

Ten Words to Live By

A study by Steve Tillis

1 Then God spoke all these words, saying, 2 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

3 You shall have no other gods before Me.

4 You shall not make for yourself an idol ...

7 You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain ...

8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ...

12 Honor your father and your mother ...

13 You shall not murder.

14 You shall not commit adultery.

15 You shall not steal.

16 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

17 You shall not covet ... (Exodus 20:1-17, NASB)

A Graceful Prologue (Exodus 20:1-2)

Why should we study the 10 Commandments?

1. To understand something of the nature of God.
2. To understand the relationship between grace and law.
3. To show the connection between the 10 Commandments and New Testament teaching.
4. To develop virtue rather than legalism.

Preface: As we begin our study on *10 Words To Live By*, we need to keep in mind the 3 uses of God's law.

1. Condemning – Romans 3:20, 4:15
2. Restraining – Deuteronomy 12:32
3. Guiding – Romans 6:14; Galatians 2:15-19; 2 Timothy 3:16

Text: (Exodus 20:1-2)

1 Then God spoke all these words, saying,

2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."

Explanation:

God spoke – He had revealed himself to Moses in Exodus 3:14-15, and now He is revealing himself to all Israel as Yahweh, the Lord.

These words – In Exodus 34:28 they are referred to as "10 words." They were written on two small tablets.

I am the LORD your God – How marvelous that a holy God would identify Himself with sinful people. This phrase speaks of the unity of the people and the closeness of God.

Who brought you out... – Grace precedes and fuels obedience. The grace of Christ paying for our sin precedes and fuels our obedience to Him.

Quotes: "I have wondered at times what the Ten Commandments would have looked like if Moses had run them through the US congress."—Ronald Reagan

"The Law is spiritual and it reaches the understanding, will, affections, and all other powers of the soul, as well as words, works, and gestures."—The Westminster Larger Catechism

Quiz: On back

Practice: Try to memorize the shorthand form of the 10 commandments.

10 Commandments Quiz

- 1) "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me" is which commandment?
 - A. second
 - B. first
 - C. tenth
 - D. fifth
- 2) "Thou shalt not commit adultery" is which commandment?
 - A. seventh
 - B. fifth
 - C. forth
 - D. ninth
- 3) Which commandment tells us that we should not steal?
 - A. first
 - B. seventh
 - C. eighth
 - D. second
- 4) In which commandment are we told not to make any graven images?
 - A. third
 - B. forth
 - C. tenth
 - D. second
- 5) We are told not to covet anything that our neighbors' have in which commandment?
 - A. fourth
 - B. tenth
 - C. ninth
 - D. seventh
- 6) "Thou shalt not bear false witness against your neighbor" is which commandment?
 - A. ninth
 - B. third
 - C. second
 - D. sixth
- 7) If a person were to say to you "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain" they would be referring to the _____ commandment?
 - A. first
 - B. second
 - C. third
 - D. fifth
- 8) "Honor thy father and thy mother" is which commandment?
 - A. fourth
 - B. fifth
 - C. seventh
 - D. eighth
- 9) "Thou shalt not kill" is the _____ commandment.
 - A. first
 - B. fourth
 - C. second
 - D. sixth
- 10) "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" is the _____ commandment.
 - A. fourth
 - B. fifth
 - C. third
 - D. second

Commandment #1 Exodus 20:3 *“You shall have no other gods before me.”*

Quotes:

“We must fear, love, and trust God more than anything else.”—Luther’s Small Catechism

“The first commandment is a matter of lordship. We are to recognize from the heart that God is Lord of all things and that therefore He will tolerate no rivals.”--John Frame

Q and A (Taken from the Westminster Larger Catechism)

What are the duties required in the first commandment?

1. To know God as the only true God.
2. To worship and glorify him accordingly, by thinking, meditating, remembering, highly esteeming, honoring, adoring, choosing, loving, desiring, fearing of Him.
3. Believing Him; trusting, hoping, delighting, rejoicing in Him.
4. Being zealous for Him; calling upon Him, giving all praise and thanks, and yielding all obedience and submission to Him with the whole man.
5. Being careful to please Him.

What are the sins forbidden in the first commandment?

