

What Do The
Ten Commandments
Have to Do
with Me?

Dr. Jeffery Elliott

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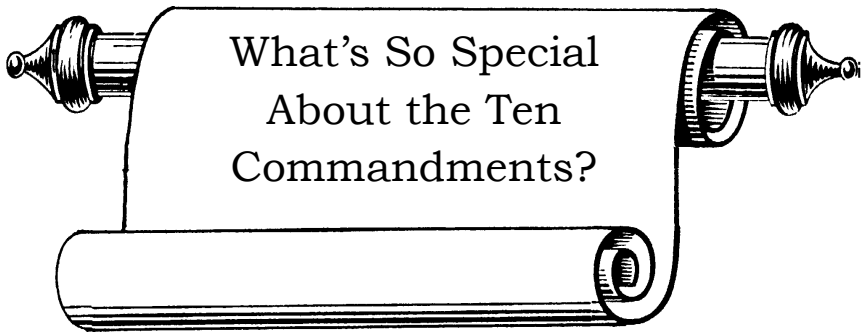
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DEDICATION

To Christians everywhere who seek a deeper relationship with God

CONTENTS

1	What is So Special About the Ten Commandments	1
2	Commandment 1 – No Other Gods	17
3	Commandment 2 – No Images	25
4	Commandment 3 – No Blasphemy	33
5	Commandment 4 – Remember the Sabbath	39
6	Commandment 5 – Honor Father & Mother	51
7	Commandment 6 – No Murder	59
8	Commandment 7 – No Adultery	69
9	Commandment 8 – No Stealing	81
10	Commandment 9 – No False Witness	91
11	Commandment 10 – No Coveting	101



On November 8, 1956, Paramount Pictures released the most expensive and elaborate movie ever made called *The Ten Commandments*. Directed by Cecil B. DeMille and starring Charlton Heston and Yul Brynner, it ran in theaters until 1960 and grossed 2.7 billion dollars (adjusted for inflation). It is one of the most popular movies ever made. Even people who have never seen the film can recall the image of Charlton Heston as Moses on the side of a mountain holding up the tablets with the Ten Commandments.

What did the tablets really look like? Where are they now? And what makes the *Ten Commandments* so special?

In the movie, Moses holds up two gray stone tablets. Scripture does not give us a description of what the tablets looked like. However, Jewish tradition from the Talmud (a collection of rabbinical teachings throughout the ages) tells us they were made of *sapir*. *Sapir* is a Hebrew word that can be translated as sapphire or

lapis lazuli. Both are brilliant blue stones. Imagine two beautiful tablets carved with the Ten Commandments. It is what you would expect from a God who is building a city with twelve layers of foundations made of precious and semi-precious stones, streets of polished gold, and gates made from a single pearl.

But where are the beautiful tablets now? There are many theories. The movie Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark was built on one theory that Shishak, Pharaoh of Egypt, took the ark and the tablets when they raided Jerusalem in the 10th century B.C. Another theory is that Solomon built tunnels under the temple, and that is where they are hidden. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church claims to have the ark, with the tablets inside, in the Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion. In the second book of Maccabees, chapter two tells us that Jeremiah, knowing that Babylon would destroy Jerusalem and the temple, took the ark and tablets along with other items and hid them in an inner chamber of a cave in the mountain where God showed Moses the Promised Land just before his death. Jeremiah said that the location would remain hidden until God “gathers his people together again and shows them mercy.”

What makes the Ten Commandments so special? They are like no other scripture. They are the most unique passages in all of the Bible. First, they are found in what is considered the most holy of the scriptures. Christians consider the Bible as a unit. However, the Jews considered the Old Testament to be three different groups of sacred writings. There was the Torah, which means law. Then, the Prophets, which were the writings of God’s prophets. And finally, the writings, which contained all the rest of the Old Testament.

The Torah was written by Moses as God spoke to him face to face as one speaks to a friend. It was considered the most holy

because it was spoken by God. It is the first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

The Prophets were written by prophets as they were led by the Holy Spirit. They contain such books as Isaiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, and others.

The Writings were books like the Psalms, Proverbs, Ruth, and so on. While they were inspired, they were not considered to be on the same level as the Torah. So, when God placed the Ten Commandments in the Torah, they held a special place.

Second, the Ten Commandments are found in two different places. While it is true that one or more of the commandments are found repeated throughout both the Old and New Testament, the complete Ten Commandments are repeated twice in the Torah.

When God wants to emphasize something, he repeats it in scripture. This means it is important. The Ten Commandments first appear in Exodus 20:1-17 and are repeated in Deuteronomy 5:6-21. Whenever you find something repeated in scripture, it means it is important.

The third reason the Ten Commandments are so special is because the finger of God wrote the commandments on stone tablets. Twice. You are probably familiar with the scene from The Ten Commandments movie by Cecil B. DeMille, where the finger of God is represented by fire carving out the words on the stone tablets. The book of Exodus records it as follows:

When the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant law, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God. Exodus

31:18

The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets. Exodus 32:16

Moses broke the first set of tablets in his anger when he came down the mountain and found the Israelites worshipping a golden calf. God told Moses to chisel out two new tablets, and God wrote the Ten Commandments in the stone a second time.

The Lord said to Moses, “Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. Exodus 34:1

And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant—the Ten Commandments. Exodus 34:28

The Ten Commandments are the only scripture carved into stone by the finger of God. This is where we get our phrase “written in stone” to show the importance of something. No other biblical passage stands out like the Ten Commandments.

To further elevate the importance of the Ten Commandments, God commanded that a special container for them be built. A gold-covered, ornate box we call the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was specifically made to house the two tablets. On top of this box were two cherubim facing each other with their wings outstretched. Between these two cherubim, God would meet with Moses.

“Have them make an ark of acacia wood—two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half

high. Overlay it with pure gold, both inside and out, and make a gold molding around it. ...Then put in the ark the tablets of the covenant law, which I will give you.

“Make an atonement cover of pure gold—two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide. And make two cherubim out of hammered gold at the ends of the cover. ...Place the cover on top of the ark and put in the ark the tablets of the covenant law that I will give you. There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the covenant law, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites. Exodus 25:10-11, 16-17, 21-22

God then instructed Moses to build within the Tabernacle a special place for the Ark of the Covenant called the Most Holy Place. The Tabernacle was the worship center of the Israelites until the temple was built. Once the temple was built, there was a special room built inside it for the Ark of the Covenant called the Holy of Holies. No one but the High Priest was allowed in this room.

Hang the curtain from the clasps and place the ark of the covenant law behind the curtain. The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. Put the atonement cover on the ark of the covenant law in the Most Holy Place. Exodus 26:33-34

The Most Holy Place signified the importance of the Ten Commandments. Placed in the Torah, repeated in the Bible twice,

written in stone by the finger of God, housed in the Ark of the Covenant, and kept in the Most Holy Place. Are you getting an idea of how important these words are?

If that were not enough to make them important, there is still more to the story. Something you may have never heard because no one ever told you. To find out why the Ten Commandments stand apart, we must go to the verses that introduce them.

The Lord said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you." Then Moses told the Lord what the people had said. And the Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes and be ready by the third day, because on that day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.

And God spoke all these words: Exodus 19:9-11; 20:1

Not only did God write them on stone tablets, but he also first spoke them to the gathered Israelites. This is the only scripture given to a mass of people by the voice of God. Does this help you see how important they are? They were placed in the Torah. They were repeated twice in scripture. They were carved into stone by the finger of God. They were placed in the Ark of the Covenant, which was placed in the Most Holy Place. And they were spoken by the voice of God to the Israelites. Can God make these stand out any more than this?

God spoke these words to instill fear of breaking them.

When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.”

Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.” Exodus 20:18-20

Today, many preachers will say that the phrase “fear God” means having a healthy respect for God. But the truth is that we do need to be afraid of God. Jesus said we should not fear those who can kill our bodies but fear the one who can kill both body and soul. When God spoke these words to the people of Israel, they knew he was serious about them keeping these commandments, and they “trembled with fear.”

Are the Ten Commandments important for Christians today? Were they just for the Israelites in Old Testament times?

Jesus took the commandments and elaborated on how we should live by them. We will take a closer look at that with each commandment.

The early church believed they were essential for living a holy life as a Christian. The earliest church order is the Didache, also known as The Teaching of the Twelve. It was written in the later part of the first century before John wrote the book of Revelation. In the section on how Christians are to live, we find the Ten Commandments.

As we progress through history, churches begin using catechisms

to teach children about the Christian faith. Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Baptist catechisms all include the Ten Commandments. Up until the last few decades, children in Sunday School were required to memorize the Ten Commandments.

Throughout history, people have sought to abbreviate the Ten Commandments. Abbreviations can help us remember the order, but we can lose some of the important words of God if all we know is an abbreviated version. Unfortunately, we can take brevity so far that we can make a mockery of God's law.

The phrase "Love God, Love People" is popular in churches today. And the phrase is not wrong, but our understanding of it can be limited if that is all we know. Most of the people who know this catchphrase cannot even list out an abbreviated version of the Ten Commandments, much less know the depth of the actual text of the commandments.

The catchphrase comes from an answer Jesus gave to the question, "what is the greatest commandment?" (referring to the Ten Commandments).

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." – Matthew

22:34-40

Jesus answered the question with two verses from the Old Testament and used them to sum up the Ten Commandments. Here is how it breaks down.

The first four commandments are ...

1. Have no other gods before me.
2. Make no graven images (idols).
3. Do not take the Lord's name in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.

These commandments show us how to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind. These deal with our relationship with God. They come first for a reason. That is why Jesus said that our love for God is the greatest commandment because our love for God must come first. We can only love people properly when we love God correctly. But we must love people, and the next six commandments tell us how to do that.

5. Honor your father and mother.
6. Do not murder.
7. Do not commit adultery.
8. Do not steal.
9. Do not bear false witness.
10. Do not covet (desire the property of others).

Unfortunately, we have taken the answer of Jesus, abbreviated it even more, and made it into a catchphrase that is now being used to justify unholy, unrestrained behavior.

Amy Grant, the one-time top Christian singer, made headlines by hosting her niece's same-sex wedding. Her response?

“Honestly, from a faith perspective, I do always say, ‘Jesus, you just narrowed it down to two things: love God and love each other.’ I mean, hey — that’s pretty simple.”

The truth is Jesus never intended his words to be twisted in this way. That is why it is important to know how to love God. The catchphrase “love God, love people” removes the instructions Jesus included with it, to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind. But even this can be vague. So, John clarified it in his first letter when he wrote,

In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 1 John 5:3-4

To love God is to keep his commands. Those commands he gave special prominence by placing them in the Torah. Those same commands he repeated twice in the Old Testament. Those same commands he carved in stone with his finger. Those same commands he spoke with the voice of God to gathered Israelites (a group that had an army of over 600,000 men).

Of course, when John speaks of God’s commands, he includes the new commandment from Jesus to love one another as well as the command to believe in the name of Jesus Christ. But neither of these negates or replaces the original ten.

Aren't you being legalistic pastor? No! Being legalistic is trying to keep the commandments (or the law) to earn salvation based on your good works. We do not keep the Ten Commandments to earn our salvation. We keep the Ten Commandments because we are saved, and we seek to live a holy life because God said,

But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

1 Peter 1:15-16

Many progressive churches today use the term legalism to mean any rules of living a Christian life. While it is true that some churches go too far with petty, man-made rules, it is no excuse to throw out biblical standards of Christian behavior.

"When there's something in the Bible that churches don't like, they call it legalism." — Leonard Ravenhill

We see in scripture that the church is supposed to hold its members to a basic standard of a moral lifestyle. Unfortunately, many have come to a place where free expression of sex in any way they want is so important that they toss aside the clear teachings of scripture to allow for their sinful desires. And we use the term legalism to justify our behavior. Take a look at the following passages to see how the Bible says the church is to respond to Christians living in sin.

