

Three Uses Of The Law

How God Gave The Ten Commandments

God first gave the Ten Commandments to Adam and Eve. By putting them directly in their hearts, the Ten Commandments enable them to know--and do--what God wanted them to do.

God also gave the Ten Commandments to Moses and the Children of Israel on Mount Sinai as His covenant with them. Having chosen them as His most dearly-loved people on earth, He blessed and honored them by making an agreement--a covenantal promise--that made them His people (Exodus 20).

God gave the Ten Commandments through Jesus. When asked which commandment was the most important, Jesus responded;

"'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Matthew 22:37-39 NIV

Since God has given His Law so many times and throughout the Bible, it must be important to Him. As we live in the joy of God's grace, God's Law is also important for us.

God gave us His Law for three purposes. Martin Luther called these purposes the "Three Uses Of The Law."

First, God gave the commandments as a CURB. This means that the Ten Commandments are designed to protect us from being hurt or hurting others. As a curb prevents a car from going off the road, so the Ten Commandments "curb" our behavior so that we do not curse, swear, steal, disobey parents, kill, covet, commit sexual sins, etc.

Second, God gave us the Law as a MIRROR. When we consider the Ten Commandments, the "thou shalt's" and the "thou shalt not's", we realize that we are sinners. The Ten Commandments, then, are the mirror by which we recognize our sin. This

recognition, as God intends, leads us to ask for forgiveness in Jesus Christ. By grace, each time we ask for forgiveness, God forgives us completely! (I John 1:8-10).

Third, God gave us the Law and the Ten Commandments as a GUIDE for how to live. Since we cannot see God, the only way we can truly know what He wants is in His Law. This use of the law applies only to Christians since unbelievers do not seek to follow God's Law. Because we are forgiven children of God, Christians *joyfully* seek God's guidance in our lives every day so that they can "take up their cross" and serve God by obedience to the God's Law.

If we wish for God to guide our lives, it is important for all Christians to know God's Law. That is why confirmands study the Ten Commandments as we will in the next lesson.