

THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL

GOD DELIVERS

GOD THE LAWGIVER

God of Our Relationships

The first four commandments of the Ten Commandments speak to our relationship with God. The next six speak to our relationships with others. Through these commandments, God reveals how important the welfare of His children is to Him. It is not my intent to ‘dissect’ and examine each individual commandment as we have in past studies. Instead we will view the last six commandments in light of Christ living through us in our relationships.

Jesus said, “*So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. Matthew 7:12 (ESV)*” These words of Jesus known as the “Golden Rule” should be practiced because we are Christians, not to make us Christians. Jesus didn't say that we are to treat others like they treat us, but how we would like to have them treat us.

During the 2005 Iraq war, an American soldier Stephen Tschiderer, an army medic, met his enemy's bullet before he met his enemy. While patrolling the streets of Baghdad, Stephen was shot in the chest by an enemy sniper. Although he was knocked to the ground by the impact, Stephen was saved by his bulletproof vest. In company with the combat team that tracked down the sniper, the soldier discovered his assailant had been wounded. At this point, the American put the words of Jesus (*whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them*) into action. The enemy sniper was directly in front of him, wounded, and in need of prompt medical attention. Only moments earlier, the sniper had put Stephen's heart between the crosshairs on the scope of his rifle and pulled the trigger, fully intending to end his life. Stephen could have roughed him up. He could have simply walked away and justified his actions. Instead, Stephen treated and dressed the wounds of the man who had tried to take his life.

Loving others begins with the family. In fact, we honor God by honoring our parents.

Read Exodus 20:12 (ESV) ¹² “*Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.*”

The Fifth Commandment is the first commandment with a promise –*that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.* Originally this promise was for the nation of Israel assuring the Jews that such obedience would keep them in their land a long time. However, the Apostle Paul repeats this command for New Testament believers . All of the Ten Commandments (other than Commandment 4 regarding Sabbath keeping) are clearly repeated in the New Testament.

Read Ephesians 6:1-3 (ESV) ¹ *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.* ² *“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise),* ³ *“that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”*

Within the family unit, love should be displayed. One significant way that children learn to honor their parents is by seeing mothers and fathers who love and honor their own parents and parents-in-law. Be warned: how we treat our parents today will factor into how we are treated tomorrow. **Galatians 6:7 (ESV)** ⁷ *Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.*

Not all children have the privilege of seeing their parents live to an old age. But, when we do, physical and mental problems often come about. From experience I know that it can be a difficult time when the parent becomes the ‘child’ and the child must become the ‘parent.’ There will be things you would not give a second thought if done by an elderly friend or acquaintance but the same action may bring you to tears when it is YOUR own parent. We can honor our aging parents through the strength and grace of the Lord. **Proverbs 23:22 (ESV)** ²² *Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.*

Before we go any further in our study of the commandments, let’s refresh our memories regarding the words of Jesus. In New Testament times, the scribes had determined that the Jews were obligated to obey 613 precepts in the Law, 365 negative precepts and 248 positive. One of their favorite exercises was discussing which of these divine commandments was the greatest. Let’s read how Jesus answered their question.

Read Mark 12:29-31 (ESV) ²⁹ *Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.’* ³⁰ *And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’* ³¹ *The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”*

The Lord quoted what the Jews call the Shema from **Deuteronomy 6:4 (ESV)** *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.* The Shema emphasized that the one and only true God is Yahweh. It is wise for Christians to focus on the most important commandment even today. There is a growing trend that calls for acceptance of the gods of others as equal to Jesus. Jesus explained in **John 10:30 (ESV)** ³⁰ *I and the Father are one.”*

Jesus continued by quoting **Deuteronomy 6:5 (ESV)** ⁵ *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.* Jesus focused on the importance of love. **1 John 4:7-8 (ESV)** ⁷ *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.* ⁸ *Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.* We are to live by relationships, a loving relationship to God that enables us to have a loving relationship with others.

Since Jesus made loving our neighbor of major importance. Therefore, our lesson writers have entitled our next four commandments as honoring God by loving our neighbors.