"If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you

have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. Matthew 18:15-17

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Galatians 6:1

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father's wife. And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have gone into mourning and have put out of your fellowship the man who has been doing this? For my part, even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. As one who is present with you in this way, I have already passed judgment in the name of our Lord Jesus on the one who has been doing this. 1 Corinthians 5:1-3

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a

drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people. 1 Corinthians 5:9-11

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. 2 Thessalonians 3:6

Take special note of anyone who does not obey our instruction in this letter. Do not associate with them, in order that they may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard them as an enemy, but warn them as you would a fellow believer. 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15

But those elders who are sinning you are to reprove before everyone, so that the others may take warning. 1 Timothy 5:20

Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful; they are self-condemned. Titus 3:10-11

There is one more thing about the Ten Commandments, and that is their connection to the gospel. The commandments show me I am a sinner. And until I know I am a sinner, I will see no need for a Savior. Paul wrote in Romans,

Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "You shall not

covet.” Romans 7:7

As we go through each of the commandments, reflect on your life and ask the question, “how have I broken this commandment?” As you do, the Holy Spirit will convict you of specific sins throughout your life. Take time to admit to God that it was wrong and ask for his forgiveness. You will experience a time of refreshing. As Peter said to the Jews in Acts

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord. Acts 3:19

One thing to remember, keeping the Ten Commandments cannot give you salvation, eternal life, forgiveness of sin, or entrance to heaven. Only faith in Jesus Christ can do that. Paul wrote in Romans,

If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Romans 10:9-10, 13

We need Jesus because we are unable to keep the Ten

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Commandments and have broken all of them many times. The Bible is clear when it says,

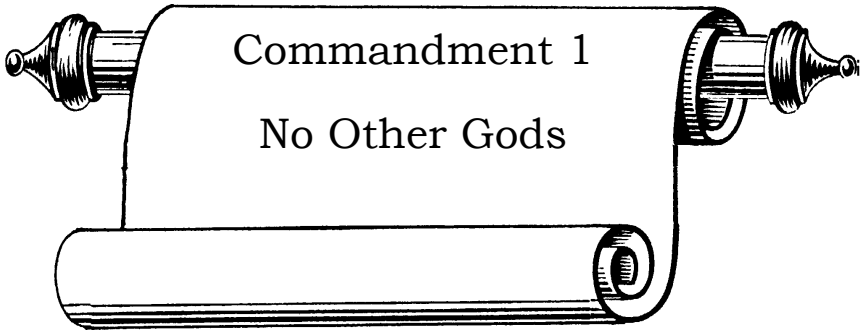
for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
Romans 3:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

If you were to die tonight, do you know that you would go to heaven? Jesus told us that he was the only way to heaven.

Dr. Jeffery Elliott



“You shall have no other gods before me.”

“Why do you work?”

It was a strange question asked me by an engineer from India who sat across the lunch table from me. Satish was always a little deeper into philosophy than I was. Still, there needed to be an answer. Work was part of my larger life direction. I worked to provide for my family. I worked to create purpose and meaning in my life. I worked because it was the way I was raised. Life consisted of growing up, getting married, starting a family, providing for that family, and watching the children start families of their own. And then it ended. For me, God was part of that, but for many, he is not.

What role should God play in our lives? Is he something we add or subtract at will, depending on convenience? Can we have too much of God in our lives?

According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, a question-and-

answer method of teaching, God is the main purpose of life. The first three questions deal with the main purpose of life.

1. What is the chief end of man?

Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.

2. What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him?

The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him.

3. What do the Scriptures principally teach?

The Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.

When we look at the life of John Quincy Adams, we see an example of someone who made it his life purpose to “glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” Adams was the sixth president of the United States of America. He spent every morning reading the Bible for an hour. Peter Marshall called him “one of the most moral statesmen America has ever produced.”¹ We should devote our lives to God.

¹ Peter Marshall. *The Light and the Glory* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1986), p 180.

Jesus took the various commandments and expanded them from just the outward action to include the inward thoughts. When asked about the greatest commandment, Jesus' answer expanded this commandment to show how our whole life must revolve around God.

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'

Matthew 22:37

What gives God the right to demand that we have no other gods before him? His right is connected to the first chapter of Genesis. God is our Creator. That gives him the right to set the rules.

God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Genesis 1:27

We were created to spend our lives with God. God created Adam and Eve and placed them in a perfect garden that provided everything they needed. There was no hunger, death, illness, crime, or sin. Every day, God walked with them in the garden in the cool of the day to have fellowship with Adam and Eve. That was the intention of creation. But Adam disobeyed God and brought sin and death into the perfect world. And ever since, we have had a problem with worshipping God only.

Israel had a problem with worshipping only Yahweh. Often, they would add the false gods of the nations around them. This started with King Solomon.

As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. 1 Kings 11:4-5

The Israelites in the southern kingdom of Judah worshipped false gods along with Yahweh for over three hundred years. They even brought their false gods into the temple. King Josiah, who turned his whole heart to God and was like no other king of Judah, removed the false gods from Judah (including removing them from the temple).

Then the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest and the priests of the second order and the doorkeepers, to bring out of the temple of the Lord all the vessels that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel. 2 Kings 23:4

The first commandment tells us we are to have no other gods before God. But in a world that has done away with the well-defined pantheon of false gods, it can be difficult to understand how this commandment fits in our lives. Let's look at what a god is today.

In ancient times, a god was a supernatural being that had power over nature and fortunes. People would devote themselves to worshipping and pleasing these gods either for pleasure or a prosperous future. Usually, these gods had specific functions or areas of power, such as gods of sex, gods of the sun, or gods of the rivers.

If you gave one of these gods an offering, you expected to receive something in return. For example, if you sacrificed your child to the god of weather and agriculture, then you would have a profitable harvest.

Today, we still have similar practices. We can sacrifice our children's upbringing in hopes of success in a career. This can be literal or figurative. At the 2020 Golden Globes, actress Michelle Williams tells how sacrificing her unborn baby gave her success in her acting career. As she accepted her award, she said, "I wouldn't have been able to do this without employing a woman's right to choose."

Even though we do not have a system of false gods to worship, we can still have "false gods" in our lives that we give our devotion. There is a simple way to see where your devotion lies. Look at how you spend your money, time, and talent.

If you look at a person's checkbook and datebook, you know what their religion really is. – Ravi Ravindra

Give me five minutes with a person's checkbook, and I will tell you where their heart is. – Billy Graham

Let's look at the role money plays in our lives. Money can be a false god. While we need money to live in this modern world, the love of money, or greed, can take over.

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: ... greed, which is idolatry. Colossians 3:5

Take time to read over the following verses and ask yourself if the pursuit of money has been a false god in your life. Then, look at how you spend your money. We spend our money on the things that are important in our lives. What do you spend your money on? Could that be a false god in your life?

No one is to appear before me empty-handed. Exodus 34:20

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts. Psalm 96:8

On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income. 1 Corinthians 16:2

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7

We hear much about spiritual gifts that God gives us for use in the church, but he also gives us our natural talents and abilities to use in his service. We usually only think of using these to make money or gain fame. But God has designed us to work in his kingdom.

“Now Bezalel and Oholiab, and every skillful person in whom the Lord has put skill and understanding to know how to perform all the work in the construction of the sanctuary, shall perform in accordance with all that the Lord has commanded.” Exodus 36:1

Just as God placed skill and understanding in Bezalel and Oholiab for service in building the tabernacle, he has placed skill and understanding in you for service in his kingdom. How are you using your talents and abilities? Are you using them to expand God's kingdom? Whatever is god in our lives is where we use our talents. Are you using your talents for the One True God or for a false god in your life?

Last of all is our time. This is last because it is the most important. Time is precious and limited. Money can be re-earned. Talent and ability can be developed. But once time passes, it is gone forever. Your life has a set number of hours. Once one hour passes, you cannot redeem it.

As time marches on, beauty fades, health declines, careers end, and friends and family disappear. The only thing that lasts is what you have done for Christ. We use our time serving whatever is god in our lives. Keep a journal of everything you do during the upcoming week and see where you spend your time. Remember the words of Jesus.

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Matthew 6:33

Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. Luke 9:23

Charles Thomas Studd, a British missionary to China, India, and Africa at the end of the nineteenth century, wrote a poem called *Only One Life, Twill Soon Be Past*. Take time to read this poem and think

about where you use your time.

Two little lines I heard one day,
Traveling along life's busy way;
Bringing conviction to my heart,
And from my mind would not depart;

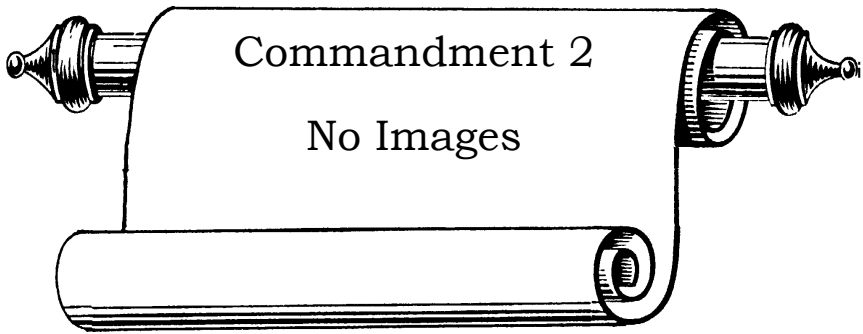
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, yes only one,
Soon will its fleeting hours be done;
Then, in 'that day' my Lord to meet,
And stand before His Judgement seat;

Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, the still small voice,
Gently pleads for a better choice
Bidding me selfish aims to leave,
And to God's holy will to cleave;

Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.



“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. 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, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

This commandment is lengthier than the first one and can be confused with the first commandment. “Have no other gods before me” and “don’t worship idols.” Sounds similar, doesn’t it?

Here is the difference. The first commandment tells us who to worship, and the second commandment tells us how to worship. It came at a time when gods could be seen. There were physical

representations of them called idols. Most of humanity at this time had small idols in their house. They were usually carved out of wood and overlaid with gold or silver leaf. Daily rituals of worship might include offering food, bowing, or praying to the idol.

The one true God is the Creator of everything and is, therefore outside of creation itself. There is nothing like God in creation. His magnificence and glory cannot be represented by anything in creation. It is an insult to try. Therefore, God demands that we worship him without a physical representation.

This was difficult for the Israelites because they came out of a land filled with idols. For them, Moses' presence became an image of God. When Moses went up on the mountain for forty days, they became afraid and demanded Aaron build them a god they could see. And so, he did.

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.' Exodus 32:7-8

The golden calf was to be a replacement of God. They believed the calf brought them out of Egypt. They were ascribing the actions of God to an idol. We see this in the phrase, "these are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt." Remember, Moses was only gone forty days. How quickly people can turn from faith (believing without seeing) to idolatry.

This isn't the only time Israel had a physical representation of God. After Solomon died and his son Rehoboam became king, God split the kingdom into two as punishment for Solomon's sin. Jeroboam led the rebellion against Rehoboam and took ten of the tribes to make the Northern Kingdom. Jeroboam was told by God he must follow the Lord with all his heart. But once in power, he feared losing that power and sinned by creating two golden calves and setting them up as physical representations of God.

After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves. He said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt." One he set up in Bethel, and the other in Dan. And this thing became a sin; the people came to worship the one at Bethel and went as far as Dan to worship the other. 1 Kings 12:28-30

God did not want the Israelites to make an image of him because that is the way the world worships. And God said,

**You must not worship the Lord your God in their way.
Deuteronomy 12:4**

Of course, this excludes the worship of any image representing any false god, not just ones made to represent the one true God. God takes this very seriously. He lists out every possible type of image. We are to worship God only. Notice all the extra words we usually do not hear when we use an abbreviated version of the Ten Commandments. There is a threat and a blessing.

The threat is that if you hate God, he will punish your descendants to four generations. The blessing is that if you love him and demonstrate your love for him by keeping his commandments, he will show love to your descendants for a thousand generations. Today, many demand scientific proof of the existence of God before they believe. But Paul wrote that we must,

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7 (KJV)

Faith is believing God and backing that up with action, even when we have no visible proof. The writer of Hebrews gives us some examples of people who acted on faith because they believed without seeing.

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.

By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family.

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. Hebrews 11:1-3, 7, 8

How does this commandment play out in today's world, where

idols no longer play a major role? By looking at the general principle. How do we worship God? Remember, Israel wanted a physical object that they could see to prove to them that God was real. That can take many forms today. But instead of looking at each wrong way to worship God, let's look at the right way. To do that, we go to Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. She asked about the proper way to worship God, and Jesus responded,

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." John 4:23-24

How do we worship in the Spirit and in truth? First, we must renew our thinking on worship. Most Christians think of a church service where everyone is singing as "worship." But where do we see this definition in the Bible? There is corporate worship, where believers get together to worship God, but worship is much more than just that.

Notice that the commandment is written to individuals, not to a group. The "you shall not" is singular, meaning God is speaking to you, not to your church. Proper worship is how we live our life. Notice what Paul wrote in Romans.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.
Romans 12:1

This means how we use our bodies Monday through Saturday is just as important as what we do on Sunday. Worshipping God in truth means that we worship God according to his Word. God's Word, the Bible, is his truth. If it says something is a sin, then we accept that and turn from it and worship God. If it tells us to do an act of kindness to another to show his love, then we do it. That is worshipping God in truth. It also means that in corporate worship, you should have a preacher who preaches what the Bible says, not what everyone wants to hear.

Worshipping in the Spirit has been twisted to mean emotional response. But it means that you live your life by what the Spirit wants. Paul helps us understand this in Galatians.

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Galatians 5:16-18, 22-25

There is another aspect to this commandment against making an image of God. We can want physical manifestations of God today.

Signs, wonders, miracles, and emotions can become exactly that. If we require such manifestations to believe in God, we have made them our image that we worship. Remember the Apostle Thomas.