1. Atheism
2. Idolatry
3. Not having and avouching Him for God and our God
4. The omission or neglect of anything due to Him, ignorance, forgetfulness, misapprehensions, false opinions, unworthy and wicked thoughts of Him.
5. Self-love, self-seeking, and all other inordinate and immoderate setting of our mind, will, or affections upon other things.

3 Reflections on the first commandment and our daily life

1. Love – Loyalty to God is an expression of love. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)
2. Worship – The first commandment deals with the object of our worship. All of life should be lived out before God in worship as a response to what God has done for us.
3. Devotion and Separation – The first commandment involves us giving ourselves wholly to God and separating from anything that comes before Him.

Christ in the Commandments:

1. Jesus perfectly obeyed God’s law and is the fulfillment of the law. Therefore, He is the perfect Lamb of God that imputes righteousness to believers and stands as the supreme example of the law.
2. The first command teaches us to worship Jesus as the one and only Lord, Savior, and Mediator. (Acts 4:12 and 1 Timothy 2:5)

Questions: (What is the relation with these questions and the first commandment?)

1. What gods do Christians worship?
2. What in my life comes before my relationship with God?

Commandment # 2 Exodus 20:4-6 No Idols

Scripture:

⁴ “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶ but showing loving kindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”

Questions:

1. What is the difference between the first and second commandments? The Second Commandment differs from the First in that it explains that, in our worship, we must not reduce God to a likeness of a physical object. Doing so is unquestionably unacceptable to God. Whereas the first commandment dealt with the object of worship, the second command deals with the manner of worship.
2. Are we banned from all images? No, we should never make images for the purpose of bowing down to them or worshipping them. Images can be reminders of the one true God such as the Ark of the Covenant, Moses’ brass serpent and the cross; but, they are never to be worshiped in place of God.
3. What constitutes an idol? Idols are representations of a god. They are viewed as having special powers and abilities. Idols are symbolic representations of gods derived from the fallen heart and mind of mankind.
4. Why are idols prohibited by God and scripture? Idols in themselves are contrary to the very nature of God. God is spirit and they who worship Him must do so in spirit and truth. Idols are contrived, physical entities. There is no idol that can possibly do justice to the infinite majesty and glory of God. Idols detract from the nature of faith. Our faith in God is not blind faith, but is based on what He has revealed to us through His Word. Lastly, idols are a poor substitute for the person and work of Jesus Christ who is the goal of our worship.
5. What is this business about “visiting the sins to the third and fourth generation?” The Bible is replete with the teaching of individual responsibility over sin. The text is most likely referring to the consequences of sin that are felt by multiple generations. The opposite is also true, the consequences of righteousness are felt by many generations.
6. Is it wrong for God to be jealous? What we don’t want to do is go down the road of asking if God has emotions that correspond to the way we experience jealousy. What the text is saying is that when we put idols in front of God, He is like a husband whose wife has committed adultery. God is jealous in the righteous sense of desiring our loyalty.

Christ in the Second Commandment:

Jesus said “he who has seen me has seen the father.” In John 14:9, Jesus said to Philip, “have I been so long with you and yet you don’t know me? He that has seen me has seen the Father”. In Colossians 1:15 Jesus is “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature...”

Practice:

Continue working on the hand prompts to remember the commandments
Begin memorizing verses 1-6

Commandment #3 Exodus 20:7 Don't take the name of the Lord in Vain

Passage:

Exodus 20:7 "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain."

Understanding:

The name of the LORD your God – According to John Frame "naming in scripture accomplishes three purposes: control, authority, and presence." The name of the LORD involves His nature (Psalm 86:5), His teaching (Psalm 25:4-5), and His morals (Psalm 25:8-10).

Take, in vain – The word here is *nasa* which not only involves speaking but bearing. God puts His name on His people Numbers 6:27. So, when we speak flippantly concerning His name or live in a manner that detracts from His glory, we are taking His name in vain. The word vain used here has the broader meaning of empty, worthless, or meaningless.

Digging Deeper:

The first commandment spoke of the object of our worship, the second of the means of our worship and the third deals with the attitude of our worship.

