

## The Purpose and Meaning of the Ten Commandments (*Exodus 20:2-17*)

Before looking at the purpose and meaning of these Ten magnificent laws of love, it should be noted that there really is *only* ONE passage we need to know that demonstrates the unchanging, eternal nature of ALL the Ten Commandments. Matthew 5:17-18 reads, *“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and Earth Pass, one jot or one tittle shall in No Wise Pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled.”* See verses from the [NIRV Bible](#) and the [CEV Bible](#) and [Luke's account](#). **Those unfortunate Christians** that have been led astray by the ruler of this world have only one response to attempt to nullify this verse, which is that [Jesus fulfilling the law](#) brings an end to the law. The NIRV explains the meaning of fulfil in these words, *“I have come to give full meaning to what is written”* and the CEV reads, *“I did not come to do away with them, but to give them their full meaning.”* There are several scriptures that use the same Greek word as what is translated “fulfil” in verse 17, and Matthew 3:15 is one example, *“...it becometh us to Fulfil all righteousness.”* If the fulfilling of the law brings an end to the law, then [Righteousness](#), [God's Word](#), [Obedience](#), [Joy](#) and [other things](#) eternal in nature are also gone. This of course is obviously not so, and so neither are the Ten Commandments abolished. Not only that but who could ever think that Jesus was abolishing the law after instructing us that we should not only obey the law but teach it as well. Put simply, unless Jesus is contradicting His Word, and Heaven and Earth are still here, then *All* Ten Commandments *have* to remain including the fourth Commandment. It is that simple!

Isaiah 42:21 says *“The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable.”* In the remainder of Matthew chapter five we see how Jesus has indeed magnified the law. We note the following; Matthew 5:19 from not only obeying the law but teaching it also, 5:21-22 from do not kill to not being angry with your brother without cause, 5:27-28 from do not commit adultery to being guilty if you look at a woman lustfully, 5:31 from divorcing by a letter to any man who divorces his wife except for sexual immorality, causes her or anyone who marries a divorced woman to commit adultery, 5:33-37 from not breaking oaths made to the Lord to do not swear at all, either by heaven or earth or by Jerusalem. And do not swear by your head, let your Yes be Yes, and your No, No, 5:38-42 from an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth to turning the other cheek and if someone sues you for your coat, give them your cloak also, 5:43-45 from love your neighbour and hate your enemy to love your enemies and bless them that curse you and pray for those that are spiteful and use you. Does it sound like Jesus is destroying the law? Certainly not!

The purpose of the Ten Commandments is to point out sin as Paul informs us in [Romans 7:7](#) and note Paul is expressing this long after the cross. Below you will find more on the meaning of each commandment in brief with the option of reading much more detail if required. These ten laws are not done away with and never will be. Just all the other Moses laws. The two most important though seem to be the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup>.

**1. The First Commandment is about Loyalty.** *“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. **Thou shall have no other gods before Me.**”*

[Read more detail.](#)

The Creator of the universe declares He is our God and our deliverer and asks us to demonstrate our love for Him by having no other God's. The First Commandment is the first of a series of four that define our relationship with our Heavenly Father. Establishing, developing and maintaining that personal relationship with the true and living God is the most important commitment we can ever make. That is the primary focus of the first of the Ten Commandments, *You shall have no other gods before Me*. We should love, honour and respect Him so much that He alone is the supreme authority and model in our lives. He alone is God. We should allow nothing to prevent us from serving and obeying Him.

**2. The Second Commandments is about Worship.** *“Thou 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; you shall not bow down to them nor 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 fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My Commandments.”* [Read more detail.](#)

The one and only true God loves us so much that He is jealous of our love and does not want to share our love by us bowing down to meaningless idols. The Second Commandment goes to the heart of our relationship with our Creator. It deals with several crucial questions. How do we perceive God? How do we explain Him to ourselves and to others? Above all, what is the proper way to worship the only true God? The Second Commandment is a constant reminder that only we, of all created things, are made in the image of God. Only we can be transformed into the spiritual image of Christ, who of course came in the flesh as the perfect spiritual image of our heavenly Father. This Commandment protects our special relationship with our Creator, who made us in His likeness and is still moulding us into His spiritual image.