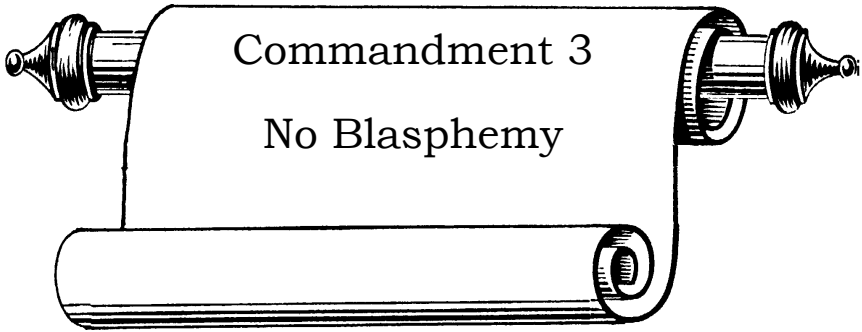
But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” John 20:25

Thomas demanded physical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. Because of the special circumstances surrounding this demand, Jesus granted his request. But he made it clear that belief should be without physical evidence.

Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” John 20:29

If you have an emotional experience on a Sunday morning, experience a miracle, or see a sign and believe, then you are not worshipping in the Spirit and in truth. You are seeking a physical manifestation, just like the Israelites and Thomas. Be part of those who are blessed. Worship God in how you live your life.

Dr. Jeffery Elliott



“You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God,
for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses
his name.”

Alexander the Great, king of Macedonia in the fourth century B.C., was walking through his camp one night and found a soldier on guard duty asleep. He woke him up and asked his name. The soldier replied, “Alexander.” He asked him again, “what is your name?” And the soldier answered louder, “Alexander, sir.” Once more, the question came, and the soldier answered, “Alexander, sir.” Alexander the Great said, “soldier, either change your conduct or change your name.” The king did not want his name tainted by the bad behavior of others.

Names are very important. There is the name, and then there is the reputation attached to that name. It is the same for God. His reputation is attached to his name, and he takes his reputation very

seriously.

As we learn the Ten Commandments, we usually abbreviate them to help us learn their order. For the third commandment, we usually learn, “Thou shalt not take the Lord’s name in vain” or “do not misuse the Lord’s name.” But there is more to this commandment. The words “for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name” are added to emphasize the seriousness of breaking this commandment.

In the past, this commandment has been used to cover all cussing or foul language. But this commandment is not about cussing. It is specifically about the use of the Lord’s name. Now, before you take a sigh of relief thinking that it is okay to use bad language, we need to look at where the Bible deals with conversation. Paul writes in Ephesians 5:4,

Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

So, the Bible does tell us that we should not use obscenity. It tells us that we need to avoid foolish talking (discussion of sinful subjects). And it tells us our humor should be clean with no “coarse joking” (jokes about sinful subjects).

In the King James Version, this commandment uses the word ‘vain.’ In the New International Version, it uses the word ‘misuse.’ The Hebrew word means empty or without purpose. So, this commandment deals with using the name of God without the proper respect or in a manner that reflects the nature and honor of God.

What is the name of God? When Moses stood before the burning bush, he asked this question. We translate the answer as I AM WHO

I AM. But the Hebrew word that God uttered to Moses was YHWH. The Hebrew uses only consonants. Over time, the Jews began speaking Arabic and forgot how to pronounce Hebrew words. Scribes placed vowel pointers in the words to aid in pronunciation. But they thought the name of God was too holy to write out and put the vowel pointers for Adonai. Centuries later, when Christian translators began working on an English translation, they did not know this and translated the word as Jehovah. Today, we translate it as Yahweh.

Even today, if you go to a Jewish Rabbis blog, you will see the word G-d instead of God. That is how seriously they take the name of God. Shouldn't we, as Christians, be as careful with how we use the name of God? We are so flippant with phrases such as OMG, where we use the name of God casually. We take the name of Jesus very lightly in society today, as well.

It reminds me of the time an unchurched family was invited to dinner by a Christian family. As they sat at the table, the unchurched son tugged on his mother's sleeve and asked her, "Why do they have a curse word hanging on their wall?" It was a scripture verse that had the name of Jesus in it. We take the name of the one who died for our sins, and we use it as a cuss word. And Jesus has been given a name that is above every name.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
Philippians 2:9-11

If God takes his name so seriously that he will “not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name,” what do you think he will do with those who take the name of Jesus as a cuss word? Sixty years ago, it was illegal to cuss in public. Today, it is a badge of honor to see how many cuss words you can use.

We can see how God feels about his name and reputation in the story of Hezekiah and Sennacherib.

“Say to Hezekiah king of Judah: Do not let the god you depend on deceive you when he says, ‘Jerusalem will not be given into the hands of the king of Assyria.’ Surely you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the countries, destroying them completely. And will you be delivered? Did the gods of the nations that were destroyed by my predecessors deliver them.” 2 Kings 19:10-12

And Hezekiah prayed to the Lord: “Lord, the God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Give ear, Lord, and hear; open your eyes, Lord, and see; listen to the words Sennacherib has sent to ridicule the living God.

“It is true, Lord, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste these nations and their lands. They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by human hands. Now, Lord our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone, Lord, are

God.” 2 Kings 19:15-19

That night the angel of the Lord went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning—there were all the dead bodies! So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there. 2 Kings 19:35-36

The event of this mass killing is not just found in the pages of scripture. It is also recorded in Babylonian records and by the Greek historian Herodotus (*Histories 2:141*). So, we see this was a real historical event, not a fable. This is how seriously God takes his name.

Notice how Hezekiah appeals to how Sennacherib is denigrating the name, or reputation, of God. His appeal is that God shows the world he is God. And God responds by killing 185,000 of Sennacherib’s army. We do not know how they died. We just know that the next morning, they were dead. This should strike so much fear in our hearts that we never again use the name of God as a cuss word or even casually.

Why is God so concerned with the use of his name? It is because his reparation is attached to his name. There is an active, intentional effort to convince people that God does not exist. There are militant atheists such as Richard Dawkins who speak around the globe, seeking to convince people that God does not exist and that he is not needed.

Then there are those who claim to believe in God but do not believe he created the world. They say that God did not create the

world the way God says he did, but instead, he made a big bang and stars and planets, plants and animals, and finally, people just evolved out of cosmic dust. But we see in Job that God not only created the world, but he is involved in every little detail of daily life on earth.

“Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation?

Tell me, if you understand.

Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!

Who stretched a measuring line across it? Job 38:4-5

“Do you hunt the prey for the lioness

and satisfy the hunger of the lions

when they crouch in their dens

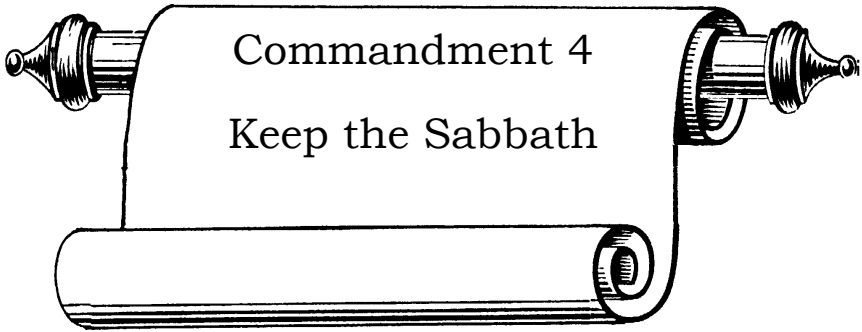
or lie in wait in a thicket?

Who provides food for the raven

when its young cry out to God

and wander about for lack of food? Job 38:39-41

Think about it. If God’s name is not held up and revered, then people begin to ignore God. That is what is happening today. People do not want to hear about God. They do not seek him. The result is they do not hear the Gospel and die in their sins. They spend all eternity in hell because we allowed the name of God to become a cuss word.



“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 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. 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.”

Growing up for me, Sundays were already planned out from breakfast to bedtime. We started with Sunday School attendance, followed by the morning worship. Then lunch and off to visit grandparents. An afternoon nap for the whole family and back to church for Training Union and evening worship. A late meal and

bedtime. Sundays were considered dedicated to God, family, and rest. My how things have changed.

Somewhere along the way, pastors began promoting that Christians were not bound by the Sabbath laws, and Sundays changed. The pastors were right. We have been freed from the law, and Paul wrote,

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a **Sabbath day**. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. Colossians 2:16-17

This seems to have turned the focus of Sunday from God-centered to self-pleasure-centered. The term “human race” is an accurate description of people. It seems we are in a constant race from one activity to another. Most of us do not even know why we are racing. Too often, it is a race to an early grave, and ultimately, it is death for everyone.

But let us look at what this commandment says and then what it means for us today. For those who have the commandments memorized, this one may have more words than you were expecting. The reason given for remembering the Sabbath is that God created the world in six days. It is tied directly to the creation week in Genesis.

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy,

because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. Genesis 2:2-3

The first four commandments are given to remind us that God is the Creator. The first commandment tells us to have no other gods before God. He is the Creator and the only one who has the right to demand this. All of the false gods were functional gods. They were over the river, or the harvest, or fertility. They were bound by creation. Pagans often had several false gods and never thought they should be devoted to just one God.

But God is not bound by creation. If every atom in the universe were to cease to exist, God would continue. There is no one like him, and therefore, there can be no one before him.

The second commandment forbids us from making an image and worshipping it. That is because there is nothing on this earth that can represent God.

The third commandment forbids the misuse of God's name, meaning his reputation. God's name should be proclaimed and revered. If we denigrate God's name as so many do today, then there will be those who will go to hell because the name of God was not exalted, and they turned away from God.

And now, we come to the fourth commandment, and we are told to set aside a day to remember that God is the Creator. Imagine once a week; the entire culture stops everything, interrupts the flow of their activities, and focuses on remembering that God is the Creator. Would we have the crime that we have today? Would our world be filled with the cruelty, hate, greed, and heartache that we see? Or could we leave our keys in our cars and our doors unlocked at night?

What was the Sabbath like for Jews before Christ came? Because the very first day of creation began with darkness, the Jews began their new day at sunset instead of midnight as we do. Therefore, the Sabbath began on Friday night at sunset, around 6 PM, and ended on Saturday at sunset. During that time, no work was done. There was no buying and selling. But the question was, “what does it mean by work?” Over the centuries, the rabbis, priests, and scribes began defining what was work on the Sabbath. By New Testament time, there were a myriad of complex rules for observing the Sabbath. Today, they continue to review the rules and update them for the modern world. Some of the things they refrain from doing are writing, erasing, and tearing, business transactions, driving or riding in cars or other vehicles, shopping, using the telephone, turning on or off anything that uses electricity, including lights, radios, television, computer, air-conditioners, and alarm clocks, cooking, baking, or kindling a fire, gardening, and grass-mowing, doing laundry. This is not the complete list, but it gives you an idea.

Because of all the added rules, the Sabbath had become burdensome to the Jews of Jesus’ day. One Sabbath, Jesus and his disciples were walking thru a field of grain and picked some to eat. The ever-watchful Pharisees proclaimed that what they were doing on the Sabbath was unlawful. Jesus responded.

Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” Mark 2:27-28

We see Jesus challenging the Sabbath rules made by man. The Sabbath was to be a time of rest from the hard labor they were forced to do just to survive and a time to remember who God was.

The question may have occurred to you by now, “if the Sabbath runs from Friday evening to Saturday evening, why do we have church on Sunday morning?” The simple answer is that we worship on the day that Jesus arose. But this can be complicated if we seek to live by the Ten Commandments.

When I was in college, I encountered other students who had different religious views. It challenged me to search the scriptures to see if what I believed or what others believed was what the Bible taught. One group was the Seventh Day Adventists. They believe that we should worship on Saturday, just as the Ten Commandments tell us. It was a very confusing time for me. My first question was, what did the early church do?

Since the Apostles and first Christians were Jewish, did they worship on Saturday, Sunday, or both? Let’s start with the writings of early church fathers to see the practice of the early church.

The oldest known church manual of practice is the Didache. It is also known as The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles because of the first line of the text. It is believed to have been written around 70 A.D. While it is not considered scripture, it does give us a glimpse of church practice in the first century. The Didache references the worship service of the church being held on the first day of the week.

**But every Lord’s day . . . gather yourselves together and
break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed
your transgressions**

The Lord’s Day is a reference to Sunday, the day the Lord Jesus was resurrected. If it had been on Saturday, it would have been called the Sabbath. Another source of early church practice comes from

The Letter of Barnabas. Some church fathers considered this letter as scripture. However, it was not included in the final canon. It deals with questions of the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. It was written around 74 A.D. This is what the Letter of Barnabas has to say about the day of worship.

We keep the eighth day [Sunday] with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead.

Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch, the church that sent out Paul and Barnabas in Acts, was arrested in 110 A.D. and sent to Rome to be executed for his beliefs. Ignatius was a disciple of the Apostle John. On his way, he wrote a series of letters. In one letter he wrote concerning the day of worship,

Those who were brought up in the ancient order of things [i.e. Jews] have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's day, on which also our life has sprung up again by him and by his death

So, we see it was the intentional habit of the early church to gather and worship on Sunday. If this is the case, is there any evidence in the New Testament that shows the early church meeting for worship on Sunday?

