle Paul keep the Sabbath? Acts 13:14-16; 17:1-3. Did the early church, including Gentile converts, keep the Sabbath? Acts 13:42-44; 16:13-15.

COMMENT: Christ set the Sabbath-keeping example for His apostles, and Paul, following His example, tells us we are to imitate him as he imitates Christ (I Corinthians 11:1). Paul preached to the Jews and Gentiles on the Sabbath because the Sabbath is for everyone, not just the Jews. These Gentiles were keeping the Sabbath in the synagogue with the Jews on the seventh day, not Sunday.

6. Is it a day to be loosed from bondage? Luke 13:11-17. Is the Sabbath a burden or a “delight”? Isaiah 58:13-14. Can one receive God’s Spirit without keeping the Sabbath? Acts 5:32.

COMMENT: God requires obedience to His commandments as a condition for receiving His Holy Spirit. When we keep the Sabbath, we show God by our action that we are worthy to receive it. If we keep the Sabbath properly, and work to improve our relationship with God, this holy time will be most valuable and a tremendous blessing each week!

“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God.” (Exodus 20:8-10)

The Fifth Commandment

The first four commandments define man's relationship with God, teaching us the magnitude of His power and name so that we can properly worship and obey Him. The fifth commandment is the first of those that regulate man's relationship with other human beings. "Honor your father and mother, that your days may be long upon the land

which the LORD your God is giving you" (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16) links the first four commandments with the last six. Truly honoring one's parents is perpetually coupled with obeying and revering God (Leviticus 19:2-4), for it is by learning to honor our parents that we first come to understand how to approach God.

"Honor your father and mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you."(Deuteronomy 5:16)

1. Does God pronounce a curse on those who break the fifth commandment? Deuteronomy 27:16. Did Ham dishonor his father Noah? Genesis 9:20-22. How did his brothers honor their father? Verse 23. What curse fell on Canaan as a result of this sin? Verses 24-27.

COMMENT: This commandment was in effect long before Moses received the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. Both Ham and Canaan break this commandment by dishonoring Noah, and God pronounces a curse, specifically on Canaan, who probably played the largest part in this sin.

2. How serious is striking or cursing one's parent? Exodus 21:15, 17. What does Solomon record about respecting parents? Proverbs 1:8; 4:1-5; 6:20-23.

COMMENT: How important this commandment is to God! The relationship of children to their parents is a type of the spiritual relationship between true Christians and God. Without a loving attitude toward parents, it is impossible to love God truly.

3. Does God emphasize that obeying the fifth commandment will prolong our lives? Deuteronomy 4:40; 5:33; 6:2; 11:8-9. Does the apostle Paul also state this? Ephesians 6:1-3.

COMMENT: Obeying this commandment automatically builds habits and character that promote long life (Proverbs 4:10-11). A child trained in biblical principles and God's way of life will avoid recklessness, violence, immorality and rebellion against authority that often result in premature death.

4. How do children dishonor their parents? What is the result? Deuteronomy 21:18-21; Exodus 21:15; Leviticus 20:9; Proverbs 19:26; 20:20; 28:24; 30:17. How did the scribes and Pharisees pervert obedience to this commandment? Matthew 15:3-9; Mark 7:6-13.

COMMENT: We can dishonor our parents through stubbornness, mocking, scorning, angrily talking back to them, thievery and violence. These will eventually be punished by death, shame, disgrace, darkened understanding (igno-

rance) and destruction. Through greedy human reasoning, the Pharisees encouraged financial neglect of parents to increase the riches of the treasury, a hypocrisy Jesus condemned.

5. Is there a limit to the love and honor we should show our parents? Matthew 10:37; Luke 14:26; Hebrews 12:9.

COMMENT: *Hate* in Luke 14 means "love less by comparison." If our love for our parents interferes with worshiping and obeying God properly, we do not genuinely love Him. Matthew 10 shows that Christ refers to those who place their father or mother above God in obedience and reverence; this is idolatry. The time may come when it is no longer necessary or right for us to obey our parents. Even so, we should never cease to honor them. Honor indicates a high respect for their worth, high esteem and reverence. Without this, we cannot properly revere God. Just as our parents corrected us, so also God corrects us. As a result, we honor and respect our parents, which is a shadow or type of our subjection to the Father.

6. How are widows to be treated by their children? I Timothy 5:4, 8. What was Christ's last concern? John 19:26-28. Did Jesus personally express his reverence and obedience toward the Father? John 14:31; 15:10; 10:17-18.

