

## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS: GUIDES FOR CHRISTIANS



*Sanctification in action.*

**W**E LEARNED IN A PREVIOUS LESSON that Adam and Eve were made in the image of God; that is, perfect in word and deed and with a blissful knowledge of God's will. But Adam and Eve did not themselves choose the best way to serve the Lord – Genesis chapters one and two tell us the God *gave* them the work they were to do in order to please Him. They were to live in Eden, avoid eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, but otherwise to "dress and keep" the garden and with wisdom make the earth serve their needs.

After the fall into sin, human hearts became dulled in the knowledge of God's will and hostile toward God and man. But God in His great mercy and longsuffering love supplied the promise of a Savior. Once again, man had powerful reason to love and serve his Savior God.. But the Lord did not want man to choose his own way of serving Him. God specifically revealed what He wanted from people by giving a LAW code to Moses at Mt. Sinai (about 1500 BC).

1. The Ten Commandments are recorded in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. As you read the two accounts, note especially v. 2 of Exodus 20 and v. 7 of Deuteronomy 5. *With what powerful and reassuring words did God prepare His people for hearing how He wants us to serve Him?*

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### ICON KEY

-  Introduction

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-  Important point

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-  For further reading

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### The Third Use of the Law

That brings us to the Third Use of the Law of God. Look back and review Lesson 7, in which we studied the first two uses of the Law (God's Law serves first as a *curb*, checking the coarse outbreak of sin, and secondly as a *mirror*, showing the sinner his sin). In no case does the keeping of God's Law count in the least toward earning a person's salvation.



But for the Christian whom God has brought to faith in Christ, the Law does something else: it shows us how we may serve God out of faith toward our Savior. For example, the Apostle John wrote, "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." -I John 3:16. We are not to choose our own ways and works of pleasing Him, but will always want *God's* will to be done. Read again the words of John, "This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it." - II John 6. Each of the Ten Commandments, therefore, has not only a *negative* aspect (what God commands all people *not* to do), but also provides positive things which Christians can do in order to express their faith in the God who has graciously redeemed them. In summary one may say, "The Law always but not only condemns."

We will now review the Ten Commandments from the positive viewpoint of this Third Use of the Law. Martin Luther's explanations of the Commandments will also be given for your reference, with the positive direction for Christians highlighted with *italics*.

## The First Commandment

*"Thou shalt have no other Gods."*

How can we make God number one in our lives? Luther explains: *We should fear, love and trust in God above all things.*

2. Read the account in Genesis 22:1-14. Abraham showed himself willing even to sacrifice his only son Isaac at the command of God. *What did this say about Abraham's priorities?*

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3. *What does it tell you about YOUR priorities?*

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4. Look up Daniel 3:1-18. In this account, three young Jewish men, captive in Babylonia, found they had to make a choice. *What was that choice?*

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5. In our materialistic world, it is taken for granted that each person serves himself, and grabs all that he can for himself from life. But read II Corinthians 5:14-15. *Which force COMPELS us to serve God and our fellow-man, rather than ourselves?*

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6. Read Matthew 8:5-13, Jesus' meeting with a Roman commander. Especially from verse 8, *what did the centurion show by his request?*

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7. *What is the Apostle John's simple advice in I John 5:21?*

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Note how God blesses His people as they live in devoted service to Him.

## The Second Commandment

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

How can we use God's name in the right way? Luther explains: "We should fear and love God that we do not curse, swear, practice superstition, lie, or deceive by His name; *but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.*"

8. According to Romans 10:13, *what is the first and most important way in which we are to use the name of God?*

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9. Read James 3:8-10. *What is one abuse of God's name which happens all too often, even among Christians?*

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10. Look up Romans 12:14. *What is one way we can show our love for God?*

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11. The devil tempts us to believe that our speech won't be forceful enough unless we sprinkle it with profanity. *What does Jesus tell us in Matthew 5:37?*

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12. It's good to remember that the "name of God" includes everything He has made known to us about Himself (i.e., the Bible!) Read Romans 16:17-18. *What should we do about those who teach and/or practice contrary to what the Bible teaches?*

13. I Peter 2:9 tells us that we Christians are a separate, very special people. *What is our most important job as God's people?*

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Note: what blessings do we receive when we carry out this part of God's will for us? We are kept close to our Savior, and we help others to know God as their Savior, too!