On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. Acts

20:7

Here, we see Paul gathering with Christians on the first day of the week. It is interesting that Luke records that it was the first day of the week. Does it really matter what day of the week it was if it was not a worship service? I believe God put this specific reference in so that we would know that the early Christians met on Sunday.

On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. 1 Corinthians 16:2

Paul is giving instructions to the Corinthians to set aside a sum of money on the first day of the week. Why the first day? Because it was the day they met for worship, and the “setting aside” was the collection of the money. This money was specifically for those Christians in Jerusalem who were suffering because the Jews who rejected Jesus would not do business with Jews who had accepted Jesus. It was easiest to collect the money on the day the Corinthians gathered to worship.

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. Colossians 2:16-17

Finally, we have Paul’s letter to the Colossians, where Paul, a

devout Jew, tells the Colossians not to let anyone judge them on how they kept a Sabbath day. Paul also wrote in his letter to the Romans.

One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Romans 14:5-6

It is obvious that Paul is writing about the Sabbath here. Apparently, there were people who held different views on keeping the Sabbath, but Paul does not endorse either view. He leaves it up to the individual.

The Seventh Day Adventists teach that the early church kept the Sabbath because the church was all Jewish at the beginning. They claim that the Catholic Church changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday at the Council of Laodicea. The implication is that the corrupt Roman Catholic Church forced a change from Saturday to Sunday. The truth is that the term catholic comes from the ancient Greek adjective καθολικός (katholikos), meaning 'on the whole, according to the whole, in general.' This term was applied to the church long before the Roman Catholic Church appeared.

The Council of Laodicea was held in A.D. 360, while the Roman Catholic Church was formed in 1054 when it broke ties with what is now known as the Eastern Orthodox Church. The council did not force a change from Saturday to Sunday because they were already worshipping on Sunday. It forbade the practice of worshipping on Saturdays. The decree from the council is as follows.

“Christians should not Judaize and should not be idle on the Sabbath, but should work on that day; they should, however, particularly reverence the Lord’s Day and, if possible, not work on it, because they were Christians.”

The early church associated keeping the Sabbath with circumcision and keeping the law, specifically the Mosaic dietary laws. It was believed that doing this, which they called Judaizing, weakened their dependence on Christ and gave way to pride in one’s own works. We see this reflected in Paul’s letter to the Galatians.

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? ... Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith. Galatians 3:1-2,11

After the Reformation in the 16th century, as various denominations arose, there were many who taught that the Sabbath laws were transferred to Sunday. This is known as Sabbatarianism. There were strict penalties for “breaking” the Sunday Sabbath. Blue laws were enacted in many states and cities that forbade certain activities on Sundays. This applied mostly to what businesses could be open. The truth is that it is easy to allow pride to enter your heart if you “keep the Sunday Sabbath” and look down on your neighbor who does not.

So, should we “keep” Sunday by attending church every week?

There are three considerations. First, the principle of the Sabbath commandment is a principle of a break from the normal to commune with God. Our physical bodies require rest. A major factor contributing to the health ailments we experience in our modern world is the lack of sleep. It can even contribute to weight gain, stress, and poor performance.

The major contributor to spiritual failure is the lack of time spent with God away from screens, media, and the distractions of the modern world. Regular time away from worldly things can bring peace, contentment, and joy.

Tremble and do not sin; when you are on your beds,
search your hearts and be silent. Psalm 4:4

He says, "Be still, and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10

A day devoted to God without worldly distractions is a benefit both physically and spiritually. Is it so hard for us to refrain from work for one day? Is it that difficult to give Jesus, who died on the cross for our sins, one day out of our week?

The second consideration is the admonition of the writers of Hebrews to attend church regularly.

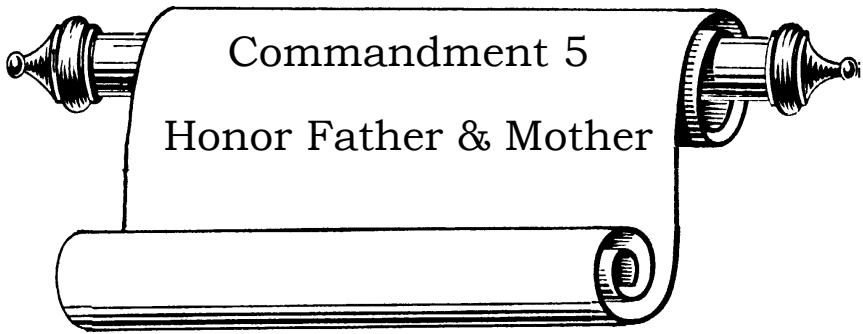
And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, **not giving up meeting together**, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24-25

If we are to meet together regularly to worship God and encourage one another, then we must have a mutually agreed upon day and time. Sunday was chosen by the early church because it was the day that Jesus rose from the dead. It commemorates the new creation and the new covenant. It has two thousand years of tradition behind it. Most churches already have services on Sundays. So, regularly attending church on Sunday seems to be the best way to follow the admonition in Hebrews and to have a time to focus on God and be encouraged.

The final consideration is why you might choose not to attend church. It is easy to come up with some pithy saying that makes your lack of attendance sound spiritual. Such as “I can commune with God in the great outdoors” or “going to church doesn’t make you a Christian.” I like Adrian Rogers’ response to the last one, “not going to church doesn’t make you one either.” Paul wrote that it is the Holy Spirit that causes us to act and to will. The Holy Spirit will draw us to other Christians and to worship God. So, if we miss church, are we doing it for spiritual reasons or for selfish reasons? Are we placing recreation, entertainment, or even sleep or work before God? And are we teaching our children that God is not important enough in our lives to make him a priority? Freedom from the law does not give us a license to do what we want. But being a child of God should make us want to gather with our brothers and sisters in Christ and worship God. If you don’t feel this, then you may need to check your salvation. First, John is a great place to start. Read it and examine yourself.

This commandment is tied to the creation week found in Genesis 1 and 2. It is a reconnection and regular reminder that God is the Creator. The Sabbath begins on Friday night at sunset and ends on Saturday at sunset. The early church, primarily Jewish, chose to

worship on Sunday instead of the Sabbath because, in Christ, we are free from the law, and the Sabbath was closely tied to Jewish legalism. While we are not bound by the law because of Jesus's death and resurrection, the principles of rest and reflection (a break from the world and our routine) and communing and worshipping God are principles of the fourth commandment that we still need today.



“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.”

On Saturday, October 7, 2023, a Jewish holiday, Hamas attacked Israel. It was a horrendous attack that resulted in the murder and abduction of women and children. Over 40 infants were beheaded. Over 1,300 people were killed, and thousands were injured. It is events like this that drive people to the prophetic scriptures to see if this is the time of the end. Will the anti-Christ be revealed? Is the rapture about to happen?

But the truth is that our world is marching toward the end of what happens quietly day by day. Only recently have the headlines become so crazy that we are beginning to pay attention. One area that Satan has been wreaking havoc in for decades now is the family. God created the family. He ordained marriage. He designed us to produce children. And he instructed us to train children in the ways of the Lord.

It is an end-time subject. Paul tells us that it will become a problem in the end times.

But mark this: There will be terrible times **in the last days**. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, **disobedient to their parents**, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good. 2 Timothy 3:1-3

Notice how Paul places disobedience to parents as an end-time problem. He lumps it with a series of other ungodly behavior. In fact, he deals with the seriousness of this subject again in his letter to the Romans.

They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; Romans 1:29-30

Notice all the powerful words that Paul uses to describe the various sins. Then he throws in disobeying parents. Today, this seems so trivial when it comes to sin. But God considers it on the level of murder and malice. It is considered evil and wickedness. So, when children disobey their parents, it is a serious matter.

God created the family, so naturally, Satan wants to destroy the family. He has been working tirelessly for decades to place his people in positions of power in government, media, and education to

accomplish this. While we could look at divorce, the gay and lesbian movement, and the transgender problem, we are going to look at the parent-child relationship because of the fifth commandment.

We can see the attitudes and beliefs of people who are working to destroy the family in the writings of Belinda Gordon in the 1960s

"The nuclear family must be destroyed and people must find better ways of living together whatever its ultimate meaning the breakup of families now is an objectively revolutionary process. No woman should have to deny herself any opportunities because of her special responsibilities to her children."

And we find it in the Declaration of Feminism from November 1974.

"Marriage has existed for the benefit of men and has been a legally sanctioned method of control over women. We must work to destroy it. The end of the institution of marriage is a necessary condition for the liberation of women."

God has ordained the relationship between a child and their parents for a specific reason. But this commandment is not just for children. The Ten Commandments were given to adults as much as children. So, while this commandment contains the idea of young children obeying their parents, adult children are to honor their parents all of their lives. We will look at how to do this after we understand the importance of this command.

This commandment, the fifth commandment, stands between the first four, which deal with our relationship with God, and the last five, which deal with our relationship with other people. It is the vertical with the horizontal and forms a cross with the fifth commandment at the connection of the two. That is because it deals with how we treat God and how we treat other people.

Parents have authority over their children, and the Bible tells us that all authority comes from God. Therefore, parents have God-given authority over their children. Not the state, not the schools, not the media, not even the church, but parents. That is why God has given every parent a greater influence in the lives of their children than any other source. For better or worse, parents, especially fathers, wield a great deal of influence over their children.

James Alexander, an influential nineteenth-century Presbyterian minister, wrote the following about the position of fathers in relation to their impact on their children.

He is their head. He is such by a divine and unalterable constitution. These are duties and prerogatives which he cannot alienate. There is something more than mere precedence in age, knowledge, or substance. He is the father and the master. No act of his and nothing in his character can fail to leave a mark on those around him.

In fact, parents work with God biologically in the creation of their children.

This is the written account of Adam's family line. When God created mankind, he made them **in the likeness of**

God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And he named them “Mankind” when they were created. When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son **in his own likeness, in his own image;** and he named him Seth.
Genesis 5:1-3

While God created all of mankind in his image, that image was marred by Adam’s sin. So, when Adam had a child, that child carried Adam’s sinful image as well as genetic traits. So, Adam and God worked together to create the next generation. And God gave Adam and Eve authority over their children.

That means that parents stand in the place of God to their children. Their purpose is to teach their children to respect their authority so they will learn to respect God’s authority. Without this respect for God, they will grow up to see themselves as little gods and reject God’s gospel. They need to be held accountable for their actions. This teaches them that one day, they will be held accountable by God for their actions throughout their lives. Without the concept of accountability, they will never see their sin and turn to Jesus for salvation. That means your children will go off on their own way and spend eternity separated from God and you for all eternity.

Today, parents are taught that their purpose is to make their children happy. That is not what the Bible teaches us. The fifth commandment tells the children it is their responsibility to honor their parents. That is their side of the relationship. We do not see that happening today. Instead, we see out-of-control children treating their parents with contempt.

God sees this as so important that he attached a promise and a curse to this commandment. The promise is that if we honor our

parents, we will “live long.” That does not mean that every person who honors their parents will live to be ninety. It is a general principle that, on the whole, a society that honors its parents will be blessed by God with a longer life.

The curse was that if they did not honor their parents, they would be ejected from the land the Lord their God gave them. God stresses this point in Leviticus.

“Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the foreigners residing among you must not do any of these detestable things, for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled. And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you. Leviticus 18:24-28

God points out that the people before the Israelites were “vomited” out of the land because of their horrible behavior. You can read some of the behaviors in the earlier verses of Leviticus 19. Dishonoring your parents is another way you could be thrown out of the land.

But what does it mean to honor your parents? Let’s see what Jesus has to say.

But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is ‘devoted to God,’ they are not to ‘honor their father or mother’ with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. Matthew 15:5-6

The Jewish leaders came up with a tradition that allowed a person to devote their wealth to God, such as in a will. Then, it could not be used to help out their parents. Jesus says this was a way that they were dishonoring their parents. So, one way to honor your parents is to take care of them in their old age. Paul reinforces this idea in his letter to Timothy.

But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God. 1 Timothy 5:4

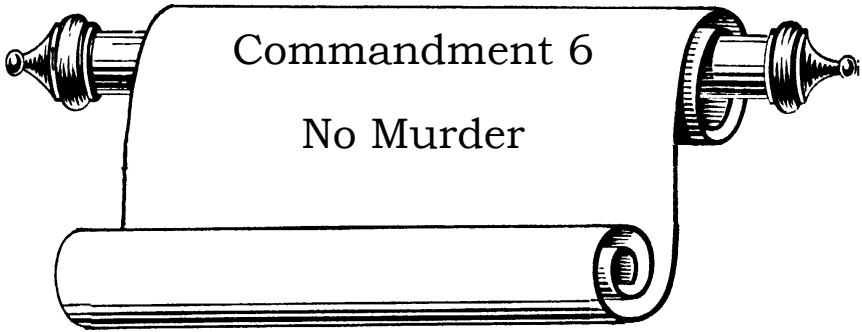
The structure of the family is God’s network of care. The parents provide care for the children when they are unable to take care of themselves. As the children reach adulthood, both parents and children enjoy life together as adults. As the parents age and become unable to care for themselves, the children care for them.

