



AN *Examination* OF *Conscience*:

PREPARING FOR Holy Communion

Based on the Ten Commandments

I confess to you, that according to the Way, ... I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, having a hope in God, ... that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.

~Acts 24:14–16

Although Christians should follow the example of the Apostle Paul and *always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man*, it is especially important to examine ourselves and our life in Christ before we eat and drink at the Lord's Table. How, then, should you prepare yourself to receive the Lord's Supper?

Before I come to the Lord's Table, I should prepare myself by carefully examining:

- the condition of my life in Christ;
- my sins and failings;
- whether I truly, and to what degree, know God, believe in him, and have repented,

and

- whether I love God and my fellow believers.

I should have a loving attitude toward everyone, including forgiveness of those who have wronged me.

I must also assess how much I desire Christ, and whether I am living in newness of obedience.

Finally, I must renew the practice of these graces in me by serious meditation and fervent prayer.

What means do you have to help you in this self-examination required by God?

God's revealed will for my life (his moral law) is summarized in the Ten Commandments given by God to his people after he had rescued them from slavery in Egypt and had brought them to himself to be his holy people. The Ten Commandments are a light to show me God's character, a mirror to show me myself (my need for repentance and for a savior), and a guide to show me how to how I ought to live as a child of God. The first four commandments show me how to love and serve God; the last six commandments show me how to love and serve other people.

And God spoke all these words, saying, I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Do I acknowledge Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as he has revealed himself in the Bible: the one true, eternal, unchangeable, almighty God, who created and sustains all things? Do I believe that he rewards those who seek him? Do I receive him as my own covenant making and keeping God and Savior, who has delivered me from slavery to sin and makes me willing and able to keep his commandments?

“You shall have no other gods before me.

Do I, day by day, sincerely seek to glorify God by loving him and doing what he commands? Is there anything in my life – people, events, or things – that is more important to me than God and obeying his instruction? Do I love, serve, trust, and worship him only? Is it my heart’s desire to please him in everything, and am I grieved when I or others offend him in any way?

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image.

Is there anything in my life – entertainments, relationships, habits, aspirations, principles – that I have made an idol in my mind? Do I look to anyone, myself included, or anything but God to save me from misery, guilt, poverty, loneliness, or despair? Do I worship God in spirit (sincerely from my heart) and in truth (the way he has appointed)?

“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.

Do I acknowledge that all forms of God’s name are holy, and that I must use his name with reverence? When I call on God in worship, in prayer, song or creed, is it sincerely and with a whole heart? Do I treat God’s name as empty through profanity, careless speech, breaking vows, open sin or meaningless exclamations. Do I honor God’s name, into which I was baptized, by keeping promises, honoring others, and living in a manner worthy of the Gospel?

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Do I acknowledge that God is the Lord of all time, and that my time belongs to God and is ordered by him? Am I thankful for the freedom from slavery to unending labor that God provides in the Sabbath? Do I reverently and with a sincere heart set apart each first day of the week, after six days of work, for rest and worship? Do I joyfully and always, unless I am prevented by God’s providence, make the Sabbath holy by joining with the Church in weekly worship? If I am the head of a family or in authority over others, do I recognize and fulfill my responsibility to see to it that they also observe the Sabbath day in worship and rest? Have I done anything that would hinder them from observing the Sabbath?

What is the sum of these four commandments?

As Jesus teaches us in Matthew 22, the sum of these four commandments is that I am to *love the Lord our God with all my heart and with all my soul, and with all my mind.*

“Honor your father and your mother.

If I am a child, do I willingly obey my parents, and, whatever my age, do I honor, serve, respect, love, and care for them? Do I show respect for the aged and submit to my teachers and church leaders in the Lord? Do I obey the civil authorities, as long as the laws of man do not command

me to sin against God? In all my relationships, do I order myself in reverent humility as is proper for a disciple of Jesus and a child of God?

“You shall not murder.

