

"Vain indeed would be the search among the writings of secular history to find so broad, so complete and so solid a basis of morality as the Ten Commandments lay down."

—John Adams

**29-Aug-03**

## **What Does It Say?**

For weeks now debate has raged over whether the Ten Commandments monument in the Alabama courthouse should be removed. Constitutional attorneys are arguing over whether the Constitution of the United States restricts the placement of the Ten Commandments in government buildings. A Federal judge ordered it removed, and the U.S. Supreme Court seems at least at this point to consider it a hot potato. One argument is that nothing in the U.S. Constitution or any of its amendments prevents Judge Moore from displaying the Ten Commandments monument. The other side claims that it violates the separation of church and state to place the Ten Commandments monument in the Alabama courthouse.

Everyone is missing the point. Has anyone bothered lately to read what the Ten Commandments actually say? Are they beneficial to the guarantee of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness? Do they promote the health of the moral and civil survival of the American people? Or, are they harmful to American citizens? Do they inflict suffering upon children?

[Moses](#) recorded the Ten Commandments as he heard them commanded in God's own words:

And [God](#) spoke all these words, saying: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

- 1) "You shall have no other gods before Me.
- 2) "You shall not make for yourself a carved image-any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.
- 3) "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.
- 4) "Remember the [Sabbath](#) day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.
- 5) "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.
- 6) "You shall not murder.
- 7) "You shall not commit adultery.
- 8) "You shall not steal.

9) "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

10) "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's." ([Exodus 20:1-17](#); see [Deuteronomy 5:5-21](#))

The secular laws of this nation, designed to protect the basic rights of each citizen, are founded on the principles contained within the Ten Commandments. What city, state, or nation would not benefit from such rules of conduct? Most people in the United States are stressed to the limit—suicides and nervous breakdowns are common. Would not the people of this nation benefit if they took one day to rest by keeping the [fourth commandment](#)? The capital city of the United States, Washington, D.C., is often called the murder capital of the nation. Would not the people of Washington, D.C., benefit if they kept the sixth commandment? One of the major causes of divorce in marriage is adultery. Would not the families of this nation (especially the children) benefit if fathers and mothers kept the [seventh commandment](#)? One of the common crimes perpetrated against families in the U.S. is burglary and theft. Would not the families of this nation benefit if people kept the eighth commandment?

Nevertheless, the arguments ranted about in the media and increasingly in courtrooms across this nation spin around the issue of constitutional law and separation of church and state. However, the real issue is that most people flat-out reject God's sovereignty and refuse to do anything He says. The results are obvious. He was kicked out of the family, so parents abuse their children, and children abuse their parents. He was kicked out of the public schools, so the children kill their teachers and each other.

No matter how beneficial God's laws are, human nature still rejects them "because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the [law of God](#), nor indeed can be" ([Romans 8:7](#)). We have a personal responsibility to ask God to remove that enmity. [King David](#) said, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" ([Psalm 51:10](#)).

In this nation's rejection of anything associated with God, we see a sad indictment of the moral and spiritual condition of its people. We are a nation of arrogant, self-serving fools who profess to be wise and have no excuse for our ignorance ([Romans 1:18-22](#)). Who do the people of this nation think they are to determine that the Ten Commandments, the immutable laws of God, are not relevant to our "modern" lives? The Ten Commandments are commandments that enable us to show appropriate love for our neighbors. They govern all relationships between individuals. They are unchallengeable laws that govern, not just this the small planet on which we live, but also the entire universe. Maybe its time people read and apply what they say.

- Martin G. Collins

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## **From the Archives: Featured Sermon**

### **[The Law's Purpose and Intent](#)**

by Martin G. Collins

The effectiveness of a law is found in its purpose and intent rather than the letter. The blind spots to God's Law unfortunately are found in the spiritual application or principle rather than a specific motor behavior. Christ taught that the righteousness of the Pharisees was not enough to fulfill the law's requirements. Love and mercy constitute the essence of the spiritual fulfillment of the Law. God's Holy Spirit enables us to carry out the spiritual intent of the Law. By continually using God's Spirit, we gradually or incrementally take on God's nature in our innermost beings. As we judge other people, we must realize that the things that offend us mirror our own (hidden from us but transparent to others) faults.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[The First Commandment \(1997\)](#)**

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The Ten Commandments open with the most important, the one that puts our

relationship with God in its proper perspective. John Ritenbaugh explains this simple but vital command.

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