**3. The Third Commandment is about Reverence.** *“Thou 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.”*

[Read more detail.](#)

God asks us to respect His Holy name and not to use it in vain. The Third Commandment focuses on showing respect. It addresses the way we communicate our feelings about God to others and to Him. It encompasses our attitudes, speech and behaviour. Respect is the cornerstone of good relationships. The quality of our relationship with God depends on the love and regard we have for Him. It also depends on the way we express respect for Him in the presence of others. We are expected always to honour who and what He is. Conversely, the use of God's name in a flippant, degrading or in any way disrespectful manner, dishonours the relationship we are supposed to have with Him. This can vary from careless disregard to hostility and antagonism. It covers misusing God's name in any way. The Hebrew name for “vain” is “shaw” and means vanity, falsehood, iniquity and emptiness. Simply summed up, “shaw” means showing disrespect and this is what we do when we take God's name in vain.

**4. The Fourth Commandment is about Sanctification and Relationship.”** *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is*

*the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it".* [Read more detail.](#)

God starts off the fourth Commandment with the word "Remember". This is because He knew we would forget it. God asks that we keep it set apart for Holy purposes so we can draw nearer to Him. The Fourth Commandment to remember the Sabbath concludes the section of the Ten Commandments that specifically helps define a proper relationship with God, how we are to love, worship and relate to Him. It explains why and when we need to take special time to draw closer to our Creator. It is also a special sign between us and God forever, that it is Him that sanctifies us Him alone we belong to and worship. The Sabbath, the seventh day of the week was set apart by God as a time of rest and spiritual rejuvenation. So why is this Commandment so frequently ignored, attacked and explained away by so many? Could it be because the challenges to the Sabbath Commandment are views generated by the ruler of this present evil world? After all, this being wants us to accept these views because he hates God's law. He does all he can to influence us to ignore, avoid and reason our way around it. On our calendar [the Sabbath day](#) begins at sunset Friday evening and ends at sunset Saturday evening.

**5. The Fifth Commandment is about Respect for Parental authority.** *"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you".* [Read more detail.](#)

God instructs us to show love for our parents by honouring them. The Fifth Commandment introduces us to a series of Commandments that define proper relationships with other people. The fifth through to the 10th serve as the standards of conduct in areas of human behaviour that generate the most far reaching consequences on individuals, families, groups and society. Families are the building blocks of societies that build strong nations. When families are fractured and flawed, the sad results are tragic and reflected in newspaper headlines every day. Any individual or group, including whole nations that understand the importance of strong families reap the rewards of an improved relationship and blessings from God. The Fifth Commandment shows us from whom and how the fundamentals of respect and honour are most effectively learned. It guides us to know how to yield to others, how to properly submit to authority and how to accept the influence of mentors. That is why the apostle Paul wrote, *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first Commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth"* Ephesians 6:2-3.

**6. The Sixth Commandment is about Respect for Human life.** *"Thou shall not murder"* [Read more detail.](#)

God asks us to demonstrate love and not hate towards others by not murdering. We must learn to control our tempers. Taking another person's life is not our right to decide. That judgment is reserved for God alone. That is the thrust of this Commandment. God does not allow us to choose to wilfully or deliberately take another person's life. The Sixth Commandment reminds

us that God is the giver of life and He alone has the authority to take it or to grant permission to take it. God wants us to go far beyond avoiding murder. He requires that we not maliciously harm another human being in word or deed. This is why John wrote, *“Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him”* 1 John 3:15. God desires that we treat even those who choose to hate us respectfully and do all within our power to live in peace and harmony with them. He wants us to be builders, not destroyers of good relationships. To accomplish this we must respect this wonderful gift of this precious possession, human life.

