

Let's remember what has just taken place. Moses has gone up and down the mountain three times already. The people have agreed to abide by the laws that God is about to give. They have been given three days to sanctify themselves. They have been warned not to touch the mountain or try to go into the cloud to see God lest they die. The priests were warned that they too must consecrate themselves. Then, God came down!

What does that mean? Since God is a spirit that is present everywhere, how can He come down? It is for our sake that God manifests Himself in a physical form so that we can relate. God isn't a cloud, or the lightening and thunder, or the shaking of the mountain, or even a voice. All those things are to help us relate to His glory, holiness and power. To "come down" points to God's transcendence and that He graciously stoops down and enters our fallen world. (Psalm 11:4) The manifestations are to help us understand His nature and our relationship to Him. That is especially true of Jesus, the incarnation of God. (John 1:14)

God has come down and will now speak to the people. We know from verse 22 that this is not just God alone with Moses. God will have Moses climb the mountain again and be with Him for 40 days, during which time the commandments etched by God's finger into two stone tablets.

We need to place ourselves there with the trembling Israelites and imagine the sites and sounds to get the full impact. The ground is shaking. The mountain is smoking. Trumpet blasts fill the air. Suddenly a voice overrides it all and declares, 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.

The God that showed the Egyptian gods to be worthless, the God that defeated Pharaoh and his armies, the God that parted the sea and led them through the wilderness was the God that was speaking. He communicates with us in words, in comprehensible language. He created languages, and He chose Hebrew to communicate to the world the words of order. It has been said that ten words brought order from chaos at the creation of the world. Now, ten words were being delivered to bring order to a chaotic new nation and all of civilization.

The first four instructions have to do with our relationship to, and worship of, the God that delivered Israel from bondage. The fifth is a transitional command, and the last five are the basis of how we relate to one another. The first group Jesus summed up as loving God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and the second group as loving your neighbor as yourself. (Matthew 22:37-39) Today we'll just be looking at the first five and I'll give you some tips to help you remember them.

Let us first set our thinking right side up. The world teaches us distorted ways of thinking. We commonly see rules to be confining and limiting our freedom. The opposite is true. The Law of God is the truest form of liberty. (John 8:31-32)

Commented [Paul Wall1]: Psalm 11:4 (ESV)
4 The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD's throne is in heaven; his eyes see, his eyelids test, the children of man.

Commented [Paul Wall2]: John 1:14 (ESV)
14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Commented [Paul Wall3]: Exodus 20:22 (ESV)
22 And the LORD said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the people of Israel: 'You have seen for yourselves that I have talked with you from heaven.'

Commented [Paul Wall4]: Matthew 22:37-39 (ESV)
37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.
38 This is the great and first commandment.
39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Commented [Paul Wall5]: John 8:31-32 (ESV)
31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Look at the Garden of Eden. God had one rule. You can enjoy everything freely, just don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:16-17) That was the freest man has ever been, but there was an unbendable law and breaking it was punishable by death. When Satan deceived Eve into thinking she was denied freedom, she yielded to the temptation and lost the freedom she once had. (Genesis 3:1) Sin creates bondage. Sin is not freedom. (John 8:34) Obedience to God's laws is the path to freedom. (Psalm 119:156) Other gods enslave; living without rest enslaves; murder, lying, adultery, and every broken law of God will end in a loss of freedom. So let's first change our mindset about what the Law does for us, as this speaks to the motivation of the Law Giver, which is love. (Psalm 119:64)

The first Word is God is first. **Number one is that God is number one.** Nothing should come before God! In regards to our modern culture and its gods, John MacArthur wrote the following: *Self-expression, moral freedom, materialism, and hedonism are the prevailing gods. Those gods, as clearly pagan as any in the ancient Greek or Roman pantheons, have inevitably spawned the epidemic breakdown of families, illegitimate births, sexual evils of every sort, unequaled growth of drug addiction and crime, and the wanton destruction of unborn babies. In the name of intellectual and scientific progress, godless philosophies have long dominated secular as well as much private education.*

These are the gods that enslave most of the world today. We pay tribute to them in our commercials, with our material wealth, and in our daily conversations. They are as worthless as the gods of Egypt, Greece, or Rome. They only enslave and destroy. Why would we even consider putting them before God? They do offer a temporary pleasure to the senses, but the price is the destruction of our body and soul, and they eventually destroy our culture. No wonder God demands that they must not take His place.