In my ministry, I have seen the elderly who have no children struggle in their later years and end of life. It is a sad situation. But I have also seen family structures where the adult children live near their parents and care for them wonderfully in their last years. It is truly a beautiful thing. This is honoring your father and your mother.

Another way of honoring your father and mother is by the way

you live your life. Turning your life over to Christ and living a godly life brings honor to your parents even after they have passed on.

There are those who are estranged from a parent, and that can make it hard to honor them through a relationship. If possible, try to restore the relationship. Some relationships are toxic and cannot be repaired. In that case, you can still honor that parent by how you live your life. Pray regularly for God to bring change in that parent and bring them to salvation.



“You shall not murder.”

There was a Sunday School teacher who was teaching her young elementary students about the Ten Commandments. She had just taught them to honor their father and mother. She then asked the class, “Is there a commandment that helps us know how to relate to our brothers and sisters.” And one little boy piped up and said, “Thou shalt not kill.”

The Ten Commandments are found in two different places in the Bible, and each place is a different setting. In Exodus 20, the Ten Commandments are spoken by God to the entire assembly of the Israelites from Mount Sinai at the beginning of their forty years in the wilderness. To get the setting, read Exodus 19.

The second listing of the Ten Commandments is found in Deuteronomy 5. This book was written by Moses, to sum up the law. Moses intended for kings over Israel to read Deuteronomy and make

their own copy of it so that they would rule righteously.

When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the Levitical priests. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and not consider himself better than his fellow Israelites and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Deuteronomy 17:18-20

Deuteronomy 6 gives the setting of this copy of the Ten Commandments. It contains instructions for parents to teach them to their children as well as setting reminders for the adults so that no one would forget these commandments.

The King James Version translates this commandment as “Thou shalt not kill.” Modern translations, including the New King James Version, translate the Hebrew word *ratsach* as murder. This is a more accurate translation. *Ratsach* means “the unlawful premeditated killing of one human being by another.”

Some animal rights groups have latched onto the KJV translation of “kill” and tried to apply it to the killing of animals, claiming that God intended that we should not kill animals even for food. This is a misrepresentation of the commandment because God commands the killing of animals as sacrifices and food in other parts of the Mosaic law. At the time that the KJV was translated, most of the population was either involved in the killing of animals for food or were exposed to it. Therefore, it would never enter their minds that this commandment applied to animals.

Others have taken the translation of “kill” to mean there should be no death penalty or no war. Again, this is a wrong interpretation. Because God specifically directs the Israelites to execute people for certain crimes. He also commands them to kill their enemies in war. It is because of our long history of Christianity and the emphasis on God’s love that modern-day people struggle with just killings. Paul tells us in Romans,

For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God’s servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Romans 13:4

The sword was a weapon for killing. The government is to use the authority given to them by God to apply just killings through executions. Rulers can misuse the authority God has given them, and God will hold them accountable and oftentimes punish them in this life. But that does not dismiss the powers of execution.

In wars, killing is seen as just killing for the purpose of protecting yourself, your compatriots, and the citizens of your country. Again, there have been rulers throughout history who have abused this authority and engaged in unjust wars, but this does not negate this power given by God.

However, the right to murder is not given to individuals. Therefore, the sixth commandment forbids murder. If I asked you which of the commandments have you been able to keep, this one would probably be the only one. For the average person they have never murdered another person. But for the Christian, keeping up outward appearances is not enough. That is why Jesus expanded this

commandment to include the heart and mind.

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:21-24

Anger and hate are the vehicles that lead to the act of murder. Jesus is telling us that we must get our emotions under the control of the Holy Spirit. There must be a change on the inside when Christ comes into our lives. With what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, many of us will find that we are not doing very well in keeping this commandment.

Notice that Jesus ties the relationship with a brother or sister, meaning more than just an actual brother or sister, to our worship of God. If there is a break in the relationship, we are to stop our act of worship and go and be reconciled. Paul writes about how anger, which produces discord, can destroy a church.

For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I

want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder. 2 Corinthians 12:20

The Corinthian church was just a mess. It was like a lot of Baptist churches. It's like the guy who was shipwrecked on a deserted island for years and years. When they finally rescued him, he had built three different buildings. They asked him why he had three buildings. He said the first one was his home, and the second was his church, for he was a very devoted Baptist. They asked him about the third building, and he responded, "That's where I used to go to church."

Notice that Paul is concerned about the condition of the church because of the broken relationships from the discord in the church. The jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, etc., all come from inside our hearts, and Jesus is tying them to the sixth commandment.

We may not murder someone physically, but we may wish them dead in our hearts. Jesus went as far as condemning harsh language toward others. There is plenty of hate in the world. And Satan stokes that hate every chance he gets. Next time you watch the news, pay attention to what is happening in your heart. Often, you will find hate, anger, and discord raising their ugly heads, provoked by the way the news is being presented.

The Nation of Israel Today

One example of hate and anger that led to murder happened on October 7, 2023, when 1,500 Hamas followers violently broke into Israel, killing over 1,300 Jews. They targeted women and children. There were over forty babies beheaded. These were men filled with

anger and hate that led to rape, kidnap, and murder.

Israel vowed to retaliate, and the world went crazy. In Germany, the leaders were cautioning people with Jewish heritage to hide their background. In America, on elite college campuses, students were protesting in solidarity with Hamas and the Palestinians. The UN warned Israel about its response. The narrative is that Israel is on stolen land. It is claimed that they stole that land from the “Palestinians.” The problem is that there has never been a country called Palestine. We need to understand the history of Israel and the land and to do that, we must go back to the beginning, back to the book of Genesis.

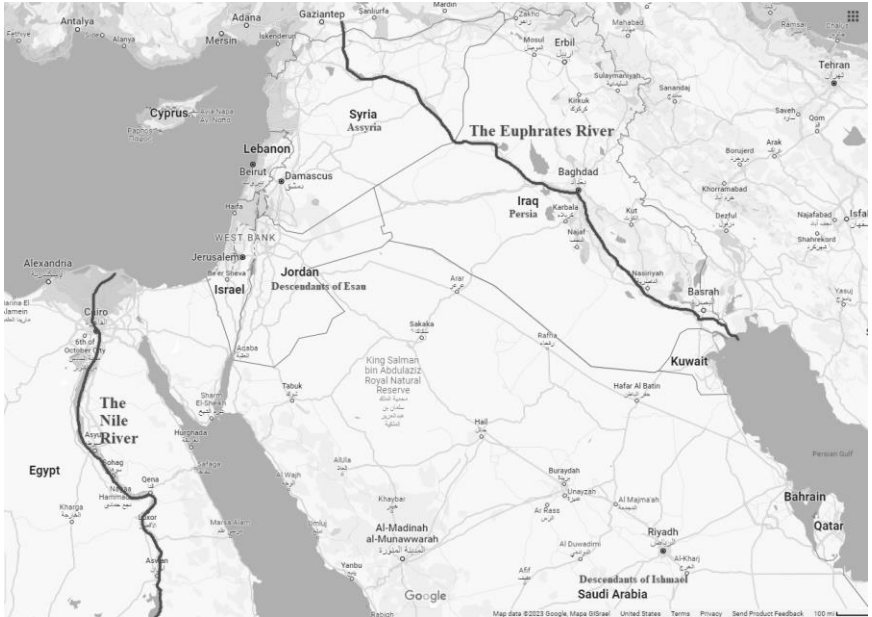
On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates— the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.” Genesis 15:18-21

God gave a land deed to Abram and his descendants in 1900 B.C. The two main boundaries God lists are the Wadi (River) of Egypt (probably the Nile) and The Euphrates River. The following map shows where these two rivers are located. It is easy to see that the Mediterranean Sea is the western border. But the southern border is not certain. Some include all of the Arabian Peninsula. Others limit it to much less.

It is interesting to note that the Arabs (Saudi Arabia) are the descendants of Ishmael, and the Jordanians are the descendants of Esau. Both Ishmael and Esau are descendants of Abraham.

What Do The Ten Commandments Have to Do with Me?

In addition to the land deed, God gave Abraham a promise. It was the promise of a son born to Sarah that would bless “all peoples on earth.” That son was Issac, the lineage through which Jesus would be



The Boundaries of The Nile River and The Euphrates River

born. From Issac came Esau and Jacob. Jacob was chosen by God to carry the lineage of Christ. Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel) had twelve sons who became the twelve tribes of Israel.

When Israel finally reached the promised land in 1451 B.C., after 430 years in Egypt, God gave them very specific boundaries.

The Lord said to Moses, “Command the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter Canaan, the land that will be allotted to you as an inheritance is to have these boundaries:

“Your southern side will include some of the Desert of

Zin along the border of Edom. Your southern boundary will start in the east from the southern end of the Dead Sea, cross south of Scorpion Pass, continue on to Zin and go south of Kadesh Barnea. Then it will go to Hazar Addar and over to Azmon, where it will turn, join the Wadi of Egypt and end at the Mediterranean Sea.

“Your western boundary will be the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. This will be your boundary on the west. “For your northern boundary, run a line from the Mediterranean Sea to Mount Hor and from Mount Hor to Lebo Hamath. Then the boundary will go to Zedad, continue to Ziphron and end at Hazar Enan. This will be your boundary on the north.

“For your eastern boundary, run a line from Hazar Enan to Shepham. The boundary will go down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain and continue along the slopes east of the Sea of Galilee. Then the boundary will go down along the Jordan and end at the Dead Sea.

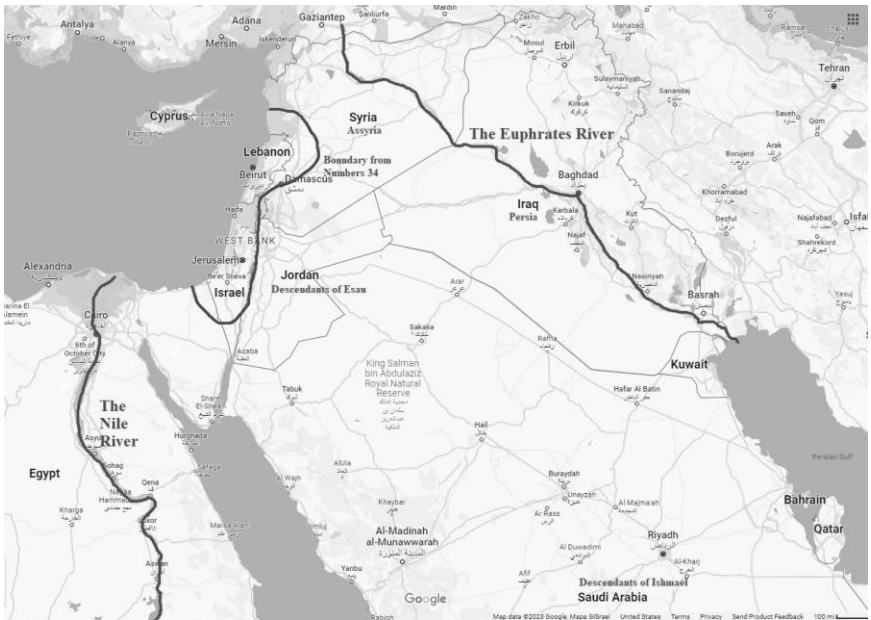
“This will be your land, with its boundaries on every side.” Numbers 34:1-12

While it is difficult to place some of the locations specifically, this gives us a very good idea of the borders God gave to Israel. They are roughly sketched on the following map.

The narrative today is that Israel stole the land they currently occupy. But the truth is that Israelis are the indigenous people who were given back their land.

What Do The Ten Commandments Have to Do with Me?

From 1451 B.C., the Israelites lived in the general area known as Israel today until the Babylonian captivity in 597 B.C. They were allowed to go back home in 538 B.C. They remained in the territory under the rule of the Persians, the Greeks, the Ptolemies, the Seleucids, and the Romans. They were very rebellious under every nation's rule, and finally, the Roman Emperor Hadrian expelled them from the borders of Judea in 135 A.D.



The Boundaries Given Israel in Numbers 34

From 135 A.D., they lived dispersed among the nations, and yet they retained their national identity as Jews. They continued their religious life through the synagogue. In 1917, Great Britain adopted the Balfour Declaration to give the Jews their own land. In 1948, Israel became a nation, and they were back in the general area deeded them by God in Numbers 34.