## The Third Commandment

*"Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy."*

How can we keep the day of rest holy for God? Luther explains: "We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and His Word, *but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.*"

14. The word "Sabbath" means rest. Read Hebrews 4:1-11, an extended discussion on the subject of the Sabbath. Especially from verse nine, *What does this passage promise to the people of God? What do you think that means?*

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15. In Matthew 11:28-29, God offers us "rest" in the truest sense of the word. *What kind of rest is Jesus referring to?*

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16. Read Psalm 122:1. *How did the writer of this psalm feel about going to church? How do YOU feel about it?*

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17. Again, according to Psalm 26:8, *what was the writer's attitude toward the house of the Lord?*

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18. Read Colossians 3:16. *How can we keep God's Sabbath-day holy?*

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Note: when we abide by this part of God's will, our souls are richly fed and strengthened in the faith.

## The Fourth Commandment

*"Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."*

How can we Christians best honor our parents, and all whom God has placed over us for our good? Luther explains: "We should fear and love God that we do not despise our parents and superiors, nor provoke them to anger, *but honor, serve, and obey them, and hold them in love and esteem.*"

19. Read Ephesians 6:1-3. *What is God's instruction here to believers?*

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20. *What special promise is attached to the keeping of this Commandment?*

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21. It is fashionable, among some, to disobey and defy the government. But look up Romans 13:1. *What should the believer's attitude toward the government be? Why?*

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22. We are to honor and obey our parents and superiors. But in Matthew 10:37, Jesus mentions one exception to this rule. *What is it?* (cf. the First Commandment)

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23. In our day of widespread divorce and "deadbeat dads," it is common to hear of people who fail to support their families. But read I Timothy 5:8. *What does God say of such behavior?*

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24. Look up Matthew 22:15-22. Especially from verse 21, *Christians serve God when they do what?*

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25. In Leviticus 19:32, the Bible tells us what a God-pleasing attitude toward our elders should be. *Describe it in your own words.*

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Note the blessings we receive from living according to this Commandment: a good earthly life, a happy home, and the benefit of our parents' wisdom.

## The Fifth Commandment

*"Thou shalt not kill."*

How can we, in thanks to God, best serve and protect our neighbor's body and life? Luther explains: "We should fear and love God that we do not hurt nor harm our neighbor in his body, *but help and befriend him in every bodily need.*"

26. Read Galatians 6:10. *We can thank God by doing what? Especially to whom?*

27. Some people think they need only be kind to those who "deserve it," i.e., who have done some kindness to them. ~~But read Matthew 5:43-45. We can show our gratitude to God by being kind~~ *even to whom?*

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28. Read Romans 12:19, and *comment on the subject of revenge:*

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29. Look up and read Luke 10:30-35. *What direction does the Lord give us in the Parable of the Good Samaritan? (It may help to remember that Jesus is the true Good Samaritan!)*

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30. Read Ephesians 4:32. From the first half of the verse, *what is our attitude toward our fellow-Christians to be?*

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31. From the second half of the verse, *where do we get the motivation for such an attitude?*

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32. Answer question 31 again, after reading John 13:4-14:

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## The Sixth Commandment

*"Thou shalt not commit adultery."*

How can we best serve God with our attitudes toward marriage and sex? Luther explains: *"We should fear and love God that we lead a chaste and decent life in word and deed, and each honor and love his spouse."*

33. Read II Timothy 2:22. *What was the Apostle Paul's advice on this subject to the young pastor Timothy?*

34. It is difficult to remain pure of mind, particularly in our age of open and promiscuous sex. But according to Psalm 51:10, *where can we get the strength we need to lead a pure life?*

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35. Read Philippians 4:8. *With what would God have us occupy our thoughts?*

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36. Look up I Corinthians 6:19-20. *What is a particularly good way for Christians to glorify God, and why?*

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37. In Matthew 26:41, Jesus tells us that *the Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*. *What is Jesus advice to us on how to remain pure?*

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38. Read Ephesians 5:22-24. *What will a Christian wife's attitude be toward her husband?*

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39. Continue with Ephesians 5: 25:28. *What will a Christian husband's attitude be toward his wife?*

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Note the blessings we receive as we practice this Commandment - marriages are preserved, the lusts of the flesh avoided, and a loving relationship between spouses is cultivated, among many others!