We are not permitted to use "divine name-dropping" to manipulate others. We do this all the time when we say things like "for that is holy," or invoke the name of God to damn something or irreverently use the name of Jesus Christ. We run rough shod over the minds and choices of others by throwing the name of God onto what we want to get our way.

Questions:

1. If taking the Lord's name in vain includes our living as well as our speaking do we break the third command with our lives?
2. What is the general attitude of lost people toward the name of God? Do we positively or negatively affect their reverence for God by the way we speak and live?
3. Can we break the other commands without breaking the third commandment?
4. Will all people one day honor God's name? (Psalm 145)

Christ in the third commandment:

Jesus is the name of God, that name to which every knee shall bow (Philippians 2:9-11; Isaiah 45:23)

Reflections for daily life:

2 Timothy 2:19: "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

Romans 2:21-24: "... You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, 'Do not commit adultery,' do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? For 'the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,' as it is written."

Practice:

Continue memorizing the 10 commandments and try to bless the name of God in your daily routines.

Commandment #4 Exodus 20:8-11

Remember the Sabbath to keep it Holy

Passage:

⁸⁻¹¹ Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Work six days and do everything you need to do. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to GOD, your God. Don't do any work—not you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your servant, nor your maid, nor your animals, not even the foreign guest visiting in your town. For in six days GOD made Heaven, Earth, and Sea, and everything in them; he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, GOD blessed the Sabbath day; he set it apart as a holy day.

Understanding:

Sabbath day – The Hebrew word 'Shabbat,' which is the word we get our word Sabbath from actually means to cease, to pause, to put on hold, to stop.

Gen 2:2-3-² By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.³ Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

1. Completed
2. Rested
3. Blessed
4. Set Apart

Quotes:

1. “We must understand that He is in charge of the outcome of our efforts, and that the outcome will be good, right. And all of this is encompassed in one biblical term, ‘Sabbath.’”—Dallas Willard

2. “Un-sabbathed, our work becomes the entire context in which we define our lives. We lose God-consciousness, God-awareness, sightings of resurrection. We lose the capacity to sing “this is my father’s world” and end up chirping little self-centered ditties about what we are doing and feeling.”—Eugene Peterson

3. “We practice Sabbath to remind us that as Christians, there is a state of permanent restfulness, easy yoke, light burden that Jesus is calling us to, and that we enter that state when we give ourselves over to complete trusting dependence in God, which we can enter any moment, as long as it is called Today.”

“There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works, as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest...”

(Hebrews 4:9-11) (Mark 2:27, Leviticus 25:4-7)

Deeper study:

John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*. Pg. 513-574

Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places*.

Abraham Heschel, *The Sabbath*.

Practice:

Personal

- Spend an afternoon without using: money, computers, phones, or watches.
- Take an extended walk in a park or garden.
- Don't do any “to-do list” stuff.
- Create special traditions.

Corporate

- Sharing the labor of Sunday worship services.
- Receiving communion.
- Prayer, Worship

Commandment #5 Exodus 20:12 Honor your father and mother

Passage:

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you”. (Exodus 20:12)

“Jesus replied, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’ ...” (Matthew 15:3-4)

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth”.
Ephesians 6:1-3

Context:

The first four commandments dealt with our relationship with God. The last six commandments guide our relationship with other people. The fifth commandment begins this second group of commands with the most fundamental of human relations, the family.

Digging Deeper:

Honor – The root of this word means “to be heavy.” Giving honor to someone involves three things: reverence, submission, and support.

1. Reverence is the heart attitude behind the behavior.
2. Submission is thoughtful obedience.
3. Support is how we continue to honor our father and mother as we grow older.

That your days may be prolonged – Some scholars understand this promise to be localized to the text. They see the promise not to individuals but to Israel and their stay in the promise land. However, there are numerous scriptures that seem to extend this promise to others. The promise is a general principle that governs human life. By and large, those who live respectful of authority are granted many days.

Why is this promise attached to the fifth command and not the others? The blessings that come from honoring God through the first set of commandments is extended to the second set as we honor those who represent Him.

Questions:

1. What does our current culture teach us about honoring our parents?
2. How does honoring one’s parents change as they grow up?
3. How might we show honor to parents who were not good parents?
4. How does this command extend to other sources of authority in our lives?