Do I follow God in considering all human life, from conception to natural death, sacred? Have I unjustly harmed anyone by my words or deeds? Is my heart free from all unjust anger, malice, or hatred towards any other person? As far as it depends on me, am I at peace with all other people? Have I sought peace with those who might have something against me? Do I seek to cause the life of others to flourish not only by refraining from thoughts, words, or deeds that would harm them but also by doing things that will help them to prosper?

“You shall not commit adultery.

If I am married, am I exclusively devoted and constantly faithful to my spouse in body, mind, and spirit? Is my relationship with my spouse deeper and more important to me than any other human relationship I have? Whether I am married or single, am I engaged in any sort of sexual sin of mind or body, including the use of pornography? Am I living chastely and constantly striving for chastity by avoiding opportunities for sexual sin, practicing sexual purity, and seeing others as image-bearers of God, not as objects for my personal gratification?

“You shall not steal.

Do I acknowledge that God is the Creator and Lord of creation and that all things belong to him? Do I recognize that whatever I have is given by him to me in trust, to hold as God’s steward, to cultivate and use for his glory while respecting what he has entrusted to others? Have I taken anything that does not belong to me? Am I true, honest, faithful, and just in all my dealings with other people in my personal and my business life? Have I done anything in word or deed that would harm another person’s reputation, honor, credit, friendship, hope, or goodwill? If I am a student, have I cheated? If I am an employee, do I work faithfully and to the best of my ability? If I am an employer, do I pay a just wage to and keep faith with my employees? Do I give and lend freely, according to my ability and the needs of others? Do I give proportionally and regularly of my increase to the Church, and do I give with a joyful and thankful heart?

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Do I love God and others by speaking truthfully and graciously at all times? Have I lied about anything or slandered anyone? Have I shared information, whether true or false, that was not mine to share with people who had no need to know it (that is, have I spread gossip)? In my love for others, do I care for, desire, and rejoice in their good reputation? And do I regret and put the best light on their failings? Do I protect their reputation as I would protect my own? And, though I must protect my neighbor’s good name against falsehood, am I willing to speak the truth in love to a neighbor, even though it may be hard for me to say and hard for my neighbor to hear?

“You shall not covet anything that is your neighbor’s.”

Have I envied anyone for what they have, whether their material possessions, family relations, gifts and talents, or success and reputation? Do I love and trust God enough to be content with what I have? Am I so completely content with what God has given me that I am able sincerely to thank him for it, and to love and wish the best for others, whatever they may possess?

What is the sum of these six commandments?

As Jesus tells us, the sum of these six commandments is that I am to *love my neighbor as myself*.

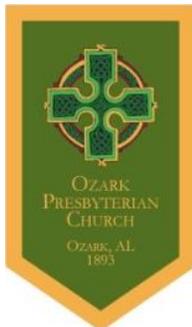
Are you able perfectly to keep these commandments of God?

No, I am not. No one, in this life, is able perfectly to keep God's commandments. I break them daily in thought, word, and deed. This is why I must regularly repent and confess my sins to God, who is always ready to forgive those who truly repent. Nevertheless, because *I have been crucified with Christ* and have *died to sin*, and because *I have been raised with Christ* and am a *new creature* in him, I am able, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, to *live to righteousness* by faith now. And so, with earnest purpose, I can begin to live according to all, not just some, of God's commandments.

Prayer for Submission to God's Instruction

Lord God, my Father, you have given me your Law and you have also shown me your Gospel. You have called me to your service, and also invited me, with all kindness, to partake of your grace. O grant that I may not be deaf, either to your command or to the promises of your mercy, but gladly give myself in submission to you. Teach me to devote all my heart, soul, and mind to you. And grant that I may follow after your rule for a holy and righteous life delivered to me in your law, and that I may also cling firmly to your promises. Do not allow me, through any of the enticements of the world, or through the crafts and deceits of Satan, to be drawn away from the love that you have made clear to me in your only begotten Son, and in which you daily confirm me by the teaching of the Gospel. And, in your own good time, bring me at last to the full enjoyment of your love in that everlasting inheritance that has been purchased for me by the blood of Jesus Christ, your only Son. Amen.

~ adapted from a prayer by John Calvin



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Meditations derived from various
Reformed Catechisms.
All *Scripture quotes* from the
English Standard Version