

*Here is the tenfold sure command, God gave to men of every land, through faithful Moses standing high, on holy Mount Sinai. Have mercy, Lord!**

We recognize sin in our lives as we examine ourselves according to the Ten Commandments. Sin takes a gift God has given and uses it in a way God does not want it used. Each commandment also teaches us how God's gifts are used to His honor and glory.

I—You shall have no other gods.

I, I alone, am God, your Lord; all idols are to be abhorred. Trust me, step boldly to my throne, sincerely love me alone. Have mercy, Lord!

Where the heart is right with God, all the other commandments follow. When a commandment is broken, this is symptomatic of the fact that the human heart, by nature, is turned away from God. God made us to be His own. He has given Himself to us through our Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever claims our greatest loyalty, fondest hopes or deepest affection is our god and takes the place God alone wants to have in our lives. Through the Word and Sacraments, the Holy Spirit works in our hearts true fear, love and trust in God above all things. (*Psalm 118:8; Proverbs 11:28; Isaiah 42:8; Matthew 4:10; John 14:15; Philippians 2:13*)

II—You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.

Do not my holy name disgrace, do not my Word of truth debase. Praise only that as good and true which I myself say and do. Have mercy, Lord!

The Lord gave us a great treasure when we were baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The name of our Lord is above any other name, in heaven or on earth. With God's name comes His power to save. Using the name of the Holy Trinity as a curse word, or swearing by it for dishonest or frivolous purposes, or using it to mislead people about His Word, is sin.

How good to know that we can call on the name of the Lord at any time, and in any situation in life, for any need. Because the Lord opens our lips, we declare His praise as we pray and give thanks in His holy name. (*Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 19:12, 24:15; Psalm 50:5, 103:1; Jeremiah 23:31; Ephesians 5:20; Philippians 2:10-11; James 3:9-10*)

what about... the TEN COMMANDMENTS

III—Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

Celebrate the worship day, that peace may fill your home and pray, and put aside the work you do, so that God may work in you. Have mercy, Lord.

God has blessed us with the gift of His Word. We honor God when we gladly hear the Word of God preached and we hold it sacred. We also honor God's Word when we use it in our daily prayer. We are tempted at times to think: "I can be a Christian without attending worship." That is as true as saying, "I do not have to eat today to live." But how long can we live without eating? We are able to attend worship because God is at work in us with His gifts so that we hold His Word sacred and gladly hear and learn it. (*Psalm 26:8; Isaiah 66:2; Matthew 12:8; Luke 10:16; John 8:47; Acts 2:42, 46; Colossians 2:16-17, 3:16; Hebrews 4:9-10, 10:25*)

IV—Honor your father and your mother.

You are to honor and obey your parents, and masters every day, serve them each way that comes to hand; you'll then live long in the land. Have mercy, Lord!

God has given us parents, pastors and other authorities for our good. They serve as His representatives. Through them, God richly blesses us, and our world, with orderly authority, as opposed to the chaos that sin brings. By honoring parents and others in authority, we honor God. (*Proverbs 23:22; Romans 13:2, 7; Ephesians 6:2-3; Colossians 3:20; 1 Timothy 5:4; Titus 3:1*)

V—You shall not murder.

Curb anger, do not harm or kill, hate not, repay not ill with ill. Be patient and of gentle mind, convince your foe that you are kind. Have mercy, Lord!

Human life is the crowning gift of God's creation. We are not to end human life through murder, abortion, euthanasia or suicide. Prejudice, bigotry and abuse of those less fortunate are forbidden. We recognize that we can "murder" a person with our thoughts, certainly with our words, and then most dramatically with our actions. As God's representative, the government has the authority to execute criminals and to wage just wars in order to punish evildoers, protect us, and maintain order. As we continue to receive mercy and kindness in Christ, so we support our neighbors when they need help. (*Genesis 9:6; Jeremiah 1:5; Proverbs 31:8; Matthew 5:22, 26:52; Romans 13:4; Ephesians 4:26; 1 John 3:15*)

VI—You shall not commit adultery.

Be faithful, keep the marriage vow; the straying thought do not allow. Keep all your conduct free from sin. Be self-controlled and disciplined. Have mercy, Lord!

God has given marriage, our sexuality, and our family as great blessings. This commandment confronts us when our thoughts, words and actions fall short of the sexual purity God demands of both the married and unmarried. God wants all people, both married and single, to honor and uphold marriage as His gift. In Christ, we are set free to live sexually pure and decent lives, and to honor and cherish the husband or wife God gives us. (Genesis 2:24-25; Mark 10:6-9; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20; Ephesians 5:3-4; Hebrews 13:4; Titus 2:11-12)

VII—You shall not steal.

You shall not steal or cheat away what others worked for night and day; but open up a generous hand to feed the poor in the land. Have mercy, Lord!

Everything we have is a gift from God, a trust from Him to be used for His honor and glory. This is turned around when we do whatever it takes to get what we want. Christians are led by the Spirit of God not to steal or cheat but instead to do what is necessary to help others keep and improve what is theirs. (Ephesians 4:28; Philippians 2:4; Hebrews 13:16; 1 John 3:17)

VIII—You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

A lying witness never be, nor foul your tongue with calumny. The cause of innocence embrace, the fallen shield from disgrace. Have mercy, Lord!