⁴ *"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. God is not prohibiting art as some have taken this to mean. He is prohibiting the worship of any object or shape. He is a spirit. (John 4:24) The things that we fashion are merely a copy of something He created. The Egyptians made amulets in the shape of the animal that represented a god, such as a dung beetle or a cow. They would bow before it. God was commanding them to forsake that practice.*

⁵ *You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.* Sin has generational effects. The consequences of our sin affect our children. In other passages, God clearly declares that each person suffers for his own sin and not that of his fathers. (Ezekiel 18:20) Is this a contradiction? I believe God is warning us that our actions affect our children's mindset and patterns of behavior. Then they will suffer for their own sin. Notice God does not say He hates them but that their iniquity is visited upon the following generations of those who hate God. It is a well-known fact that the abused often become abusers. The child of a criminal is likely to be incarcerated. You can probably identify good and bad patterns that you developed from watching how your parents dealt with life.

Commented [Paul Wall6]: Genesis 2:16-17 (ESV)
16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Commented [Paul Wall7]: Genesis 3:1 (ESV)
1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'"

Commented [Paul Wall8]: John 8:34 (ESV)
34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin."

Commented [Paul Wall9]: Psalm 119:156 (ESV)
156 Great is your mercy, O LORD; give me life according to your rules.

Commented [Paul Wall10]: Psalm 119:64 (NIV)
64 The earth is filled with your love, O LORD; teach me your decrees.

Commented [Paul Wall11]: John MacArthur, *Commentary on Titus*, 3:1-2

Commented [Paul Wall12]: John 4:24 (NIV)
24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

Commented [Paul Wall13]: Ezekiel 18:20 (ESV)
20 The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.

When I do marriage counseling I have the couple do a chart of their parents and the good and bad habits they acquired from them so their spouse will know what they are dealing with. It is my conviction that God is warning those who would hear these commands that obeying them blesses their descendants far down their family line, while disobeying them will create problems for next few generations.

In this verse, God declares that the reason for the command is His jealousy. Human jealousy is often selfish envy of something that steals the affection of someone we desire. That is ungodly.

Is God jealous over your worship of a little golden image of a cow? Let's be clear, He is not jealous of the cow, but jealous for your heart. The godly jealousy of our Creator is a burning love that desires us to be absorbed in what is good. He is good. Idolatry is always destructive. God's jealousy is a passion to see you live in a way that is best for you, and that is to be in a love relationship with Him. An idol is anything that comes between you and God. (1John 5:21)

When we think of the first commandments, we should read into it a passionate love. Allow me to say it how I think of it. "I love you so much, I forbid you from destroying your life and that of you children and their children on worthless things that distract you from my love for you."

Here is that wonderful word again, *hesed*, God's steadfast love (mercy – KJV). But notice that it is not the general love that He has for all mankind. It is shown to those who love Him and keep His commands. God is saying that those who choose iniquity hate Him. Those who choose to keep His commands do so because they love Him. (John 14:15) God demonstrates His steadfast love to those who love Him.

God is telling us we have a choice. We can see our sins affect our children, or we can see His steadfast love on their lives. Thousands implies a thousand generations which is the wording in Deuteronomy 7:9. Which have you chosen? It is one or the other!

We can remember the second command is not to bow down to idols by thinking of the number two as someone on their knees bowing before an idol. But don't forget that our idols today are materialism, hedonism, and self-exaltation. Our bowing down can be how much time we spend focused on those pursuits. (2Kings 17:41)

⁷ "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. Contrary to popular thinking, this is not primarily using God's name as a curse word. That meaning is implied (Leviticus 24:10-16), but this is mainly referring to using God's name as an oath and then not keeping the oath, in other words, in a dishonest way. (19:12; Deuteronomy 5:11) This is why we promise to tell the truth with our hand on the Bible. It reminds us that we are in the presence of God, and aware of His power to judge us. To use His name in vain is to invoke His presence as a witness and then do something that is ungodly.

In one sense, we do that quite easily by saying we are a Christian and then doing something ungodly. When someone tells you they will never hire a Christian contractor, it is because they experienced someone taking God's name in vain.