Read Exodus 20:13-16 (ESV) ¹³ “You shall not murder.” ¹⁴ “You shall not commit adultery.” ¹⁵ “You shall not steal.” ¹⁶ “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”

I will admit that loving some ‘neighbors’ as ourselves – it is often easier said than done. However, when we need to have ‘more love,’ for others and cannot seem to find that love within our own hearts, we can ask God to fill our hearts with His love for that individual. **Philippians 4:19 (ESV)** ¹⁹ *And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*

Paul repeated these Old Testament commandments in **Romans 13:9 (ESV)** ⁹ *For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”* Loving one another is the basic principle of the Christian life. It is the “new commandment” that God the Son gave to us. **John 13:34 (ESV)** ³⁴ *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.* When we practice love, there is no need for any other laws, because love covers it all! Saying that love covers it all reminds me of an old hymn we used to sing. Calvary Covers It All. My past with its sin and stain, my guilt and despair Jesus took on Him there, and Calvary covers it all. Jesus set the ultimate example as He hung from the cross when He said, ... *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”* ... **Luke 23:34 (ESV)**

As believers, we do not live under the Old Covenant of the Law; we live under the New Covenant of Grace. Our motive for obedience to God is not motivation to fulfill the Law for the purpose of our salvation. It was Jesus who fulfilled the Law so that we may be saved by grace. Our motivation for obedience to God’s Law is love – our love for God and our love for our fellow man. If we love others, we don’t murder with guns or words; we live inside God’s parameters for marriage; we don’t take what is not ours; and we don’t ‘edit the truth’ to suit ourselves. With the way communication is in our time, we can see ‘instant replays’ of politicians who are ‘editing the truth’ of what they have said in the past to suit themselves in the present and it is not becoming in them and it doesn’t look any better to our LORD when we edit the truth to suit our purposes.

We honor God by cultivating a heart of contentment.

Read Exodus 20:17 (ESV) ¹⁷ *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”*

Although we place coveting with the commandments concerning our relationships with people, coveting is an inward attitude of the heart that promotes other sins: such as adultery, stealing, lying and even murder.

It is the Law that reveals this ‘heart condition.’ Paul said in **Romans 7:7 (ESV)** ⁷ *... if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”* Warren Wiersbe points out, “Paul did not use murder, stealing, or adultery in his discussion; he uses *coveting*. This is the last of the Ten Commandments, and it differs

from the other nine in that it is an inward attitude, not an outward action. Covetousness leads to the breaking of the other commandments! It is an insidious sin that most people never recognize in their own lives, but God's Law reveals it."

There are several answers to the question, "what is coveting?"

- (1) When my thoughts are wholly dominated and consumed with this world and its goods, I am coveting. The coveter is consumed with the things of this life – never satisfied with what he/she has.
- (2) When I am more concerned with earthly matters than eternal ones, I am coveting. Coveters are more focused on the praise of men than the praise that God will give one day.
- (3) When I overload my life with worldly business, I am coveting. This is not about providing for genuine family needs. The priority of possessions drown out the Lord.
- (4) When my heart is so set upon the world to the point that I am willing to do unlawful, crooked, dishonest methods to get what I want, I am a coveter indeed.

Men from history like Napoleon, Alexander, and Hitler all coveted the rule of the world. I will list some "coveters" of Scripture who complicated and corrupted their lives with their greedy, grasping attitudes.

- Eve coveted forbidden fruit. This **damaged** humanity's relationship with God.
- David coveted Bathsheba. He was **disgraced**.
- Ahab and Jezebel coveted Naboth's vineyard. **Death** was the result.
- Absalom coveted David's throne. **Death** was the outcome.
- Judas coveted 30 pieces of silver. He committed **suicide**.
- Demas coveted this world. He was **disgraced**.

The opposite of coveting is contentment. *1 Timothy 6:6 (ESV)*⁶ *But godliness with contentment is great gain.* True contentment comes from godliness in the heart, not wealth in the hand. A person who depends on material things for peace and assurance will never be satisfied, for material things have a way of losing their appeal.

There is nothing positive to say regarding coveting – the sin that starts in the heart. However, there is everything positive to say about contentment in Jesus. Paul said in *2 Corinthians 12:10 (ESV)*¹⁰ *For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*