

# Message Reflections

a little something extra to keep you connected to Jesus this week

*Message Reflections accompany the [weekly message](#).*

"Do you think I spend my time looking for ways to suck the fun out of your life? I want you to have your phone; I want you to go places with your friends; and I want you to do things and have all the fun! But my major responsibility as a parent is to make sure you are safe and not making decisions that could negatively impact your future!" This may sound familiar to some of you out there who are in the throws of parenting teenagers. I was trying to explain why we have certain rules in our home. I finally likened rules to the bumpers at the bowling alley. They are there so you can have lots of fun and succeed, absolutely no gutter balls... EVER. As I said this I realized the connection to the ten commandments, a light bulb and God moment all in one.

The way I disciplined was shifting from a model of obedience motivated from a healthy fear of authority to one where I wanted obedience to be motivated from love, relationship, and influence. The goal was no longer simple behavior modification but the building of character through relationship. I wanted my child to obey me not because he feared punishment but because he trusted, loved, and honored me as his parent.

There is a place for healthy fear of a parent, especially in young children. We need immediate obedience when we yell, "Stop!" right before our child runs into a busy street or is about to jump into the deep end of the pool after their older siblings. I didn't need my three year old to be motivated to obey by a deep sense of relationship with me. I needed them to obey for safety and fear was a very good motivator! There is a place for fear. In fact, the Bible says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

However, as my children matured, I wanted them to know me on a deeper level and to understand the why behind our decisions, what motivated my actions. I wanted them not only to obey me but to *want* to obey me out of their desire to honor me and out of their deep love for me. As we mature as Christians, I think we begin to understand this shift. At first I tried to obey the ten commandments because I didn't want to be punished or make God angry with me. As I have grown in Him, I now want to keep the commandments because I want to please Him. Not because I am afraid of Him but because I love Him with

all my heart, all my soul, and all my strength (Deut 6:5), and I want to bring honor to His name. Actually, I'm so glad that He gave us a map telling us exactly how to please Him so we don't have to go around guessing and potentially failing at it!

Lastly, God gave us the ten commandments so that we would know our weakness and our need for a Savior. We are sinful and will never be able to keep these perfectly. This is where Jesus comes in. He was and is the perfect sacrifice for all of our sins and we get to be reunited with God in heaven. Jesus even simplified the ten commandments further in Matthew 22:36-40, when he was asked which was the most important commandment. He said, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind." & "Love your neighbor as yourself." He continued, "The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments." To his point, the first four commandments are about how we are to be in relationship with God and the last six are about how to be in relationship with each other.

God desires to give good gifts to His children. He wants to give us life and joy to the fullest. But living in a fallen world is tricky. So He gave us boundaries, bumpers at the bowling alley, if you will. He gave us a way to succeed at life so that we may have all the blessings He has stored up for us on earth and in heaven.

The Ten Commandments:

1. You must not have any other god but me.
2. You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or worship an idol.
3. You must not misuse the name of the Lord your God.
4. Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
5. Honor your father and mother.
6. You must not murder.
7. You must not commit adultery.
8. You must not steal.
9. You must not testify falsely against your neighbor.
10. You must not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Questions for further discussion:

1. Which of the ten commandments do you need to focus on this week to strengthen your relationship with God?
2. How do the commandments reveal God's character to us?

3. Were your parents authoritative or relational in their approach to discipline? Were they effective? Did your relationship flourish or suffer?
4. Have your views of God's discipline changed over time? If so, in what ways?