Practice:

1. We honor our parents best at all stages of life when we honor God with our lives.
2. You could write them a card, call, or visit them.
3. You can listen to them and not always correct them.

Commandment # 6 Exodus 20:13 You shall not murder

Passage:

Genesis 9:6 “If anyone takes a human life, that person’s life will also be taken by human hands. For God made human beings in His own image.”

Exodus 21:12 “Anyone who assaults and kills another person must be put to death.”

Exodus 23:7 “Be sure never to charge anyone falsely with evil. Never sentence an innocent or blameless person to death, for I never declare a guilty person to be innocent.”

Leviticus 24:17 “Anyone who takes another person’s life must be put to death.”

Digging Deeper:

1. God is the Lord of _____.
2. The result of Adam’s sin is _____.
3. The Hebrew word *ratsakh* refers to _____ killing.
4. There are 3 additional instructions that arise out of this commandment.
 - _____ (Numbers 35:26-27)
 - _____ (Matthew 5:21-26)
 - _____ (1 John 3:14-16)

Quotes:

“In short, the sixth commandment stakes out the claim of God over all life and serves notice to all human beings...that God’s claim upon life is to be given priority in the decisions taken by a community of its individual members.” —W. Harrelson

“I must caution you about getting too comfortable. You see, the commandment prohibiting murder goes much farther than this. It condemns any attitude or action which might lead to murder. It also necessitates that we learn the principle which underlies this prohibition. And finally, it requires some positive action on our part, not just the avoidance of a specific evil, but the pursuit of some specific good.” — Bob Deffinbaugh

Questions:

1. What is the relationship between obedience and a right heart attitude?
2. Who should be the first to make reconciliation, the offender or the offended?

Practice:

1. Spend some time meditating on the relationship between the 6th commandment and Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:21-26.
2. Keep a journal of when you get angry for 1 week.
3. Ask yourself why you got angry in each situation.
4. Begin to ask the Lord to help you not just to avoid anger but to love others.

Commandment #7 Exodus 20:14 You shall not commit adultery

Related Passages:

1. Genesis 2:23-24 "At last!" the man exclaimed. "This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh! She will be called 'woman,' because she was taken from 'man.'" This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.
2. Ephesians 5:28-31 "In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. And we are members of his body. As the Scriptures say, 'A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one'."

Digging Deeper:

1. Marriage is a covenant relationship. A covenant is a relationship governed by an oath. In the Old Testament, marriage is seen as a covenant between God and his people. In the New Testament that image is magnified through our relationship with the Lord Jesus. Our relationship with our spouse should reflect the relationship of Christ with the church. (Ezekiel 16:8, Malachi 2:14)
2. Adultery is a matter of the heart. Christ goes beyond the action to the heart attitude. He says we sin when there is an intentional harboring of desire for illicit relationship. He is not saying hate women, don't ever look at a woman, or that the mere recognition of beauty is sin. He is saying that when a man desires to desire more he is sinning.
Matthew 5:28-30 "But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. So if your eye—even your good eye—causes you to lust, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your hand—even your stronger hand—causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell."
3. This commandment explicitly prohibits adultery, implicitly affirms marriage, and reminds us of our covenant with God.

Quotes:

1. "The kind of relationships we all want take courage, diligence, and a rigorous attention to our heart, our mind, and our behavior. It means standing against the current of the world. Some will say it is too much work. But God tells us that it is this work that will lead us to a love the world cannot duplicate and a joy the world cannot imagine. Don't settle for cheap substitutes! Pursue the best and do so with all your heart."-- Bruce Goettsche
2. "Intimacy is the mutual mingling of souls who are taking each other into themselves to ever increasing depths."—Dallas Willard

Questions:

1. How would your behavior change if you started thinking about your marriage as a reflection of your relationship with Christ?
2. How would you go about getting at the heart of the matter in your life when it comes to this commandment?

Practice:

1. Memorize the scripture in this study guide.
2. Develop different habits.

Commandment #8 Exodus 20:15 Do not steal

Related Passage

Isaiah 61:8 “For I, the LORD, love justice. I hate robbery and wrongdoing. I will faithfully reward my people for their suffering and make an everlasting covenant with them.”

Ephesians 4:28 “If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need.”