COMMENT: A person who has properly obeyed his parents in childhood later expresses his honor for them in a deeper appreciation of the comforts and training they provided him as a child. This honor expresses itself in courtesy, thoughtfulness and kind deeds. Any parent, especially a widowed parent, should be repaid by his children for the care given them as they grew up. Even in His dying moments, while suffering an agonizing death, Jesus honored and loved His mother by making provision for John to care for her after His death. God our Father is well pleased with us when we obey this vital commandment (Colossians 3:20).

The Sixth Commandment

God requires us to obey His sixth commandment, “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17). This commandment falls second in a series of six that determines a person’s responsibility to his neighbor. God hereby protects a person’s most precious physical possession, his life, from being cut short by another human being.

Of all the commandments, this one is the most noticeable and the least tolerated by society when broken. Virtually all human cultures prohibit the taking of human life. The spiritual principle behind this commandment is that God has created all of mankind in His image, and no one else has the authority or right to end a human life unless He specifically commands it.

“ ‘You shall not murder,’ and whoever murders shall be in danger of the judgment.” (Matthew 5:21)

1. What curse does God pronounce on Cain for murdering Abel? Genesis 4:8-15. Does God confirm the penalty for murder in His covenant with Noah? Genesis 9:5-6.

COMMENT: Murder was sin from the beginning, and God reaffirms the sacredness of human life to Noah. Whatever sheds man’s blood, whether man or beast, must be put to death.

2. Does it make a difference whether a person is killed intentionally or accidentally? Exodus 21:12-14; Numbers 35:9-32.

COMMENT: Under the original letter of the law, intentional killing (murder) was forbidden. Accidental killing was not regarded as murder. Nevertheless, manslaughter is a horrible crime, and the culprit had to remain in a city of refuge until the high priest died.

3. How many witnesses were required to initiate the death penalty? Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6-7.

COMMENT: Under the Old Covenant, God commanded Israel to kill or execute those guilty of major crimes (Exodus 21:12-17).

4. What is murder’s effect on the land? Numbers 35:33-34; Psalm 106:38; Hosea 4:1-3.

COMMENT: Murder is shown to be a source of defilement, bringing on curses such as famine, drought, disease, etc.

5. Are euthanasia and suicide permissible? Who has the right to take life? Deuteronomy 32:35, 39; Leviticus 19:18.

COMMENT: God, the giver of life (Genesis 2:7), has the right to end any life if and when He chooses (Job 1:21), but man does not unless God grants it to him (I Samuel 15:1-3). No biblical example shows any godly person taking the life of another or his own with God’s approval in an act of euthanasia or suicide. Neither does God say that we must give our loved ones drugs or use machines to force them, contrary to nature, to live as long as possible, even when they are in great pain or totally unconscious. The life God has given to us is not ours to take.

6. Is abortion murder? Exodus 23:7; Deuteronomy 27:25. What was the penalty for causing a miscarriage? Exodus 21:22-24. Do unborn children possess intelligence? Genesis 25:21-26; Luke 1:41-44. Does God care about the

unborn? Job 10:8-12; Psalm 139:13-16; 127:3; Matthew 18:10, 14; Jeremiah 1:5.

COMMENT: Statistically, in the United States the most dangerous place for anyone to be is in the mother’s womb! The unborn baby is a living human being who dies a painful death when aborted. By the seventh week of gestation, the fetus has measurable brain waves, a legal criterion to determine whether a person is alive or dead. God—not the state, not the individual, not the parent—is the Lord of life (Psalm 100:3; Isaiah 44:24; I Corinthians 6:19).

7. Who has the right of vengeance? Romans 12:19. How should we treat our enemies? Romans 12:20-21; Matthew 5:43-44. Should Christians kill or go to war in the name of God? John 18:36.

COMMENT: God alone has the wisdom and power and the right to take vengeance. Regarding war, Exodus 14:14 says, “The LORD will fight for you.” War has never solved man’s problems, and God promises that those who live by violence will die by it (Matthew 26:52). Christians must treat others with kindness, gentleness and love (Luke 6:31; Galatians 5:14-15).

8. Does anger without a cause toward another human being break the sixth commandment? Matthew 5:21-24. How do the apostles summarize the commandments in the New Testament? Romans 13:9; I John 2:8-11.