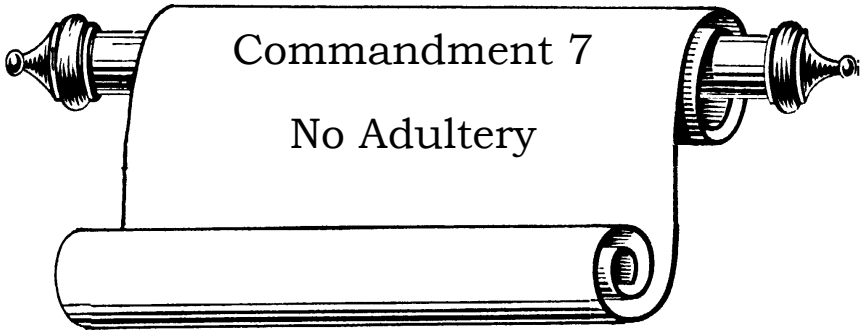
This was in fulfillment of prophecy. God prophesied to bring his people back to their land.

“For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. Ezekiel 36:24

This was an important milestone on the prophetic timeline. Until 1948, biblical scholars did not know what to do with the unfulfilled prophecies about Israel. It was believed that those prophecies must somehow be spiritualized and find their fulfillment in the church. Once Israel became a nation once again, the prophetic landscape shifted overnight. Today, we believe that the nation of Israel will play a key role in the Great Tribulation and the return of Christ.

When war begins in Israel, many turn to Ezekiel 38 and 39. I will not quote them here, but I encourage you to read both chapters. God prophesies that one day, a nation from the north of Israel, usually identified as Russia, allied with Iran (Persia) and Turkey (Tubal), will attack Israel, and God will strike them down in a manner that will let all the world know it was God. At this point, the attack from Hamas does not seem to be this event.

But it does illustrate the danger of hate, anger, and murder. Our entire modern world has been thrown into confusion because of this attack. If the world followed the Ten Commandments and, better yet, received Christ as their Savior, none of this tragedy would have happened.



“You shall not commit adultery.”

Have you ever heard of the Wicked Bible? No, it’s not a bible of Satanism or witchcraft. Nor is it a romance novel. In 1631, the royal printers in London reprinted a copy of the King James Bible. It was a perfect copy, except one word was omitted. That word was “not” found in Exodus 20:14, making the seventh commandment read, “Thou shalt commit adultery.” It was also known as the Sinners’ Bible and the Adulterous Bible. Most of the copies were immediately destroyed.

However, there are pastors today who are taking the seventh commandment and trying to remove the not. They look for every way possible to remove the sexual ethic of the Bible. One has gone as far as to say that we are no longer under the Ten Commandments and, therefore, we are free from sexual restraints. According to the teachings of this pastor, the church has been getting it wrong for 2,000 years now. And only our generation is smart enough to cast off

those pesky biblical sexual ethics.

But when we read the whole Bible, especially the New Testament, we find that the sexual ethics of the church are much stricter than what we find in the Old Testament.

Before we look at this commandment in detail, let's consider the commandments as a whole. How did Jesus feel about them? Let's look at his words in the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew.

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus is serious about the Ten Commandments. Those who teach others to disobey the commandments are called the least in the kingdom of heaven.

Notice Jesus refers to “your righteousness.” You cannot enter the kingdom of heaven unless “your” righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees. The Pharisees were a sect of Judaism who spent their lives

trying to keep every law to the minute detail. They were considered the most righteous Jews. Jesus is saying that unless your righteousness is better than theirs, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

The problem is that no matter how hard we try to “be good,” there are going to be times when we fail. The Bible tells us that our righteousness is as filthy rags compared to the righteousness of God. How can we get into the kingdom of heaven then?

Jesus is giving a hint of what was to come because we do not get into heaven based on our righteousness. Praise God! Praise God that I do not have to rely on my righteousness to get into heaven because my righteousness wouldn't even get me close to the door. Instead, we get into heaven based on the righteousness of Christ. He took my sins to the cross. He bore all the sins I have committed and all the sins I will commit. But that wasn't the end of it because he also gave. He gave me his righteousness. So when I stand before God, I will not have to justify my life. All I have to do is say, “Lord, I am standing here in the righteousness of Christ.” It is going to be a glorious day!

Let's turn our attention to the seventh commandment. When we think about adultery, we usually connect it to sex. But this commandment is more about fidelity or faithfulness. That is why God uses the word adultery when he speaks to Israel about worshipping other gods. He is talking about their unfaithfulness. God takes adultery very seriously. While there are no prescribed punishments for breaking the seventh commandment here in Exodus, there are punishments listed in the civil law.

“If a man commits adultery with another man's wife—
with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the

adulteress are to be put to death. Leviticus 20:10

Here, we see the death penalty for those caught in adultery. We see this repeated in the New Testament when the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus.

At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. John 8:2-6

This was part of Israel's civil law. The laws the government of Israel followed. Today, our laws do not require the death penalty for adultery. If you are caught in adultery today, we interview you, your videos go viral, and you become a hero. But that is not the only place we see the seriousness of adultery in the Bible. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth.

Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters **nor adulterers** nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

We see that Paul is putting adultery on a list of very serious sins and saying that these “will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Adultery, unfaithfulness, is a very serious sin. In Proverbs, Solomon, who was trying to teach his son about how he was to live, says this about adultery.

Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes. For a prostitute can be had for a loaf of bread, but another man’s wife preys on your very life. Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned? Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched? So is he who sleeps with another man’s wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished. Proverbs 6:25-29

And Paul warns us to flee from adultery as well as all other sexual sins.

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. 1 Corinthians 6:18

We have examined just a small portion of the scriptures that teach adultery is a very serious sin. But let’s look at the foundation of this commandment, for it forms the foundation of all the sexual ethics found in both the Old and New Testaments. To do this, we must go to the foundational book of the Bible. The book that forms the foundation for all theology. The book that tells us how the world was

designed to work best. That book is Genesis.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Genesis 2:20-24

God created the family as the foundational building block of society. Sex was created in the context of the family. For millennia, this was understood. But today, we have lost this understanding. Satan is trying to take us away from how God ordained this world to work. When you fight against the order God established, it does not go well. When you lose that building block, everything begins to crumble. That is where we find ourselves today.

Genesis tells us about the two becoming one flesh. Malachi tells us why that is so important.

Because the Lord has been witness
Between you and the wife of your youth,
With whom you have dealt treacherously;
Yet she is your companion
And your wife by covenant.

But did He not make them one,
Having a remnant of the Spirit?

And why one?

He seeks godly offspring.

Therefore take heed to your spirit,
And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his
youth.

Malachi 2:14-15 (NKJV)

Notice the phrase “and why one?” In other words, why did God create marriage? Why did he put a man and a woman together as husband and wife? Because he was seeking godly offspring.

God created sex and marriage to produce the next generation and have them raised up knowing about God. That newborn baby has no concept of how the world works. It is our job to usher them into the world and teach them to feed and clothe themselves. But we are also to teach them about God. And we only have about nine to twelve years to do that. We have such a short period of time. It is our expected responsibility given to us by God to introduce that new life to Jesus Christ. This is what is meant by God “seeking godly offspring.”

So, the structure God has created to propagate mankind throughout the ages is marriage and family. It is the biological purpose of sex to produce children. It is the spiritual purpose of marriage for sex to produce a family. I know there are exceptions where couples either cannot have children or do not want children. But the general rule throughout all of history is that people get married, stay married, have children, raise them to know God, and most of all, be faithful to each other.

The marriage partner is just that, a partner. An individual who helps you create a family and complete the ministry God has given you. It was to be one man and one woman for one lifetime to create one family that serves the One God for all eternity. God created Adam and Eve, not Adam, Eve, and Edith. He did not create Adam and Steve.

The reason we throw the book of Genesis out of the Bible is so that we can hide this truth and live in a manner opposite to what God created.

God is the giver of life. Life comes from no one else. When you attend a funeral, remember that all the chemicals and elements needed for life lie in the coffin. But there is no life there. Because natural forces cannot create life, only God can give life.

And yet, every perversion of sex outside of marriage is not done to produce life but to circumvent it. It is to take the pleasure of sex and elevate it to god status and deny the life-producing purpose of sex. Can a man lie with a man and produce children? Does a man and a woman commit adultery to produce offspring? Is the couple “dating” trying to get pregnant? The answer is always no. That is because sex outside the framework of marriage is a perversion of what God has created. But as a society, we don’t know that because we have stopped teaching Genesis.

Marriage and family are the foundation of the seventh commandment. A couple must have trust between each other for the marriage and family to work. Unfortunately, because we all have a sinful nature, that trust is often broken.

In this context, we see that the seventh commandment prohibits sex before marriage. How? Because the pattern designed by God is one man and one woman married for life. If you engage in sex before

marriage, you are being unfaithful to your future spouse, and you cause the other person to be unfaithful to their future spouse. What if you are going to get married anyway? It still holds. Sex was designed for married couples. When God created Eve out of Adam's rib, he immediately proclaimed that a husband and wife would become one flesh. Adam and Eve were married from the beginning of Eve.

It is popular to believe that living together is a benefit to a couple because it tests whether they are compatible. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The Before I Do Report for the National Marriage Project found that people who had been married before, people who had lived together before, and those who had more sexual partners before marriage were associated with having lower marital quality. It was also found that having only one marital sexual partner was associated with greater marital quality. Other studies have also shown that couples who cohabit before marriage have a greater chance of divorce or marital unhappiness.

The most important question on this commandment is what Jesus says about it. We find his words on the subject in the Sermon on the Mount.

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it

is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

“Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery. Matthew 5:27-32

Jesus expands the seventh commandment beyond the physical act of adultery to our thoughts and desires. We may be able to resist the physical act of adultery and yet have raging lust in our hearts. Jesus is telling us it is just as bad. It is breaking faith with your wife.

But notice there are no qualifiers on either the man lusting or the woman he is lusting after. It does not say a married man who lusts in his heart. Nor does it say that it has to be a married woman who is the object of lust. Jesus was not just speaking to married men and women. Surely, there were unmarried people in the audience. Jesus was saying that any man who lusts after any woman is committing adultery because she is not his wife. Thus emphasizing that the seventh commandment forbids sex before marriage.

Lusting in our hearts is just a step away from the physical act. James tells us that sin is first conceived in our hearts, and then it leads to the physical act of sin. We must deal with it in our hearts.

To show the seriousness of lusting in your heart, Jesus uses hyperbole. He says that if you have a wandering eye, an eye that makes you lust in your heart, then just pluck it out. Or if your right hand is responsible for your sin, chop it off. Obviously, it is neither

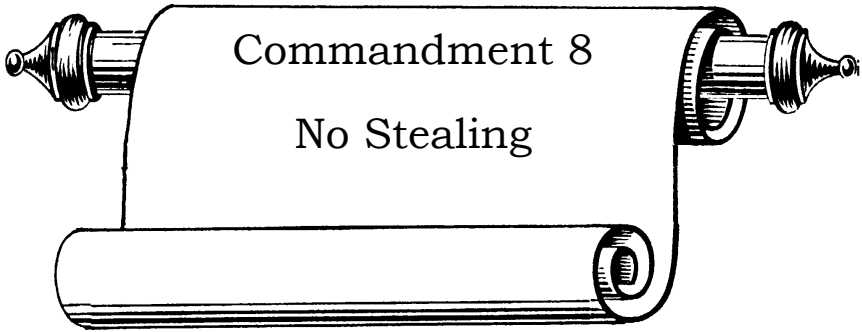
your eye nor your hand that is responsible for your sin but your heart's desires and the thoughts of your mind. So, you must "pluck out" those desires. You must "cut off" those thoughts.

Jesus also connects adultery with divorce. He is saying that divorce and remarriage may seem like a legal way to try to get around adultery. Getting rid of one spouse through divorce and moving on to a new one may seem like a legal loophole, but Jesus says it is not.

Fidelity in marriage is a difficult thing for many. It is so hard that when Jesus taught it, the disciples cried out, "If this is the situation, it is better not to marry." Then Jesus looked at them and replied, "There are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." (Matthew 19:11-12 NKJV) In other words, Jesus is saying if you cannot be faithful to your wife, then castrate yourself. Sounds pretty serious to me.

The only way to change the heart is through the work of the Holy Spirit. And we can only have the Holy Spirit in our hearts by believing and receiving Jesus as our Savior. As we walk in the Spirit, it is then that we can "pluck out" the sinful desires of our hearts and "cut off" the sinful thoughts of our minds.

Dr. Jeffery Elliott



“You shall not steal.”

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

These words should be familiar to every American. They are the preamble to the Declaration of Independence. A document that was written Thomas Jefferson in 1776 and signed by the members of the Second Continental Congress on July 4, 1776. But today, scholars wonder why Jefferson chose to include the phrase “pursuit of happiness.” The words life and liberty had very technical, legal definitions for the founding fathers.

For the preamble, Jefferson borrowed from John Locke, an English writer who addressed political philosophy and the interaction of governments and their citizenry. His writings were very popular

with the Founding Fathers. But John Locke's three rights were "life, liberty, and property." What made Jefferson change the last one? There are many theories, but scholars do not agree on anything.