Commented [Paul Wall14]: 1 John 5:21 (ESV)
21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

Commented [Paul Wall15]: John 14:15 (NIV)
15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command.

Commented [Paul Wall16]: Deuteronomy 7:9 (ESV)
9 Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations,

Commented [Paul Wall17]: 2 Kings 17:41 (ESV)
41 So these nations feared the LORD and also served their carved images. Their children did likewise, and their children's children—as their fathers did, so they do to this day.

Commented [Paul Wall18]: Leviticus 24:10-16 (ESV)
10 Now an Israelite woman's son, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the people of Israel. And the Israelite woman's son and a man of Israel fought in the camp,
11 and the Israelite woman's son blasphemed the Name, and cursed. Then they brought him to Moses. His mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan.
12 And they put him in custody, till the will of the LORD should be clear to them.
13 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,
14 "Bring out of the camp the one who cursed, and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head, and let all the congregation stone him.
15 And speak to the people of Israel, saying, Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin.
16 Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him. The sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.

Commented [Paul Wall19]: Leviticus 19:12 (ESV)
12 You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.

Commented [Paul Wall20]: Deuteronomy 5:11 (ESV)
11 "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

We can remember this is command number three by picturing the number three as a drawing of lips. Our lips should not take His name in vain. If you've said you are a Christian, you better glorify God with your behavior.

⁸ *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.* We have discussed this one recently when the command was given to not collect manna on the Sabbath. (Exodus 16:29) The early church changed their day of worship to the first day of the week as Christ rose on Sunday and Pentecost took place on Sunday as well. (1Corinthians 16:2) Once again, Romans 14 gives us the New Testament guidelines in regards to sacred days. ⁵ *One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.* Romans 14:5 (ESV)

A day to enjoy God and His goodness is not only healthy spiritually but physically and emotionally as well. Sunday is a good day to do that because we worship on Sunday, but for many it is not possible to take the day off. God is not demanding that the letter of the Law be meticulously kept, but rather is looking to see if we want to please Him by keeping the spirit of the law. Jesus is our Sabbath rest. We cease from our own works and find our spiritual rest in His accomplished work. (Hebrews 4:3, 10)

We should note that the passage is not only for the Hebrews but also for everyone, servants, travelers, and even working farm animals. God cares about all His creation. Productivity actually increases when you take regular periods of rest.

We can remember command number four by picturing a four as a person standing with arms straight out and bent upward from the elbows in prayer.

The fifth command is a transitional one. ¹² *"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.*

I refer to this command as transitional because the first commands are about our relationship with God and the last about our relationship with one another. This is about our relations with others, but it also speaks to our relationship with God. Jesus calls God our heavenly Father. (Matthew 6:9) Our earthly parents are supposed to be an example of the heavenly Father. We honor them because God placed them in authority over us. (Titus 3:1) They gave us life. They nurture and care for us. All those things are true of God. Jesus and Paul both referred to the importance of this command (Mark 7:10; Ephesians 6:1-3; 1 Timothy 5:4)

This is the only commandment that comes with a promise attached. If you want to live a long life, you'll obey this one! We can remember commandment five as being in the center and related to God the Father and our earthly father and mother as authority in the center of our life.

We can show honor not only by obedience, but also by respecting them, looking for the good qualities they possess, and caring for them in their old age. Remember, we will all be in their shoes one day, and we should do unto others as we would have others do to us. (Luke 6:31)

Commented [Paul Wall21]: Exodus 16:29 (ESV)
29 See! The LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day."

Commented [Paul Wall22]: 1 Corinthians 16:2 (ESV)
2 On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.

Commented [Paul Wall23]: Hebrews 4:2-3 (ESV)
2 For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.
3 For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, "As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest,'" although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.

Commented [Paul Wall24]: Hebrews 4:10 (ESV)
10 for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

Commented [Paul Wall25]: Matthew 6:9 (ESV)
9 Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Commented [Paul Wall26]: Titus 3:1 (ESV)
1 Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work,

Commented [Paul Wall27]: Mark 7:10 (ESV)
10 For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.'

Commented [Paul Wall28]: Ephesians 6:1-3 (ESV)
1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.
2 "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise),
3 "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."

Commented [Paul Wall29]: 1 Timothy 5:4 (ESV)
4 But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God.

