

Love God, Love Others 4

THE COMMUNITY'S STANDARDS

Exodus 20:1-17

And God spoke all these words:

- ² *"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.*
- ³ *"You shall have no other gods before me.*
- ⁴ *"You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.*
- ⁷ *"You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.*
- ⁸ *"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ^{Ten} but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*
- ¹² *"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.*
- ¹³ *"You shall not murder.*
- ¹⁴ *"You shall not commit adultery.*
- ¹⁵ *"You shall not steal.*
- ¹⁶ *"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.*
- ¹⁷ *"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."*

--Exodus 20:1-17, NIV

Once upon a time there was a woman—a sweet, kind woman—who married a strong, handsome man. She loved him very much. But unfortunately, as time went by, he grew cold, distant, and domineering. He started bossing his wife around, telling her to cook and clean and do all the old-fashioned housewife stuff, and on many days he would go so far as to give her a LIST of things she had to do before he got home from work. The woman still loved her husband, but she was also afraid of him, so she did the things on the list out of fear.

After a while that husband died, and the woman met another man, who showered her with affection and swept her off her feet. He treated her like a queen. He made her feel loved like never before. They got married, and they lived together in wedded bliss for many years.

One day the woman was cleaning out an old chest of drawers, and she found a list—one of the lists from her former husband—a list of things she had to do. And as she read the list, she realized that she was still doing everything on that list for her new husband—but not because she had to—and not because she was afraid. She did those things because she wanted to, AS A RESPONSE OF LOVE.

I tell you that story because I am about to give you a LIST, and I want you to understand that, metaphorically speaking, this list comes from the second husband. That is to say, the God who gives the Ten Commandments is not a domineering, uncaring, hateful deity who says, “Here’s the list – get it done!” No, the God who gives the Ten Commandments is a caring, compassionate, tender God who has gone to great lengths to show His affection. And now we “do the list,” not because we’re afraid we have to, but because we want to, as a response of love

To really understand the Ten Commandments, you have to understand what comes before God gives them. First, God chooses a man named Abram (later Abraham), and he says, “Abram, I love you, and for no other reason than because I love you, I’m going to bless you. I’m going to make you famous. I’m going to give you more descendants than anyone can count. I’m going to make you into a great nation. And best of all, Abram—all nations will be blessed through you!”

And then God makes that same promise to Abraham’s son, Isaac, and to Isaac’s son, Jacob, and to all twelve of Jacob’s sons.

Then God takes the people to Egypt where they’re well-fed and cared for and they can multiply and grow. But then a cocky king comes along and turns God’s people into slaves. And God lets that go on for a while, until he finally say, “All right, that’s it. I’ve had enough.” And he busts his people out of there through a series of miracles. Powerful stuff. God turns water into blood, and blots out the sun, and makes there be frogs everywhere, and generally wreaks havoc.

So the people leave Egypt, and they’re marching across the desert, and they come to the Red Sea. And they come to this body of water and they stop. And they look behind them, and the Egyptians are coming! The Egyptian army is coming after them. So they look at Moses, who’s been leading them, and they say, “What do we do? What do we do? Did you just bring us out here to die?”

And Moses says, “Be chill. God’s got this.” And he raises his rod, and WHOOSH—God parts the waters, and the people walk across the sea on dry land.

Then God leads them through the desert, in a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire at night. And when they get hungry – ZAP! God gives ‘em bread from heaven. And when they get thirsty – SWISH! God gives ‘em water from a rock.

And then after all that--after God has reached out to them, rescued them, cared for them, led them, protected them, provided for them--after God has formed a RELATIONSHIP with them, he says to His people:

“Look: Because I love you – let me tell you some things about the way life works.”

#1 – Put Me first in your life – your life has been designed to operate with me at the center.

#2 – Be sure you’re really worshiping ME – don’t put any things or people or places or special experiences in my place. Be careful to worship the real ME, and not some made-up image of Me.

#3 – Be careful how you represent Me – don’t drag My Name through the mud. Don’t say things in My Name that I didn’t say. Don’t do things in My Name that I didn’t tell you to do.

#4 – For your own good, Take a day off every week – Rest, and remind yourself that everything does not depend on you. Trust me, and relax in the knowledge that I can run the universe without you!

And later on, Jesus summed up these 4 things when he said:

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul
and with all your mind and with all your strength.”*

--Mark 12:30

And then God gave the people six more commands that tell us how to get along with other people – how to live with each other in the human community:

#5 – Family is important – so take care of Mom & Dad.

#6 – Life is important – so treat every human being as sacred

#7 – Marriage is important – so be faithful to your partner

#8 – Boundaries are important – so respect what belongs to others

#9 – Truth is important – so be honest

#Ten – Gratitude is important – so be content with what I’ve given you.

And later on, Jesus summed all these up when he said,

“Love your neighbor as yourself.” --Mark 12:31

Now, the Ten Commandments are RULES, but they’re more than just rules. For one thing, the Ten Commandments are values that reveal who God is, and what God cares about. The Ten Commandments reflect the character of God.

For another thing, the Ten Commandments are principles that show us the best way to live. They’re not given to destroy our fun – they’re given to PROTECT US.

There’s a story that’s told about Chi Chi Rodriguez, the famous golfer from Puerto Rico. It’s probably not true, but it makes a good point.

The story goes that Chi Chi was traveling with a friend who noticed that he was driving much too fast. As they approached an intersection, Chi Chi sped right through the red light. The friend said, "Chi Chi! Man, what are you doing? You ran that red light!"

Rodriguez said, "My brother taught me to drive, and my brother never stops at red lights, so I don't stop at red lights."

A couple of blocks later, the light was red and again, they drove through the intersection at a high rate of speed. The rider said, "Chi Chi! You're going to get us killed! What are you doing?"

Chi Chi said, "My brother taught me to drive and my brother doesn't stop for red lights, so I don't stop for red lights."

A few blocks down the street, they came to an intersection where the light was green. This time, Chi Chi put on the brakes and came to a stop. "Now what are you doing?" said the friend. "The light is green."

Chi Chi said, "I know it. *But my brother might be coming.*"

When we get in our cars and drive, there are rules like:

- Stop at red lights
- Go the speed limit
- Pass on the left
- Don't pass when there's a solid yellow line

Why are those rules there? TO PROTECT US.

Now, back when I was 16 and I first started driving, I obeyed the traffic rules (when I did obey them) for one reason: I didn't want to get caught! I was afraid. Not just of the cops, but of my parents.

Later I grew up a bit, and I gained some wisdom and maturity. And then I obeyed the rules because I realized they make sense. They're good rules, they make traffic work, and best of all, they keep me from getting killed!

But then later I grew up even more, and I got a wife, and two kids. And then I found another reason to obey the rules. It's called "LOVE."

You see, I care deeply about those three precious human beings who used to ride around with me in the car. I didn't want anything to happen to them. I wanted my wife to feel safe. I wanted my kids to learn good habits that would keep them safe later.

And so now I follow the rules out of LOVE.

The Ten Commandments are like traffic rules for the road called "LIFE." They're more than rules – but they are rules. And there's several things you can do with these rules: You can reject them, like Chi Chi Rodriguez in the story; or you can follow them because you're afraid of being punished; or you can follow them because you've come to realize that they actually make sense.

But my hope is that you are someone who knows how much God loves you – and how much he's already done for you – and how he's already showered you with grace upon grace, blessing upon blessing. My hope is that you are someone who has accepted God's free gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

And my hope is that now, you will "do the list," not because you have to, but because you want to – as A REPOSE OF LOVE.