

# The 10 Commandments

## I. You Shall Have No Other Gods Before Me

*God's demand for man's exclusive worship. It is not necessary to worship the sun, the moon and the stars to break this law. We break it whenever we give to something or someone other than God Himself the first place in our thoughts or our affections.*" For some people, it might be sports or hobbies; for others, money and possessions. These things aren't wrong or sinful in and of themselves. But it is wrong and sinful when we idolize them, and give to them the place that only God should have. To perfectly keep this commandment would be, as Jesus said, to love the Lord with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind; to seek His will and glory always; to give Him the first place in thought, word, and deed. No one has ever fully kept this commandment save Jesus of Nazareth. All others have failed utterly. *"What someone wrote of the Englishman is true of everyman: he is 'a self-made man who worships his creator'."*

## II. You Shall Not Make For Yourself A Graven Image

*"If the first commandment concerns the object of our worship, the second concerns its manner. In the first, God demands our exclusive worship, and in the second our sincere and spiritual worship. For 'God is a spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth' (John 4:24)."* Although we may have never made a graven image with our hands, what gruesome mental image have we conjured up in our minds? And although this commandment doesn't prohibit the use of all external forms of worship, it does imply that they are futile except there be inward reality as well. *"We may have attended church; have we ever really worshipped God? We may have said prayers; have we ever really prayed? We may have read the Bible; have we ever let God speak to us through it and done what He said?"* It is pointless to approach the Lord with our lips if our hearts are not sincere (Isaiah 29:13; Mark 7:6).

## III. You Shall Not Take the Name of the Lord Your God in Vain

*"The name of God represents the nature of God... His Holy Name can be profaned by our loose language and most of us could do worse than revise our vocabulary from time to time. But to take God's name in vain is not just a matter of words, but also of thoughts and deeds."* Whenever our actions are contradictory to our beliefs, or our practice is not aligned with what we preach, we take God's name in vain. If we call Him "Lord" and then disobey Him, we are taking His name in vain. If we call Him "Father" and then doubt Him, we deny His name. This is hypocrisy. This is sin.

#### **IV. Remember the Sabbath Day, to Keep It Holy**

Stott points out, *“To set one day in seven apart is not just a human arrangement or a social convenience. It is God’s plan... Man’s body and mind need rest, and man’s spirit needs the opportunity to worship. The sabbath is therefore a day of rest and worship.”* We are not only to keep it as such ourselves, for our own well-being, but we are to do everything we can for the common good to make certain that others do not have to work needlessly on this day. Sunday is holy, set apart unto God. It is His day, not ours. Therefore, we are to spend it in His way, and not in our way; we are to use it for His worship and service and not just for our own selfish pleasures.

#### **V. Honor Your Father and Your Mother**

*“... our parents, at least while we are children, stand towards us in loco Dei: they represent God’s authority. Yet often it is in their own home that people, young people especially, are at their most selfish and inconsiderate.”* It is too easy to be ungrateful and negligent, and to fall short of giving our parents the respect, affection, and honor they deserve.

#### **VI. You Shall Not Kill**

It is important to understand that this commandment does not just prohibit outright murder. *“If looks could kill, many would kill with a look. If murder can be committed by cutting words, many are guilty.”* In fact, Jesus clearly stated that to be angry with someone without a cause, and to be insulting, are matters just as grave.

John writes, *“Whoever who hates his brother is a murderer”* (1 John 3:15). *“Every loss of temper, every outburst of uncontrolled passion, every stirring of sullen rage, every bitter resentment and thirst for revenge – all these things are murder. We can kill by malicious gossip... studied neglect and cruelty... spite and jealousy. We have probably all done so.”* Note that this commandment also forbids the taking of one’s own life. Since God controls all things, and has chosen each person’s circumstances, to commit suicide is to rebel against His

authority.

#### **VII. You Shall Not Commit Adultery**

*“... this commandment has a far wider application than just to unfaithfulness in marriage... This commandment in fact embraces every abuse of a sacred and beautiful gift from God.”* It means that we are to be holy in heart, language, and conduct. We must avoid reading or watching impure things; speaking or jesting in a coarse, unseemly manner; or acting in any way that would compromise one’s own purity or the purity of others.

### **VIII. You Shall Not Steal**

*“To steal,” says Stott, “is to rob a person of anything which belongs to him or is due to him. The theft of money or property is not the only infringement of this commandment. Tax evasion is robbery. So is dodging the customs. So is working short hours. What the world calls ‘scrounging’ the Bible calls ‘stealing’. To overwork and underpay one’s staff is to break this commandment.”* Yet these negative commandments also entail a positive counterpart. To truly abstain from killing, we must do everything in our power – so far as it is lawful and God-honoring – to nurture the health and protect our own lives and the lives of our fellow men. It is not enough to merely refrain from the act of adultery. The commandment requires the proper, healthy, and honorable behaviour of each sex towards the other. *“Similarly, to keep from stealing is no particular virtue if one is miserly or mean. Paul was not satisfied that a thief should stop stealing; he had to start working. Indeed, he had to continue in honest labor until he found himself in a position to give to those in need.”*

### **IX. You Shall Not Bear False Witness Against Your Neighbor**

This commandment forbids not only perjury, but also slander, scandal, idle talk, lies, and deliberate exaggerations or distortions of the truth. *“We can bear false witness by listening to unkind rumors as well as by passing them on, by making jokes at somebody else’s expense, by creating false impressions, by not correcting untrue statements, and by our silence as well as by our speech.”*

### **X. You Shall Not Covet**

*“The tenth commandment,” Stott concludes, “is in some ways the most revealing of all. It turns the decalogue from an outward legal code to an inward moral standard. The civil law cannot touch us for covetousness but only for theft. For covetousness belongs to the inner life. It lurks in the heart and the mind. What lust is to adultery and temper is to murder, that covetousness is to theft.”* When a man covets, he not only breaks this commandment, but the first commandment also. He is allowing his desire for someone else’s property to usurp the place of God. This is idolatry (Colossians 3:5b). By contrast, Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 6:6 that godliness with contentment is great gain.