In fact, Jefferson had used Locke's phrase in a previous document. While we all know of the Declaration of Independence, few are familiar with the Declaration of Rights and Grievances. Protestors raided an East India Company ship and dumped the tea into the Boston Harbor in response to a new tax implemented by the British government. This is known as the Boston Tea Party. In response, parliament passed the Coercive Acts, which ended local self-government in Massachusetts. The Americans responded by convening the First Continental Congress in 1774. Thomas Jefferson was chosen to draw up the Declaration of Rights and Grievances, which was signed by the members and sent to the King requesting a repeal of the acts. In this Declaration, Jefferson used Locke's phrase.

That they are entitled to life, liberty, and property, and they have never ceded to any sovereign power whatever, a right to dispose of either without their consent.

Obviously, Jefferson believed that private property ownership was as important as life and liberty. While we may never know why he used the phrase "pursuit of happiness" in the Declaration of Independence, it matters little since property rights were enshrined in the Constitution, our legal documents guiding our nation's laws.

Jefferson wasn't the only one concerned about property rights. John Adams wrote concerning the matter,

The moment the idea is admitted into society that

property is not as sacred as the laws of God, and that there is not a force of law and public justice to protect it, anarchy and tyranny commence. If “Thou shalt not covet’ and “Thou shalt not steal” were not commandments of heaven, they must be made inviolable precepts in every society before it can be civilized or made free.

He tied property rights to the Eighth and Tenth Commandments. Showing us that God gave us the right to own our own property, and no one had the right to take that property away from us. If the colonies had waited a hundred years to declare independence, I am sure they would have used property instead of the pursuit of happiness because, during that time, Carl Marx presented the idea of Marxism. It is also known as Communism and Socialism.

When you look at the tenets of Marxism, you find it is an attempt to destroy the Ten Commandments, especially the modern-day version. First, it rejects the idea of God and seeks to destroy Christianity. That takes away the first four commandments.

Next, it seeks to destroy the nuclear family where a mother and a father in a committed marriage raise their children. Instead, it proposes alternate, unbiblical structures. Thus nullifying the Fifth Commandment.

The main tenet is the confiscation of all private property by force by government officials. This violates both the Eighth and Tenth Commandments, as we see from John Adams.

To round things out, Marxism has no problem violating the sixth commandment, do not murder, since it murdered over 100 million people just in the twentieth century. That makes the twentieth

century the bloodiest century of all history. And, of course, it violates the ninth commandment, does not lie, by using lies or false promises to spread its philosophy.

Our problem today is that half of Gen Z believes that communism is preferred over capitalism. More than a third of millennials approve of communism. The truth is that most have little or no knowledge of the subject but have a positive image of communism because of a professor or high school teacher. The danger is that with a positive image, they may be more inclined to vote for proponents of it without realizing what they are voting for. But even more frightening is that this favorable view leads to the idea that it is okay to take the belongings of others.

And that's where we find ourselves today. Cities such as Los Angeles and San Francisco are dealing with a new kind of organized crime. Instead of wise guys with Tommy guns, there are young people on bicycles riding through stores, grabbing what they can and pooling their plunder. On the other end of the scale, our elected officials spend their time thinking up ways to steal the property of others through new and higher taxes and inflation.

There is no penalty in the Ten Commandments for breaking them. But we do find penalties for stealing in other passages that show it was considered very wrong.

“Whoever steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep.” Exodus 22:1

Here, we see that the penalty for stealing is paying a fine of four to

five times the value of what was stolen. Imagine stealing a car today that is worth \$50,000. You would be required by law to pay \$200,000 to \$250,000. To see how bad stealing is in the New Testament, we see Jesus ascribing stealing as a trait of the devil.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10

So, if you steal, you are emulating Satan. You are like the devil.

Adrian Rogers once preached that Ephesians 4:28 was “the perfect explanation and amplification of the Old Testament verse that says thou shalt not steal.”

Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need. Ephesians 4:28

Pastor Rogers outlined this verse with three words: integrity, industry, and generosity. When you stop stealing and become an honest person, you gain integrity. When you work and produce something useful, you become industrious. And when you have something to share with those in need, you become generous. These are the marks of a Christian. Integrity, industry, and generosity.

Paul wrote about the need to work in his letter to the Thessalonians.

For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule:
“The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.” 2
Thessalonians 3:10

Work is an important aspect of a healthy lifestyle. Usually, we think of work as a required evil to provide for our wants and needs. Paul is certainly tying the need for work to the basic need for eating. But the Bible develops an entire work ethic. The Puritans saw this work ethic in the scriptures and weaved it into their way of life. They taught it to their children. It has long been considered a key to the success of America. No other country has the work ethic of America. They saw work as a gift from God. Work gives your life a sense of purpose. You felt you were contributing to the community as well as the welfare of your family. Without work, life becomes meaningless and boring. Solomon taught that work was a gift from God.

This is what I have observed to be good: that it is appropriate for a person to eat, to drink, and to find satisfaction in their toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given them—for this is their lot. Moreover, when God gives someone wealth and possessions and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil—this is a gift of God.
Ecclesiastes 5:18-19

Solomon uses the word toil for work and calls it a gift of God. We were designed to work. How do I know that? In Genesis, it says that once God created Adam, he placed him in the garden and told him, “Adam, you now have a job. Take care of this garden.”

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. Genesis 2:15

As we work, God works with and through us. He provides us the opportunity to work and provide for ourselves and our families. And he expects us to recognize his hand of blessing on us by giving a portion of our earnings to provide for his ministry.

“Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. “But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ “In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,” says the Lord Almighty. “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the Lord Almighty. Malachi 3:8-12

We can see three things in this scripture. First, you can steal from God by not giving back to him. Second, the tithes and offerings were to go to provide for the running of God’s house. This is the ministry of the temple. It provided for the livelihood of the priests and Levites (those who kept the temple operating). It provided for the upkeep of

the building.

But the most important thing we see in the scripture is that God says, “Test me in this.” God is telling us to try it and see what God will do. He tells us he will pour out so many blessings we won’t be able to store them. Since Israel was mainly an agricultural society, God lists out practical ways that he would act, such as preventing the destruction of their crops. Today, we see these blessings play out in similar ways in our everyday lives.

What about you? Are you stealing from God? Are you giving back to God? Look at your bank statements and see how often you give to God. When you come to church, do you think about giving back to God in appreciation of what he has given you? Consider these verses.

**“No one is to appear before me empty-handed. Exodus
34:20**

**Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an
offering and come into his courts. Psalm 96:8**

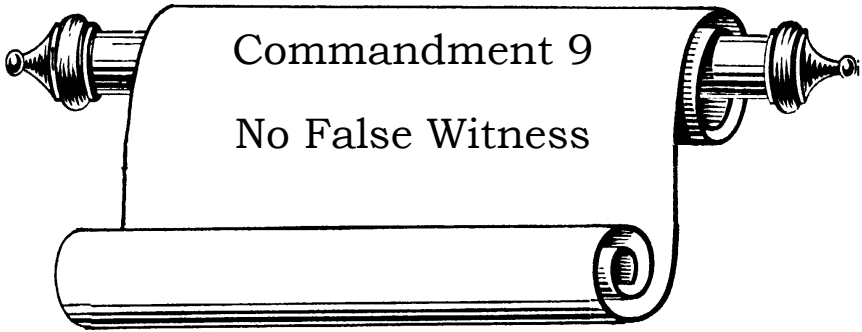
God expected the Israelites to bring an offering each time they came to worship him. It was a custom in the days of kings to bring a king a gift anytime you came into his court. It was a way of showing respect and honor. Since God is the king of kings, he is due the utmost respect and honor.

Jesus had much to say about money. He told us that we are stewards of God’s money, and as such, we are to handle it responsibly. Here are just a couple of passages about being a generous giver and handling the money God gives you.

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” Luke 6:38

“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own? Luke 16:10-12

Dr. Jeffery Elliott



“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.”

Harold walks into his bedroom and sees his wife standing in front of a full-length mirror, wearing a new dress. She turns her head, looks back, and asks, “Does this dress make me look fat?” Well, Harold was an honest man, and he gave her an honest answer, and he didn’t see her for three days. But the swelling is going down in his right eye, and he can see out of it a little bit now.

Lying stresses the body. There is an entire branch of science devoted to the effects of stress on the body. Its most visible aspect is lie detection. A lie detector looks for changes in heart rate, blood pressure, skin moisture, and pupil dilation for signs of lies. But the other side of the science studies the damage lying can do to your health.

A 2002 University of Massachusetts study found that 60% of

people lied during a ten-minute conversation, averaging two to three lies. All of us know someone who is a compulsive liar. It seems they cannot stop lying. We call these people politicians.

Often, we can think of lies as being harmless, such as the case with Harold and his wife's dress. But lies can create enormous suffering and dire consequences. An example is the 1930s when Stalin decided to get rid of private farms in Ukraine. He implemented policies that resulted in almost four million people starving to death. The Stalin administration denied that there was any problem, and a very influential journalist by the name of Walter Duranty propagated this lie. Duranty worked for the New York Times and even won a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of Soviet Russia. He picked up the lie of Stalin and boldly published it in article after article, stating, "There is no famine in Ukraine. There is no starvation. And there is not likely to be." Because of his reputation and influence, western leaders, both in the US and Europe, believed him. And nothing was done to provide famine relief in Ukraine. And upwards of four million people died of starvation. Lies can create horrible suffering.

But let us look at the actual wording of this commandment.

"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. Exodus 20:16

We associate this commandment with lying, but it does not say, "Do not lie." So, let's explore the wording. In its strictest sense, this commandment deals with giving testimony in a court of law. But "giving a false testimony" can also be done outside the courtroom. But that does not mean that lying, in general, is alright as long as you do not use it in this specific case. The Bible is clear that lying is

wrong. Let's look at just a few scriptures that tell us that.

“Do not steal. “**Do not lie.** “Do not deceive one another. Lev 19:11

This verse clearly tells us not to lie.

These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, **A lying tongue**, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, **A false witness who speaks lies**, And **one who sows discord** among brethren. Proverbs 6:16-19 (NKJV)

As we look at this Proverb, we find that out of seven things that are an abomination to God, three of them deal with lying. A lying tongue and a false witness are obvious, but sowing discord is often accomplished by spreading lies. These are all in the Old Testament, but what about the New Testament?

But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and **all liars**—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.” Revelation 21:8

This verse in Revelation places liars alongside murderers and idolaters. Thus showing that God takes lying very seriously. Jesus called those who lied children of the devil.

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. John 8:44

So, we see that lying is something that God hates. It is something that he calls an abomination. It is a serious matter. But this commandment is dealing with something that is even worse than just telling your wife a little white lie about her dress. It is about using lies as a weapon to destroy the character, reputation, or life of another. The Bible takes this sin to a higher level than just lying about someone's weight. Let's look at the case of an individual who lies on the witness stand for the purpose of bringing harm to another.

If a malicious witness takes the stand to accuse someone of a crime, the two people involved in the dispute must stand in the presence of the Lord before the priests and the judges who are in office at the time. The judges must make a thorough investigation, and if the witness proves to be a liar, giving false testimony against a fellow Israelite, then do to the false witness as that witness intended to do to the other party. You must purge the evil from among you. The rest of the people will hear of this and be afraid, and never again will such an evil thing be done among you. Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. Deuteronomy 19:16-21

If it was discovered that you had lied in court, then you would have to suffer the penalty that would have been charged against the person you lied about. If it was stolen, then you would have to pay five times what was stolen. If it was murder, you would forfeit your life. That is how seriously God takes using lying as a weapon to destroy another. There are indications in scripture that when the justice system fails, God steps in to bring judgment, and nobody wants that.

Today, we use lying as a weapon to destroy in a new way. It is called social media. When we have to stand face to face with another person, we are hesitant to lie about them. But when we can hide safely behind closed doors and use the anonymity of the internet to spread lies about another, the evil within us is released in a way that has never been seen in history.

Whether it is bullying, gossiping, trying to ‘cancel’ someone with different views than yours, or political attacks, it is all breaking the ninth commandment. And God will not look the other way. You may think that you are hidden, but the Bible makes it clear that God sees what you do in secret.

**For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed,
and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought
out into the open. Luke 8:17**

In researching this commandment, I came across a quote from a collection of rules by Jewish Rabbis called the Mekhilta.

One who bears false witness against one's neighbor

commits as serious a sin as if one had borne false witness against God, saying that God did not create the world. —
Mekhilta

It is interesting how this connects bearing false witness with denying God as the Creator. Our society is not only engaged in the destruction of people's reputations and character but also adamant about claiming God did not create the world. It just somehow created itself. Dethroning God condemns millions to eternity in hell. Stripping God of his title as Creator makes you his enemy and co-conspirator with Satan. It makes you an anti-Christ. That is why bearing false witness is one of the Ten Commandments. It all began with Satan, disguised as the serpent, spreading lies to destroy God's reputation. Let's go back to Genesis and take a look at what God actually said and how the serpent lied.