Our good reputation is another gift from God. God gives some the duty to judge behavior and to punish evildoers, but if that is not our calling in life, we have no right to tarnish other people's reputations. We have the duty to speak in such a way about individuals or situations that we are putting the best construction on them and speaking about them in the kindest possible way, even as God treats us kindly, with mercy and compassion, through Christ our Lord. (1 Corinthians 13:7; Ephesians 4:25; James 4:11; 1 Peter 4:8)

IX and X—You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

The portion in your neighbor's lot, his goods, home, wife, desire not. Pray God he would your neighbor bless, as you yourself wish success. Have mercy, Lord!

Being content with the material gifts God has given us is the theme of these last two commandments. The Lord will

provide for all our needs. We are free to help our neighbor and wish him well, rejoicing with him in his good fortune, or helping him in need. As Christ has served us, so we serve others. With these two commandments, we find ourselves back again at the first, for the heart that fears, loves and trust in God is content with the gifts God gives. (Romans 7:8; Philippians 4:11; 1 Timothy 6:6, 8-10; Hebrews 13:5)

How does God use the Ten Commandments in our lives?

You have this law to see therein, that you have not been free from sin, but also that you clearly see, how pure toward God life should be. Have mercy, Lord!

Lord Jesus, help us in our need; Christ, you are our go-between indeed. Our works, how sinful, marred, unjust! Christ, you are our one hope and trust. Have mercy, Lord!

The Ten Commandments cause us to ask ourselves the following questions: Do I fear, love and trust in anything or anyone above the Triune God? Have I honored the Lord's name on my lips and in my life? Have I gladly held His Word sacred, listened attentively to the preaching of that Word, and made use of it in my daily life? Have I honored and obeyed all the authorities placed over me? Have I maintained the purity of my marriage and my sexual life in my thoughts, words and deeds? Have I stolen property or not helped my neighbor protect his? Have I gossiped, either by listening to it, or spreading it myself? Have I been content with all that the Lord has given to me?

The Law is a blinding reflection of our sin. The Law of God is what the Holy Spirit uses to make us realize how much we need the forgiveness Christ won for the world and now distributes through His Word and Sacraments. The Holy Spirit calls us by the Gospel, to turn to Christ Jesus, who is our only hope, for He has fulfilled the Law perfectly for us and died so that our sin would be forgiven. Through His resurrection from death, He conquered death. In Christ, we have been adopted as the Lord's own dear children.

Therefore, God uses His Law in three ways: First, like a **curb**, by which outbursts of sin are controlled. Second, and most importantly, like a **mirror**, to show us our sin and our need for a Savior. And then, like a **guide**, to teach us what is pleasing to Him. Living in the forgiveness won by Christ, throughout our lives we pray, "Have mercy, Lord!"

**The italicized verses in this pamphlet are from Martin Luther's hymn on the Ten Commandments, Here Is the Tenfold Sure Command, Hymn 331 in Lutheran Worship (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982).*

— Dr. A.L. Barry
President Emeritus, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

what about...the TEN COMMANDMENTS

Scriptural References

I—You shall have no other gods.

Psalms 118:8—It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man.

Proverbs 11:28—Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.

Isaiah 42:8—I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.

Matthew 4:10—Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve."

John 14:15—If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Philippians 2:13—...for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

II—You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.

Exodus 20:7—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.

Leviticus 19:12, 24:15—You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord. And speak to the people of Israel, saying, Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin.

Psalms 50:5, 103:1—Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!" Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!

Jeremiah 23:31—Behold, I am against the prophets, declares the Lord, who use their tongues and declare, 'declares the Lord.'

Ephesians 5:20—giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Philippians 2:10-11—...so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

James 3:9-10—With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.

III—Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

Psalms 26:8—O Lord, I love the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells.

Isaiah 66:2—All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the Lord. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

Matthew 12:8—For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.

Luke 10:16—The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.

John 8:47—Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.

Acts 2:42, 46—And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts.

Colossians 2:16-17, 3:16—Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Hebrews 4:9-10, 10:25—So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. ...not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

IV—Honor your father and your mother.

Proverbs 23:22—Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.

Romans 13:2, 7—Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

Ephesians 6:2-3—"Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."

Colossians 3:20—Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

1 Timothy 5:4—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.

Titus 3:1—Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work.

V—You shall not murder.

Genesis 9:6—Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.

Jeremiah 1:5—Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.

Proverbs 31:8—Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute.

Matthew 5:22, 26:52—But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire. Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword.

Romans 13:4—...for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

Ephesians 4:26—Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger...

1 John 3:15—Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

VI—You shall not commit adultery.

Genesis 2:24-25—Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Mark 10:6-9—But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ 7 ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

1 Corinthians 6:18-20—Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Ephesians 5:3-4—But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.

Hebrews 13:4—Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

Titus 2:11-12—For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age...

VII—You shall not steal.

Ephesians 4:28—Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

Philippians 2:4—Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Hebrews 13:16—Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

1 John 3:17—But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?

VIII—You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

1 Corinthians 13:7—Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Ephesians 4:25—Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

James 4:11—Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.

1 Peter 4:8—Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

IX and X—You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Romans 7:8—But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead.

Philippians 4:11—Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

1 Timothy 6:6, 8-10—But godliness with contentment is great gain. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

Hebrews 13:5—Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”