COMMENT: The source of murder comes from the heart (mind, the core of an individual’s character) where hate and anger are fomented by Satan. If we have these evil traits in our hearts, we are fostering the spirit of murder. Thought precedes action and hatred precedes murder. If we hate someone, we break the sixth commandment.

9. Where does the attitude of murder come from? Ezekiel 28:14-16; John 8:44; I John 3:11-12; James 4:1-2; Matthew 5:21-22. Can a murderer receive eternal life? Galatians 5:21; I John 3:15; Matthew 15:18-19.

COMMENT: Satan was the first one with the attitude of murder, and he has promoted it ever since. A murderer is a child of Satan with the same arrogant pride. Such a person will not enter God’s Kingdom.

The Seventh Commandment

The Creator God directly devotes two of His ten great laws to protecting family relationships. In the fifth commandment, we saw how important honoring parents is in maintaining a Christian family relationship. God gave the seventh commandment, “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18), to protect the honor and sanctity of marriage. It is through marriage and the family that we learn how to

conduct proper relationships, both with other people and with God. Since it is such an important institution to character development, God does not tolerate its defilement. Within marriage, sex is fully sanctioned by God, but otherwise, its practice causes great harm. In principle, this commandment covers all forms of illicit sex, including fornication, homosexuality, bestiality and pedophilia.

1. Is adultery only a physical act? Matthew 5:27-28,31-32; Luke 16:18. Does adultery lead to death? Leviticus 20:10; Proverbs 2:16-22; 7:22-27.

COMMENT: According to the letter of the law, adultery is sexual intercourse outside of marriage, but Christ emphasizes the spirit of the law. If a man even looks at a woman to lust after her, he has committed adultery. This sin so defiles the land and its inhabitants that it must be removed. Thus, the law’s penalty for adultery is death.

2. Does the adulterer care if he or she is found out? Job 24:15-17. Is adultery and divorce considered treachery? Jeremiah 9:2; Malachi 2:14-16.

COMMENT: No one wants to be found guilty of adultery! It is not only an offense to the aggrieved husband or wife involved, but also to their home and their children. It strikes at the very basis of a decent society. Treachery is a violation of trust and confidence, like that placed in us by our spouses and by Almighty God.

3. Is violence associated with adultery? II Samuel 12:9-10; Hosea 4:2. Does adultery curse the land? Hosea 4:3; Jeremiah 23:10, 14.

COMMENT: Violence is a fruit of adultery because of its treachery and self-centeredness. It destroys loyalty and submission to authority, and it teaches disrespect for others.

4. What does the act of fornication and adultery bring upon a man? Proverbs 6:24-29, 32-35; 29:3.

5. How does God feel about divorce? Malachi 2:16. Can marrying a divorced person be adultery? Matthew 5:32; 19:3-9; Romans 7:2-4. Can sexual immorality be grounds to exclude someone from Christian fellowship? I Corinthians 5:1-13.

COMMENT: Although God hates divorce, He allows it in

rare cases under certain circumstances (Matthew 5:32; 19:9; I Corinthians 7:15). If someone is continuously and flagrantly committing sexual immorality, it is necessary for the spiritual health of the church “not to keep company with sexually immoral people.”

6. Is committing adultery a sin against God? Genesis 39:7-9; Psalm 51:3-4. Does it merit God’s judgment? Malachi 3:5; Hebrews 13:4; Jeremiah 5:7-9.

COMMENT: Psalm 51 is David’s confession after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba (II Samuel 11:4-5; 12:13-14).

7. Can adulterers inherit the Kingdom of God? I Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21. Can adultery be forgiven? II Samuel 12:13-14; John 8:10-11.

COMMENT: God will forgive an adulterer if he genuinely repents, and He will give him eternal life. However, the consequences of sin still have their harmful effect, as we see in the death of David and Bathsheba’s child. Although forgiven, David and his household endured violence from that point forward because of his adultery and murder.

8. What is spiritual adultery? Judges 2:11, 17; Hosea 4:12-14; Malachi 2:10-11; James 4:4; Revelation 2:14-15, 20-22.

COMMENT: Symbolically, adultery is used to express unfaithfulness to God, and we can easily see this in Israel’s idolatry. God is represented as the Husband of His people. Ezekiel 16:15-59 gives a graphic description of Israel’s spiritual adultery, and Hosea 1:1-2 shows the same symbolism in Hosea’s marriage. We can fall into spiritual adultery by relying on the world and its false teaching rather than God.