Commented [Paul Wall30]: Luke 6:31 (ESV)
31 And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

Some parents are poor examples of our heavenly father. Their children struggle with the idea of God as a heavenly father. Nevertheless, we honor them because we honor authority. All authority is in place by God's permissive will. (1Peter 2:13-14)

Our culture once respected authority and honored those that served in government. In the 1960s, our culture rebelled against authority. There are always those that abuse the authority that is given them, from police to pastors, but the office they represent should still be respected. Respecting authority is respecting God who allowed the authority to be in place. Without authority, there would be no order. One thing worse than bad authority is no authority.

The popular opinion today is to judge each situation without any universal truth but rather how it feels to you at the moment. It's referred to as situational ethics.

The commands of God however, teach us that there is no such thing. **What is in accord with the character and nature of God is truth in all cultures and at all times.** All people in every age should recognize that there is only one true God. They should worship Him alone. They should never dishonor His name or take it lightly. They should set aside time to worship Him and to rest because He set that example of a day of rest for us. They are invited to enter His rest. They should honor their parents. These truths are always valid. Take any of them out of life, a home, or a culture and you will see the iniquities of the fathers that hate God visited upon their children.

Can you see it in our culture? I've watched the change in my lifetime. There has been a steady erosion of these principles. Those of you that are older have witnessed even more of a change. However, we are only responsible for our own decisions. We can choose to show our love for God by obedience to His commands. We can have the promise of His love affecting a thousand generations after us. We can walk in the blessing of being His treasured possession, a nation of priests. (Exodus 19:5-6) Regardless of where our nation goes, we can see God's blessing on our own life and the lives of our children.

Some would ask if these laws are still applicable. Didn't Jesus do away with the Law by nailing it to the cross? (Colossians 2:14) As we get into the Laws that governed the nation, we'll see that many of the laws were related to ritual worship, health, and societal rules for the nation. They were rules that separated Israel from the world as God's unique people. The Ten Words, however, are moral principals that are forever valid for all people.

Jesus did fulfill the Law in our place, and the Laws that separate Jew and Gentile were done away with by Jesus that we might be one. (Ephesians 2:14-15) The moral principals, however, remain forever because they are a reflection of the nature of our unchanging God. In fact, Jeremiah predicted that when the new covenant came, God would write them on our hearts. (Jeremiah 31:33)

We don't keep these principles to earn favor with God. As we'll see next week, that is not possible. We have all broken them consistently. We strive to keep them, with the help of the Holy Spirit, because we are grateful for the forgiveness that has brought us salvation through the cross of Jesus. We want to please God. These commands are

Commented [Paul Wall31]: 1 Peter 2:13-14 (NIV)
13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority,
14 or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.

Commented [Paul Wall32]: Exodus 19:5-6 (NIV)
5 Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine,
6 you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

Commented [Paul Wall33]: Colossians 2:14 (ESV)
14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

Commented [Paul Wall34]: Ephesians 2:14-15 (ESV)
14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility
15 by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,

Commented [Paul Wall35]: Jeremiah 31:33 (ESV)
33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

guidelines for those who love God. That is why we should remember them, meditate on them, and strive to let them guide our life each day. (Psalm 119:97)

Let's see if you can remember the first five from the pictures we've associated with each. 1 – God is to be number one in our life. 2 – You should never bow to an idol (an idol is anything that comes between you and God) 3 – Do not take God's name in vain. Use it with respect and dignity it deserves. 4 – remember the Sabbath. Take time to rest and worship. 5 – In the center comes honor for our parents. We honor the authority that God has placed in our lives. He is the ultimate authority. These were the words that thundered from the mountain when God spoke to man.

These are words that bring freedom and order to our life. They set us on the right path, a path in line with God's very nature. Will you take the time to memorize and meditate on these eternal truths?

Questions

- 1 What is the setting for this chapter?
- 2 What is the first Word?
- 3 What are our idols today?
- 4 What is the second Word?
- 5 What are its curses and blessings?
- 6 What is the motivation for this Word? Explain.
- 7 What is the third Word and its application?
- 8 What is the fourth Word? How does Apostle Paul redefine?
- 9 What is the fifth Word? Why is it transitional?
- 10 What is the promise it carries?
- 11 What is the basis for eternal truth?
- 12 Why are these laws still applicable today?

Commented [Paul Wall36]: Psalm 119:97 (ESV)
97 MEM Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.