And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." Genesis 2:16-17

"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Genesis 3:4-5

As a result of this character assignation of God, sin, and death enter the world.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned. Romans 5:12

Satan continued to use lies as a weapon against Jesus when the Sanhedrin sought out people willing to ‘bear false witness’ against him. Notice that they did not even try to find truthful witnesses who could bring a real charge against Jesus. That is because Jesus had committed no sin.

The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward and declared, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’” Matthew 26:59-61

God takes the truth seriously because Jesus said he was the truth. In this world, we only find lies. Our lives are but a fragile house of cards built on lies. So many trust the news media, but the news “bears false witness.” In 1976, the publication Mother Jones ran the headline “Pinto Madness”. In the article, they wrote that 800-900 people died every year in Pinto fires. There was a problem with the position of the gas tank in Pintos that could cause them to spill gas when rear-ended. 60 Minutes picked up the story and reported thousands of deaths each year. The problem with the gas tank was real, but the news was fake. The National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration, which keeps track of such data, reported only 27 Pinto fire deaths from 1970 (Pinto’s first year available) to 1976

(publication of Mother Jones' article) out of 2.4 million Pintos on the road. Outright lies that sold thousands of Mother Jones magazines and had millions of eyeballs watching 60 Minutes. This lie was spread to make money, but today, the news media uses lies to destroy lives and push an agenda.

Scientists lie. Dr. Mattias Desmet, professor of clinical psychology at Ghent University in Belgium, exposes the epidemic of fraud in the scientific community in his book *The Psychology of Totalitarianism*.

To the extent that the scientific discourse become an ideology, it lost its virtue of truth-telling. Nothing illustrates this better than the so-called replication crisis that erupted in academia in 2005. This crisis emerged when a number of serious cases of scientific fraud came to light. Scientific scans and other imaging were proven to have been manipulated, archaeological artefacts were found to be counterfeit, embryo clones had been forged; some researchers claimed to have successfully trans-planted skin from mice, whilst they had simply dyed the skin of the test animals without performing any surgical procedure. Other researchers had manufactured missing links from pieces of skulls of humans and monkeys; and yes, it appeared that some even completely made up their research.

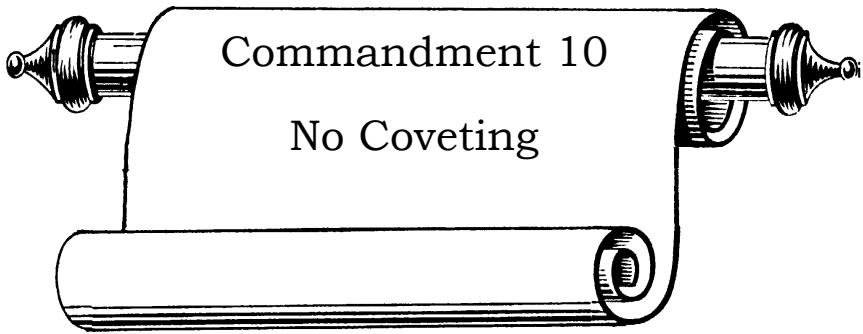
An endless series of books could be written on the lies we are told daily. Yet, we go on with our lives believing so many because to do otherwise would cause our house-of-cards hope in a safe world to collapse. But there is a source of truth, Jesus.

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6

Where it counts the most, we can find truth. While we raced around chasing lie after lie, Truth stood among us. When we placed our trust in falsehoods, Truth took on flesh and blood. Lying is an abomination to God because Jesus is Truth. Using lies as a weapon to destroy others is of grave concern to God because Satan uses lies to try to destroy the truth that God is the Creator, and that can cause people to reject the gospel and spend eternity in hell.

Can you handle the truth? The truth is that God created a perfect world without sin and without death. But through the lies of the devil, Adam and Eve sinned by eating the forbidden fruit, thus breaking the one commandment God gave them. They passed this sinful nature on to their descendants in an unbroken line of sinful people. We are born with a sinful nature and spend our lives breaking God's commandments. The wages of sin, breaking God's commandments, is death, Paul says in Romans. But the gift of God is eternal life through belief in Jesus. God loved us so much that he made a way for our sins to be forgiven. It was through the death of Jesus on the cross. Realizing our sin separates us from God and condemns us to an eternity in hell; our only hope is to believe in Jesus and trust that his death on the cross paid the price for our sins. And that believing in him, we are saved and will spend eternity with God. That is the truth.

Dr. Jeffery Elliott



“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.”

There are three books in the Old Testament that are attributed to Solomon. Solomon was the wisest man to ever live. God blessed him with great wisdom. Now, there are different stages in adult life, just like there are in childhood. And as we find ourselves in each stage, we see life from a different perspective. So it was with Solomon. He wrote each of his books at different stages in life.

His first book was Song of Solomon. Newer translations often title it as Song of Songs. It is about the love between a husband and wife, and Solomon probably wrote it while he was a young man in his early twenties.

His next book was Proverbs. Right at the beginning, the book

identifies its purpose of teaching wisdom and understanding to Solomon's sons. Proverbs was probably written in his thirties.

And finally, there is Ecclesiastes. The word itself means teacher or preacher. It is written from the perspective of an older, experienced man. Solomon was probably around fifty. After studying and learning all he could for a lifetime, he found it meaningless. He tried finding meaning in pleasure and denied himself nothing. Still, it was all meaningless. He threw himself into building projects: parks, gardens, palaces. All meaningless.

Have you ever wondered what the meaning and purpose of life are? Solomon summed up his twelve chapters on the meaninglessness of life with these two verses on the meaning and purpose of life.

Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: **Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.**

For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

Solomon was not only incredibly wise but also extremely wealthy. The Bible says that Solomon's basic salary was 22 tons of gold a year. At the time of this writing, gold is selling for \$1,991.50 per ounce. That means Solomon's salary was 1.4 billion dollars a year! Nothing was denied Solomon. And yet, after a lifetime of endless exploration and experimentation, his conclusion is that the whole purpose of our lives is to fear God and keep his commandments.

Let's explore the meaning of this commandment. God lists four very specific things: house, wife, servants, and "ox and donkey." The ox was the powerhouse of work around a farm or business. It was the "beast of burden" because it had great strength. Most of us do not own an ox today. The modern equivalent would be a work vehicle such as a truck, a backhoe, or a combine. The donkey would also be a beast of burden. It often provided transportation. Today, we will talk about our cars.

We now have appliances instead of servants. Our washer, dryer, dishwasher, and even our computers and phones take the place of servants.

God listed out these specific areas of coveting because they were the areas people coveted. Coveting is not limited to just these four items, but we still seem to have trouble with coveting the same things today.

What does it mean to covet? Merriam-Webster defines covet as "to wish for earnestly; to desire (what belongs to another) inordinately or culpably." In one sense, coveting is simply to want what belongs to another. But there is another aspect of coveting in the Bible. It is wanting more, and more, and more. Because coveting is used so rarely in conversation today, most people do not understand the word. We find that modern translators will replace the word covet in New Testament passages with the word greedy.

We live in a culture that is saturated with advertising designed to create a yearning for more. Every aspect of our lives is flooded with ads designed to make us crave things we didn't even know existed. This is a state of coveting. Out of all the possible "do not" commandments God could have given us, he reserved one for coveting.

Coveting is an inward sin. It is something that is not immediately obvious. If we murder someone, there is the body. If we break in and steal, there is the physical evidence. If we give false testimony or lie, it can be proven. And if we commit adultery, it can be found out. But coveting can rot us from the inside and yet be hidden from others. Like a great oak tree with the heart of the tree rotten. And that is why this sin is so insidious. The Bible takes this sin very seriously.

For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Ephesians 5:5 (NKJV)

Paul compares covetousness to idolatry and an exclusion from the kingdom of Christ. The reason this sin is so serious is that it can keep you from Christ because you place those things you covet above Jesus. Your covetousness becomes your god.

Coveting can also be the foundation of breaking other commandments. It can be the reason we steal. It can also lead to adultery. We may lie to gain something we covet. And in some cases, murder can be the result of coveting.

Solomon tells us in Ecclesiastes that God has put eternity in our hearts. In other words, there is a longing for God in us. There is a hole that we are seeking to fill. In reality, that hole can only be filled by God. But we seek to fill it with possessions. The problem is that possessions can only satisfy us for a short period of time, and then we want more. That is when covetousness is born. As Christians, we have God, and the Bible makes it clear that we need to learn to be content.

Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Hebrew 13:5 NKJV

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.¹ Timothy 6:6-10

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength. Philippians 4:11-13

The writer of Hebrews tells us that we can be content because we will always have God. He will never leave us, and he will provide for our needs.

Paul tells us that contentment is a great gain. It is a benefit to our lives to be content with what we have instead of always chasing after

the next great purchase. He tells us that we can be content even when we are hungry or in want because Christ is our source of strength, satisfaction, and sense of purpose. That's why, instead of chasing the next purchase, we should chase the kingdom of God.

**But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,
and all these things shall be added to you. Matthew 6:33
NKJV**

When we seek the kingdom of God, he will provide for all our needs. Coveting is looking at what we do not have. It focuses your attention on the things your neighbor has. You look at yourself and say, "I am lacking something. If I could have this particular item, I could be happy." Yet, you get it and remain unhappy.

What is the opposite of all that? It is to look at what you do have. And no matter what your situation is, you still have things you can be thankful for. I want to challenge you to become a grateful person.

The Morning Thanksgiving List

John Maxwell has spent his life helping people understand that your attitude is something you choose. You can choose to wake up grumpy in the morning, or you can choose to wake up grateful. I want to help you to choose to be grateful every morning. Did you know that you are commanded in the Bible to be a thankful person? Remember, in Psalms, it says, "Come into his courts with thanksgiving."

I challenge you to wake up every morning and pray a prayer of thanksgiving to God for the following five areas of life. I call them the Morning Thanksgiving List.

God

The first thing we should thank God for is being God.

Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods. Psalm 95:2-3

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our “God is a consuming fire.” Hebrews 12:28-29

What a wonderful God we have. He loves us so much that he gave his only son to die for our sins. He created us to have a relationship with him. He is so powerful that the creation of this wonderful world was simple for him. Every morning, think of something about God to give thanks. Make it different every day.

Salvation

The second thing to be thankful for is salvation.

So then, just as you **received Christ Jesus as Lord**, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with **thankfulness**. Colossians 2:6-7

If we had nothing else to be thankful for, salvation would be enough for a lifetime of thanksgiving. Think of it. As Christians, we

can be thankful that no matter how bad life can get, we will never go to hell. That one thing is worth a lifetime of thanksgiving. But it is not just about what happens after death. We get the Holy Spirit living in us right now, guiding us, teaching us, changing us. We have forgiveness of sins. All of our sins. We have eternal life. We have an inheritance with God. The list goes on. Wake up every morning and thank God for one thing about salvation.

The Church

Next, be thankful for the church.

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. Ephesians 1:15-16

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. Colossians 1:3

Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing[b] her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. Ephesians 5:25-27

Everybody loves to complain about the church. People in a traditional church complain about those in a contemporary church, while they complain that the traditional people are doing church wrong. It sounds like the Israelites, during their time in the wilderness, complained about everything God gave them. Read about it in Numbers 11.

But Jesus is the one who started the church. Paul tells us he gave himself up for the church. The church is a great benefit to Christians. When we gather at church, we can encourage each other. We can build each other up. We can help each other go through difficult times. We can provide for needs. Church is Jesus' idea.

Wake up every morning and thank God for your church. Find something specific and different every day.

Your Family

Then, thank God for your family.

Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him. Psalm 127:3

He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord. Proverbs 18:22

The Bible tells us that children and spouses are wonderful things. It is so wonderful that God created it. These are gifts from God. God has given me a wonderful, loving wife and partner in ministry. He has provided me with delightful children that bring joy to my life.

And don't forget about parents and extended family. I have a wonderful family. Some of them are in heaven now. I still thank God for them. They had a great influence on my life. Every day, we should awake and thank God for one thing about our family. Make it specific. Make it something new every day.

God's Provisions

Finally, there is God's provisions.

Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things. Psalm 107:8-9

Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. 2 Corinthians 9:10-11

God provides for all our needs. Over and over, scripture tells us that the righteous (believers in Christ) will never go hungry. It says that all things work together for good. It tells us that we do not have to worry about tomorrow because we know God is going to provide for us. What a wonderful blessing. Let's wake up every day and thank God for something he has provided for us.

Combat covetousness by becoming a thankful person. Learn to be content by focusing on what you have every morning when you wake up.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Jeffery Elliott, originally from Clarksville, Tennessee, is married to his college sweetheart and has two grown daughters. He earned his BSEE from Tennessee Technological University and worked as an Electrical Engineer for twenty years. Dr. Elliott has worked in Dallas, Texas, Rockford, Illinois, and Seattle, Washington, for such companies as Texas Instruments, Sundstrand, Boeing, Allied Signal, and Honeywell.

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“I am very concerned by the biblical illiteracy in America, even in our churches. So many reject Jesus based on a false image created by academia and popular media, never knowing the real Jesus. I write to help introduce people to the real Jesus of the Bible.”

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