Revelation 19:7-9 shows that the Bride of Christ will be a chaste and pure spouse. As verse 9 states, all those who are part of this righteous Bride are truly blessed!

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matthew 5:28-29)

The Eighth Commandment

The eighth commandment of God's law—"You shall not steal"—reflects our sense of responsibility toward others and their possessions. It exposes whether we understand the motivating principle and purpose of the entire law of God, the principle of give rather than get (Acts 20:35). This commandment, found in Exodus 20:15 and Deuteronomy 5:19, is interwoven with the other commandments. Breaking it usually begins with

covetousness. Such greed can lead to physical or mental violence and murder. It often involves fraud, deceit and lying. Stealing to acquire the objects of our worship is spiritual adultery and idolatry against God. Succumbing to Satan's "get" way of life dishonors our spiritual Father and elevates the self above God. Would we consider stealing if we truly and deeply respected God's power and office?

1. Did Jacob know stealing is sin? Genesis 30:29-33.

COMMENT: Jacob lived long before God gave the Ten Commandments at Sinai, yet he understood theft. Stealing is taking or appropriating another's property or ideas without permission, dishonestly or unlawfully, usually in a secret manner. The apostle Paul reiterates the eighth commandment in the New Testament (Romans 13:9), showing that it is clearly a sin to steal.

2. What was the penalty in ancient Israel for stealing to avoid starvation? Exodus 22:1-4; Proverbs 6:30-31.

COMMENT: The penalty for thievery to avert hunger was not as severe as stealing motivated by greed. Nevertheless, any kind of stealing is shameful (Jeremiah 2:26). We should ask God to provide for our needs so that we will not be tempted to steal to survive (Proverbs 30:7-9).

3. What happens when we associate with a thief? Proverbs 29:24. Does God hear the cry of those cheated by a dishonest employer? James 5:4.

COMMENT: Having a thief as a partner will only bring shame and harm upon ourselves. We become liars because we share in the lies of the thief. Two principles relate to the responsibilities of the employer/employee relationship: "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work" and "a fair day's work for a fair day's wage."

4. Should we fellowship with a spiritual brother who is an extortioner? I Corinthians 5:11.

COMMENT: An extortioner obtains things from others by force, intimidation or undue power. Parents can train a child to extort if they give him everything he demands through his cries and tantrums. That child is stealing what he wants from his parents. Christ condemns the Pharisees for extorting from the people. They used their office to intimidate the people into giving offerings (Matthew 23:25). Jesus admonishes the tax collector to avoid stealing from people by not collecting more than his due (Luke 3:12-13).

5. Is stealing sometimes hidden behind the appearance of

benevolence? John 12:4-6; Acts 5:1-11.

COMMENT: Ananias and Sapphira not only lied against the Holy Spirit, but they also stole from God by appearing to give all the money from the land they sold instead of part of it. Within the spirit of the law, they were stealing the part they retained under false pretenses.

6. Are false shepherds comparable to thieves and robbers? John 10:1-10. Are they held responsible for their actions? Jeremiah 23:1-2; Ezekiel 34:1-10.

COMMENT: A false minister tries to steal people from Jesus Christ, the True Shepherd, by enticing them with false doctrine mixed with some truth. A sign of a false shepherd is neglecting the flock while looking out for himself, accumulating material possessions in the process.

7. Does stealing defile a man? Matthew 15:18-20. Can a thief inherit God's Kingdom? I Corinthians 6:9-10.

COMMENT: Defilement comes from within a person's heart and mind. Stealing defiles because it begins in the mind with covetousness and greed spawned by a selfish character.

8. What is the opposite of stealing? Ephesians 4:28; Acts 20:35; Luke 3:11.

COMMENT: In contrast to getting, acquiring, taking, extorting and embezzling, God's people must give, produce, work and be resourceful. Paul advises,

For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. (II Thessalonians 3:7-8)

The eighth commandment guards our relationship with others and urges us to produce and accomplish so that we can take care of those in need. It should stir us to service and usefulness on behalf of our fellow human beings. Such an attitude is pleasing to our Judge, who wants such people in His Kingdom (Matthew 25:31-40).

"Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need." (Ephesians 4:28)

The Ninth Commandment

The ninth commandment, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (Exodus 20:16; Deuteronomy 5:20), protects our relationship with God because, by seeking and bearing a true witness to the truth, we can have a relationship with God. God is truth (John 14:6), and he who speaks truth from the heart

abides with God (Psalm 15:1-2). Speaking the truth also shows love toward our fellow man (Ephesians 4:15). Lies of any kind—bald-faced, white or anywhere in between—cause separation and distrust, while truth, though sometimes hard to bear at first, produces unity and trust in the end.

**“Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.”
(I John 2:22-23)**

1. Does the Bible define “bearing false witness”? Proverbs 14:5, 25; 12:17.

COMMENT: “Bearing false witness” is lying. Conversely, a faithful witness gives accurate testimony. He declares events, statements and information as they happened, not as he perceives them or as they give him an advantage. Such a person will consistently tell the complete truth.

2. How did the Old Covenant deal with false witnesses? Deuteronomy 19:15-21. What does God think about lying? Proverbs 6:16-19; 12:22; Ezekiel 13:8.

COMMENT: If enacted today, the Old Testament law—that a false witness would receive the same penalty that would have been given to the accused—would substantially reduce the number of lawsuits in our courts! People sue indiscriminately because they have no penalties to fear. God considers such things as abominations!

3. Who is the father of liars? John 8:44. Who cannot lie? Hebrews 6:17-18; Numbers 23:19.

COMMENT: A quick look at this world reveals that its loyalty is to Satan, who influences and rules it. He lies from the very depths of his character. In contrast, God does not and cannot lie, for truth is a primary attribute of His character.

4. Is it lying to deny that Jesus is the Christ? I John 2:22-23. Are we lying if we say we know Christ but do not keep His commandments? I John 2:4; Jeremiah 9:3-6. Can we say we love God and still be lying? I John 4:20.

COMMENT: If we say we love God but break His laws, we show we hate both God and man. We can just as easily lie with our actions as with our mouths!

5. Does the wrath of God come upon those who suppress the truth? Romans 1:18. Why do the wicked suppress the truth? Romans 1:24-25.

COMMENT: Commandment breakers suppress the truth to avoid admitting they are wrong. The human mind reasons

that it is easier to lie than to live God’s way, which they view as oppressive. But by lying, they become slaves to sin and Satan, the father of lies.

6. When does a lying tongue first appear in a wicked person? Psalm 58:3; Isaiah 48:8. Will liars always be allowed to lie? Psalm 63:11; 31:18; Proverbs 12:19; 19:5, 9. What terrible fate awaits liars? Revelation 21:8, 27.

COMMENT: The sinful habit of lying begins in earliest childhood and becomes ingrained in the character until it is rooted out through overcoming and repentance. All who continue to practice lying will receive the final death.

7. What does lying produce? Amos 2:4; Proverbs 12:18; 21:6; Hosea 10:13-15.

COMMENT: Lying produces penalties, poor health, death, corruption, suffering and more. A thief takes replaceable material things, but a slanderer can rob one of self-esteem and reputation that may never be completely regained.

8. What should a Christian’s attitude be toward lies? Psalm 120:2; Proverbs 30:7-9. Is part of conversion ridding ourselves of lies? Zechariah 8:16-17; Ephesians 4:25, 29; Colossians 3:9.

COMMENT: A Christian’s goal should be to remove all vestiges of falsehood from his character, and thus conform to the image of Christ.

9. What is part of Israel’s responsibility upon their future repentance? Zephaniah 3:12-13. What is not found in the mouths of the redeemed 144,000? Revelation 14:5. Will the New Jerusalem accept liars into it? Revelation 22:15.

COMMENT: Removing lies from their character may be the hardest thing the Israelites have to do in the Millennium! They will be able to see the example of the firstfruits of God’s Kingdom, who are found without fault and without deceit. They will have overcome bearing false witness and entered the very Family of God, into which God will never permit liars!

The Tenth Commandment

The Ten Commandments are living, moving, active laws that are even more permanent than the laws of physics that govern matter and energy. They are automatic in their results. If we break them, we incur horrible curses, but if we keep them, we receive wonderful blessings. So it is with the tenth commandment, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox,

nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s” (Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21). Covetousness is an insatiable desire for worldly gain and lies at the heart of where most sin originates. Of all the commandments, the tenth especially emphasizes man’s relationship to man, which is readily seen in the repeated phrase “your neighbor’s.” It protects the interests of others in seven major areas listed individually within the commandment.

