

The Commandment Of Respect

The Commandments: The "Human" Side

The Ten Commandments are directed to two parties: God and human beings. All the commandments are directed toward safeguarding healthy relationships. Commandments 1-3 safeguard our relationship with God. Commandments 4-10 safeguard our relationships with others or, as the Bible would say, our "neighbor."

Who is our "neighbor?" Our neighbor is not just the person who lives next door. Our neighbor is any living human being on this planet. Our neighbor is a family member, a teacher, a friend. Our neighbor may also be people whom we have never met from a distant land. Male or female, young or old, black or white, God calls us to love Him...and love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves.

Jesus, in Matthew 22:37-39 summarizes the commandments:

"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.'" (NIV)

The Fourth Commandment

Honor your father and mother.

What does this mean?

"We should fear and love God that we do not despise our parents and masters, nor provoke them to anger. But hold them in honor, love and esteem, and serve and obey them.

The Fourth Commandment calls us to respect all those in authority. This not only includes parents. It also includes teachers, government officials, law enforcement officers as well as church leaders such as pastors.

Luther's explanation of the Fourth Commandment is clear. We are to honor and respect our parents and superiors. This is done by faithful obedience and not, as Luther wrote, "provoke them to anger" by our attitude, disservice and disrespect.

Like most of the commandments, this commandment not only tells us what we should NOT do; it also encourages us as to what we should do. The Fourth Commandment forbids us from disrespecting authorities. It also calls us to respect and give them honor.

In what ways might you disrespect your parents? Teachers? Leaders? Pastors and church workers? In what ways can you show greater respect for them?

The Commandment Of Life

The Fifth Commandment

You shall not murder.

What does this mean?

"We should fear and love God that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and befriend him in every bodily need."

The Fifth Commandment doesn't merely condemn murder. It condemns any process by which a death occurs. This includes...

- * Suicide: Killing one's self;
- * Homicide: Killing a family member;
- * Assassination: Killing a Person of Importance (e.g. President, King or prominent public figure such a Martin Luther King Jr., President Kennedy, et al.); and
- * Murder-For-Pay: Hiring a "hit man" or someone else to murder someone.

The Fifth Commandment also prohibits two forms of murder which, though legalized in many areas, are nevertheless violations of this commandment.

- * Abortion: The killing of an unborn (or partially born) baby; and
- * Euthanasia: Using drugs to kill a sick person ("put them to sleep").

Perhaps the Apostle John, Jesus' closest disciple, gives the most important insight into this commandment.

"Anyone who **hates** his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him." (I John 3:15)

Have you ever hated someone? St. John says that hatred-driven anger is murder. Why should people be concerned? St. John said it best. "No murderer has eternal life...".

Sometimes God puts people in our lives who are very, very difficult. They hurt us, they call us names, they speak behind our backs and they do things to make us mad. Whatever they do to us, God does not permit us to take revenge. Nor does He permit us to get angry so that we hate them. "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you," Jesus taught in Matthew 5:44 (NIV).

In Romans 12, St. Paul gave us more advice for how to get along with our enemies. "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Romans 12:17-21 (NIV)

What do you do when people hurt you? Do you take revenge? Or, in the spirit of the Fifth Commandment, do you seek to overcome evil with good?

That IS our calling. That is one of the key lessons for life the Fifth Commandment teaches.

God's Call To Sexual Purity

The Sixth Commandment You shall not commit adultery.

What does this mean?

"We should fear and love God that we may lead a chaste and decent life in word and deed, and each love and honor his spouse."

Our bodies are "temples of the Holy Spirit." They are "bought with a price" and therefore belong to God (I Corinthians 6:19 et al.).

The purpose of the Sixth Commandment is to protect God's most valuable temple: Your body. None of us would tolerate it if our church allowed wild parties and other sinful activities to occur within it. In the

Sixth Commandment God tells us He will not tolerate it if we misuse our body--which is really His temple.

Since, by Baptism, your body is the place where God dwells, how should you use it? We should not use our bodies in "adulterous" ways. The word "adultery" specifically replies to sexual sin. It occurs when a married person has sex with any person other than their spouse.

"Adultery" has a broader meaning, too. To "adulterate" simply means to "make dirty" or to "pervert the proper use of something." God's calling to all Christians is to avoid sexual sin of all kinds. This includes:

- * sex outside of marriage;
- * premarital sex;
- * living together before marriage;
- * "unnatural" sex including...
 - a. homosexuality: sex between people of the same sex;
 - b. bestiality: sex with animals
 - c. incest: sex with family members and/or close relatives (e.g. cousins).
- * rape: non-consensual, violent sex which intends to hurt someone.

Divorce, in many cases, is another example of adultery. Jesus taught,

"It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery." Matthew 5:31-32 (NIV)

Adultery is not merely limited to physical acts. Jesus, in His "Sermon on the Mount" says that we commit adultery with our thoughts.

"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.'
But I tell you that anyone who *looks at a woman lustfully* has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

If your right eye causes you to sin, 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." Matthew 5:27-29 (NIV)

Sin, Forgiveness, And Grace

Have you sinned against this commandment? No doubt you have. This commandment, like all others, is very difficult to keep. We look, we lust and we sin. No matter how hard we try to keep this and God's other commandments, we fail.

You're not alone!

St. Paul struggle to avoid sin. Like us, he often failed. Here's what Paul tells us about our struggle against sin and temptation.

"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing...What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.
(Romans 7:15-8:2 (selected verses) (NIV)

What was Paul's struggle? It was a struggle against his own sinful flesh. As long as we are in our flesh--that is, alive--we will have that same struggle. As long as we continue struggling--and do not give in to sin--God does not condemn us. Instead, through Jesus Christ we know there is "now no condemnation" for believers.

We truly *ARE* sinners! But we are also *truly forgiven* saints. We don't deserve it; in fact, we keep sinning. But that's what "grace" is: God loving us and forgiving us, even when we don't deserve it.

Thank you, Jesus, for Your grace. Lord, give me strength that I may keep Your temple--my body--pure, chaste, clean and unadulterated to serve you.