Philippians 2:3 “Don’t be selfish; don’t try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.”

2 Kinds of stealing:

Aggressive

- property theft
- swindling
- stealing from widows and orphans
- defrauding employees
- land theft

Passive

- time theft at work
- family time
- not tipping properly at restaurants
- taking credit for ideas and material that isn’t yours
- taking every blessing from God without giving back to Him

Lessons:

1. When we steal we demonstrate that we do not trust God.
2. When we steal we violate the trust of other people.
3. When we steal we treat people as a means to an end.

Questions:

1. What attitude is behind the thoughts “they won’t care, they won’t miss it, they have an overabundance?”
2. If your boss, spouse, or kids were here would they say that you steal in the area of time?
3. What is the heart attitude behind stealing from God?

Practice:

1. Look to God as your ultimate source of accountability, not just your boss.
2. Ask God to help you trust Him in every area of your life.
3. Give, the best defense against stealing and greed is to give.

“May God enable all of us to give without expecting to receive anything in return, rather than to take without expecting to give anything in return.”—Bob Deffinbaugh

Commandment # 9 Exodus 20:16 Do not lie

Relevant Passages:

1. Ephesians 4:25 “Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.”
2. Ephesians 4:29,31 “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers... Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.”
3. Philippians 4:8 “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

Definitions:

1. “A lie is a word or act that intentionally deceives a neighbor in order to hurt him.”—Frame
2. “A false statement made with deliberate intent to deceive; an intentional untruth; a falsehood.”

Digging Deeper:

1. Continuity in the second table of the law: respect, life, spouse, and property.
2. Lying in this passage is understood in a legal sense but the broader interpretation encompasses all lying.
3. Lying is normal for the unregenerate. (Romans 1:25) Lying defines many of the ways we harm others by words. (Proverbs 11:9,13) We bear witness both with our words and with our life.

Quotes:

- A lie has no legs. It requires other lies to support it. Tell one lie and you are forced to tell others to back it up.
- Stretching the truth won't make it last any longer.
- Those that think it permissible to tell white lies soon grow colorblind. – Austin O'Malley
- I would not tell one lie to save the souls of all the world. – John Wesley
- One never errs more safely than when one errs by too much loving the truth. – Augustine
- No man has a good enough memory to make a successful liar. – A. Lincoln
- Men hate those to whom they have to lie. – Victor Hugo
- What upsets me is not that you lied to me, but that from now on I can no longer believe you. – Friedrich Nietzsche
- When regard for truth has been broken down or even slightly weakened, all things will remain doubtful. – Augustine

Questions:

1. What are some motivations for lying?
2. What can you do to help put this bad habit to death?

Commandment #10 Exodus 20:17 Do Not Covet

Relevant passages:

Romans 7:7 “Well, then, am I suggesting that the law of God is sinful? Of course not! In fact, it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, ‘You must not covet.’”

Romans 13:9 “For the commandments say, ‘You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet.’ These—and other such commandments—are summed up in this one commandment: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Deuteronomy. 5:21 “You must not covet your neighbor’s wife. You must not covet your neighbor’s house or land, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor.”

Digging Deeper:

1. Coveting is a matter of the heart. From the beginning God has always desired that His commands be obeyed from the heart. (Deuteronomy 5:29)
2. The 10th commandment encourages **contentment** and warns against **envying**.
3. Coveting takes place as we nurse a desire for what others have and as we make plans to achieve that desire.

Questions:

1. Would hoarding be an action of coveting? Why or why not?
2. What happens when a person begins to want something so badly that he or she would do anything to get it? Let’s think of some examples of what might happen if our desires get out of control.
3. Why should we “beware of covetousness”? Consider also 1 Timothy 6:7-10.
4. What would be the approach that is opposite to covetousness? Read Romans 13:9-10

Christ from the 10 Commandments: (John Frame)

1. Jesus is the one and only Lord.
2. Jesus is the one and perfect image of the Father.
3. Jesus is the name of God.
4. Jesus is the Sabbath.
5. Jesus restores us to the divine family.
6. We honor Jesus as our life.
7. We honor him as our bridegroom.
8. Jesus is the source of our inheritance.
9. We honor Jesus as God’s truth.
10. Jesus is our complete sufficiency.