## The Seventh Commandment

*"Thou shalt not steal."*

We show God our gratitude when we respect and protect our neighbor's property. Luther explains: "We should fear and love God that we do not take our neighbor's money or goods, nor get them by false ware or dealing, *but help him to improve and protect his property and business.*"

40. Read Psalm 128:2. *What is one key of happiness in the life of a believer?*

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41. I John 3:17 describes a very un-Christian attitude. *What is it?*

42. Look up Ephesians 4:28 and *describe the honest lifestyle of a true child of God:*

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43. Read Psalm 37:21. *What does this passage say on the subjects of borrowing and giving?*

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44. Refer to Hebrews 13:5. *WHAT KNOWLEDGE allows us to be content with the things which we already have?*

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45. In our era of "white-collar crime," many employees do not consider it wrong to pad expense accounts, take things from the office, etc. *But what instruction does God give us in Colossians 3:22-24?*

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Note the blessings which are ours in keeping the Seventh Commandment: we can be content and confident in our Lord's providence, and we will have the wherewithal to help those who are in need.

## The Eighth Commandment

## "LEARN FROM ME"

*"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."*

How can we best protect our neighbor's honor and good name? Luther explains: "We should fear and love God that we do not deceitfully belie, betray, slander, nor defame our neighbor, *but defend him, speak well of him, and put the best construction on everything.*"

46. Look up and read I Samuel 19:1-6. King Saul had a grudge against David, who had been anointed to become the next King of Israel. One might also expect Saul's son Jonathan - next in line to the throne - to oppose young David. *But what did Jonathan do in this episode?*

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47. I Samuel 1:9-17 is an example of someone who put the *worst* construction on a particular set of facts. *What mistaken conclusion did Eli draw when he saw Hannah praying?*

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48. The first half of Leviticus 19:16-17 describes a sinful activity which is *very* common in all societies, especially ours. *A Christian should be careful never to be a...what?*

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49. Read Matthew 18:15. *What is the best way to deal with a person who has sinned against you?*

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Note: when we keep this Commandment, we will preserve the reputations of our neighbors and ourselves, and we will help others to lead more God-pleasing lives.

## The Ninth and Tenth Commandments

*"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house." "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maid-servant, nor his cattle, nor anything that is thy neighbor's."*

A grateful Christian will strive to reflect God's love with an attitude of respect and support toward those things which belong to his neighbor. Luther explains: (9<sup>th</sup> Commandment) "We should fear and love God that we do not craftily seek to get our neighbor's inheritance or house, nor obtain it by a show of right, *but help and be of service to him in keeping it.*" (10<sup>th</sup> Commandment) "We should fear and love God that we do not

## "LEARN FROM ME"

alienate, beg, or take away from our neighbor his wife, servants, or cattle, *but urge them to stay and do their duty.*"

50. To "covet" something means to have a sinful desire to get something that belongs to someone else. Read I Timothy 6:9-10. *What is the most common OBJECT of covetous thoughts, and what are the consequences?*

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51. In Genesis chapter 39, Joseph was faced with the temptation of adultery. But instead of coveting his master's wife, *what did he say to turn away temptation? (v.9)*

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52. "Christian liberty" means we have the right to do anything not forbidden in the Bible. But Galatians 5:13 tells us that there is a higher rule than the rule of Christian liberty - *what is that?*

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### **Additional Bible Readings**

Consult Psalms 23, 32, 51, 100, 103, 121, 130.