**7. The Seventh Commandment is about Purity in Relationships.** *“Thou shall not commit adultery.”* [Read more detail.](#)

God asks us to express and demonstrate our love for our partner by not committing adultery. Adultery is the violation of the marriage covenant by wilful participation in sexual activity with someone other than one's spouse. Since God's law sanctions sexual relationships only within a legitimate marriage, the command not to commit adultery covers in principle, all varieties of sexual immorality. No sexual relationship of any sort should occur outside of marriage. That is the crux of this Commandment. Most of us need the support and companionship of a loving spouse. We need someone special who can share our ups and downs, triumphs and failures. No one can fill this role like a mate who shares with us a deep love and commitment. Society suffers because we have lost the vision that God had for marriage from the beginning. Marriage is not a requirement for success in pleasing God. But it is a tremendous blessing to couples who treat each other as God intended. Most people desire and need the benefits that come from a stable marriage. To return to what God intended, we must give marriage the respect it deserves.

**8. The Eighth Commandment is about Honesty.** *“Thou shall not steal.”* [Read more detail.](#)

God instructs us to show our love and respect for others by not stealing what belongs to them. The Eighth Commandment safeguards everyone's right to legitimately acquire and own property. God wants that right honoured and protected. His approach to material wealth is balanced. He wants us to prosper and enjoy physical blessings. He also expects us to show wisdom in how we use what He provides us and He does not want possessions to be our primary pursuit in life. When we see material blessings as a means to achieve more-important objectives, God enjoys seeing us prosper. To Him it is important that generosity rather than greed motivate the choices we make. Because they are qualities of His own character, He asks that we, from the heart, put giving and serving ahead of lavishing possessions on ourselves.

**9. The Ninth Commandment is about Truthfulness.** *“Thou shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”* [Read more detail.](#)

God says if we love others we should not deceive or lie to them. How important is truth? The Bible says that Jesus is *“the way and the Truth”* John 14:6. To fully appreciate the Ninth Commandment with its prohibition of lying, we must realize how important truth is to God. Jesus Christ said of God the Father, *“Your word is truth”* John 17:17. The Bible throughout teaches that *“God is not a man, that He should lie”* Numbers 23:19. As the source of truth, God requires that His servants always speak truthfully. Under God's inspiration, King David wrote,

“...LORD, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart and has no slander on his tongue, who does his neighbour no wrong and casts no slur on his fellow-man, who despises a vile man but honours those who fear the LORD, who keeps his oath even when it hurts” Psalms 15:1-3, NIV. God expects truth to permeate every facet of our lives. Everything in the life of a Christian is anchored to truth. God wants us as His children, to commit ourselves to truth and reflect it in everything we do.

**10. The Tenth Commandment is about Contentment.** *“Thou shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.”* [Read more detail.](#)

God instructs us not to covet because He knows it can entrap us into even greater sin. To *covet* means to crave or desire, especially in excessive or improper ways. The Tenth Commandment does not tell us that all of our desires are immoral. It tells us that some desires are wrong. Coveting is an immoral longing for something that is not rightfully ours. That is usually because the object of our desire already belongs to someone else. But coveting can also include our wanting far more than we would legitimately deserve or that would be our rightful share. The focus of the Tenth Commandment is that we are not to illicitly desire anything that already belongs to others. The opposite of coveting is a positive desire to help others preserve and protect their blessings from God. We should rejoice when other people are blessed. Our desire should be to contribute to the well being of others, to make our presence in their lives a blessing to them. The last of the Ten Commandments is aimed directly at the heart and mind of every human being. In prohibiting coveting, it defines not so much what we must do but how we should think. It asks us to look deep within ourselves to see what we are on the inside. As with each of the previous nine Commandments, it is directed toward our relationships. It specifically deals with the thoughts that threaten those relationships and can potentially hurt ourselves and our neighbours. Therefore, it is fitting that the formal listing of these Ten foundational commands, which define the love of God, should end by focusing on our hearts as the wellspring of our relationship problems. From within come the desires that tempt us and lead us astray.