1. How is covetousness involved in the process of sin? James 1:13-15. Is anyone immune to covetousness? Jeremiah 6:13. Where do wars and fights come from? James 4:1-2.

COMMENT: It is not wrong to want something. We can want a spouse, a house or a car, but not if it belongs to our neighbor—unless he is selling a possession, and we acquire it in a fair and honest manner. However, when “desire has conceived,” it may result in breaking any of the Ten Commandments, including covetousness, to which everyone is susceptible. Uncontrolled lust for power, land and wealth can drive men to murder, if necessary, to obtain a coveted prize.

2. Should we value our accomplishments by our possessions? Luke 12:15; I Timothy 6:6-11; Matthew 16:26.

COMMENT: The apostle Paul tells Timothy that “godliness with contentment is great gain” and that, instead of possessions, we should be pursuing righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Paul learned to be content in whatever state he was in (Philippians 4:11). Jesus Christ sets our primary goal as seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). The inevitable result of doing this will be wonderful blessings and eternal life.

3. Covetousness is described as what spiritual sin? Colossians 3:5. After a man gathers possessions through covetousness, what does he normally do? Habakkuk 2:9; Obadiah 4; Psalm 39:6.

COMMENT: If we seek something contrary to God’s will, we covet. If we lust after something, it can become an idol to us, and we will serve it (Romans 6:16). The Bible associates lust with pride and vanity (I John 2:16-17). When a man amasses possessions, he feels a false sense of security because they make him feel he is superior to others. He deceives himself into thinking that calamity will not touch him, yet covetousness is never satisfied and brings on many sorrows.

4. What does covetousness produce? Joshua 7:20-21, 25; Proverbs 1:18-19; Acts 5:1-10; I Timothy 6:9-10.

COMMENT: Covetousness produces only negative results like theft, lying, murder, harmful lusts and apostasy. Only sorrow comes from covetousness—and eventually death,

if it is allowed to dominate a person’s mind.

5. Should a minister of God be covetous? I Timothy 3:1-3. What can covetousness cost us? I Corinthians 6:9-10; Ephesians 5:3, 5.

COMMENT: It is just as wrong for a minister to covet as it is for anyone else, and his judgment is harsher. A minister should be setting a proper example in this area for others to follow. An unqualified man should not covet the position of minister if he does not meet the biblical requirements (I Timothy 3; Titus 1). God will exclude any covetous person from His Kingdom.

6. Who delivers us from sin, including covetousness? Romans 7:22-25; 8:1-2; Galatians 5:16. What is our responsibility? Proverbs 23:4-5; 28:16; Luke 12:15; Romans 6:12-13; Hebrews 13:5.

COMMENT: Even the elect struggle in resisting covetousness, but God through His Spirit helps us to resist the desires that war within us. He expects us to oppose the lusts of the flesh, and promises to help us if we obey Him. It is our responsibility to present ourselves as instruments of righteousness, being careful to hate covetousness and be content with what we have.

7. What is the opposite of coveting? Proverbs 21:26; 22:9. What should we pursue? Matthew 6:19-21; I Timothy 6:10-11.

COMMENT: Although the tenth commandment deals most obviously with human and physical relationships, its spiritual requirement is in many ways even more rigid. Like the others, the tenth regulates the mind and heart (II Corinthians 10:5). Many people look on sin as physical action, not realizing that the holy, righteous character that God purposes to form in us necessitates that even our thoughts be completely purified and made like His (Matthew 5:8; Philippians 2:5). God is a Giver, and He gives good and perfect things (James 1:17). This is the character we must emulate.

The Ten Commandments are a complete set of principles that we can keep properly in their spiritual intent only with the help of the Holy Spirit. God uses them as the standard of righteousness by which He develops His righteous mind and character in us. We need to keep them now more than ever!

The Ten Commandments

No set of laws governing human conduct are greater than the Ten Commandments. With simplicity and directness, these laws cut to the heart of man's nature, regulating his relationships with God and with his neighbors.

Though handed to Moses on Mount Sinai 3,500 years ago, the Ten Commandments and their underlying principles are still relevant in today's fast-paced, sophisticated world. Undoubtedly, their observance is needed now more than ever! How sad it is that God's laws are increasingly more unwelcome in our society.

These Bible studies succinctly cover each of the commandments and their applications to us today. With God and His laws being systematically stripped from public discourse and culture, it is time to renew our resolve to honor God by keeping His Ten Commandments.

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