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The Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule - Why Bother?

Matthew 7:12: (NASB) *In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*



So often when people think about the Bible, they think of an ancient book full of rules given by a God who was jealous and angry in the Old Testament, and they think about Jesus as a representation of love and kindness in the New Testament. Our present social culture has decided that any necessary rules and guidelines can simply come from within each of us and that we do not need any ancient book telling us here in this age of knowledge and reason what to do! Well, is the ancient wisdom right or are we?

The Golden Rule is one of the most simple and profound sayings ever uttered at anytime, anywhere.

Matthew 7:12: (NASB) *In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

If we allow it to be, this can be a very transformative statement. ...*the Law and the Prophets* - Jesus credits the Old Testament for the ingredients that make up this saying. Some say Jesus was merely copying other ancient wisdom found elsewhere - was he?

Jesus built his teachings of love and kindness on the basis of the Old Testament and its purpose. **Let us focus on what the Law said in its most basic (and abbreviated) form:**
Exodus 20

1	Thou shalt have no other gods before me
2	Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image
3	Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain
4	Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy
5	Honor thy father and thy mother
6	Thou shalt not kill
7	Thou shalt not commit adultery
8	Thou shalt not steal
9	Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor
10	Thou shalt not covet

Observations:

- The first four Commandments guide our relationship with the Almighty.
- The First Commandment is “internal action instruction,” meaning it is fulfilled within our heart and mind.
- The next three are “external action instructions,” meaning their fulfillment can be seen.
- The second six guide our relationship with our human family.
- Commandments 5 through 9 are “external action instructions,” meaning their fulfillment can be seen.
- The 10th Commandment is “internal action instruction,” meaning it is fulfilled within our heart and mind.

We have somewhat of a sandwich effect - surrounding all of our actions are the internal desires of our hearts and mind.

The key to overcoming subjective morality is to have a primary objective. If that primary objective is to worship God and Him alone, that is the highest objective for which we could ever hope! Without this standard, everything becomes subjective based on how you feel.

James 1:17: God does not change! He is bound by the barriers of His own character of love, justice, wisdom and power. God is not subjective.

(Remember, this is *internal* instruction.)

Psalms 29:2 James 1:8: This is why the Commandments start with just God. It helps to take away double-mindedness from

us. There is a saying: A man who tries to catch two rabbits catches none. The idea is to have a focus for our morality. If that focus is higher than humanity, it can bring us to a true objective morality.

1 Thou shalt have no other gods before me



Matthew 4:10: Jesus understood to worship God and Him only. Satan knew this, too, but chose not to believe in that any longer, choosing instead to be subject to himself. Subjective morality was founded in the character of Satan. Violation of this First Commandment is the beginning of the downfall of any civilization. This can be subtle - happening in your mind first - (Lucifer is a good example) **see Bonus Material!**

The defining characteristics of worship rightly placed and worship wrongly placed:

The **OBJECT** of your worship - what is it? What are you really worshipping? What/who are you bowing down to in your mind?

The **REASONS** for your worship - why is it? Why have you chosen in your mind to bow down to whatever/whoever it is you are worshipping?

The **METHODS** to your worship - how is it? What are the things you are doing to show that worship? Answering these questions could be very revealing. We live in a world full of idolatry, yet according to the First Commandment, we are not to worship anything not worthy of our admiration, our praise and our loyalty. There are things in this world that are good and should be respected, but not on the same level as God.

There is no better way to target fulfilling the "Golden Rule" than by putting God first!

2 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image

Isaiah 42:8: God was adamant about this. God is not arrogant; He is truthful. He demands and commands our respect because of what and who He is. In making and giving recognition to "images" we take God's glory and reduce it to that which is earthly.

The consequences of this foolishness is expressed in Romans: **Romans 1:21-23:** Violation of this commandment is the outward sign resulting from violating the First Commandment. It is a clear manifestation of a conscience either going or already gone bad. Of course in our age, the idea of a graven image has become a much more widespread imagery, from digital images to trinkets to possessions, brand names, clubs, celebrities, politicians and sports figures...we have lots of graven images in the 21st century! Therefore, we have missed the meaning of that First internal heart Commandment to put no other God before Jehovah. That is when morality becomes subjective and not objective.

3 Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain

Take the Lord's name in vain - more literally translated to lift up or carry His name.

It implies this means more than just speaking His name carelessly. Rather, it implies *living* "His name" carelessly and senselessly. For example, being a Christian "in name only" but not living according to Jesus in daily life. There are lots of ways to take God's name in vain, such as idolatry, hypocrisy, pride, lack of sobriety, greed and the list goes on. **The New Testament focuses more on honoring the name of God rather than misusing it:** **Matthew 6:9** **An example of taking God's name in vain:** **Mark 7:6-7:** Violation of this Commandment is the result of the first two violations - a minimizing of the importance of the name of God. Once the first two have been violated, this one seems to be of little consequence. After all, it is just a name and in today's world, it is not even a politically correct one.

Honor God's name and character in the same way we want our name and character to be honored.

If we put God first, everything else will follow. That is why we believe the first four Commandments are all about God - if we can't get that right, how can we possibly treat each other right?

4 Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy

Revelation 1:10: This talks about *the Lord's Day* in the ancient Christian development process. *The Lord's Day* was known as Sunday, the day after the Jewish Sabbath, Saturday. Sunday

became the day of rest for Christians because it was the day Jesus was resurrected. It became the day of focusing on the rest in Christ that we have to honor God. It was the Christian fulfillment of the Jewish Sabbath.



So far, we have focused on the first four commandments - the ones that teach us to put God first. Without this as a basis, the other six commandments can easily become subjective, as each of them needs the "God First Foundation" to truly be able to guide our behavior. That is the foundation for crystal clear objective morality.

We will begin to examine the final six commandments by *beginning with the tenth* because it, like the first, is an internal instruction that goes on in your head and your heart. The rest will be the expression of this Commandment.

10

Thou shalt not covet

Clearly, coveting is a very emotional thing. That can be tricky! Whenever we base our actions on our emotions, we are walking on unstable ground because emotions change. We are not to covet those things, which do not - or should not - rightfully belong to us! But we can covet something in a good way. For example, we want to honor God. We want to delight in this, covet this. But we can easily covet the wrong things.

There are defining characteristics of positive vs. negative coveting: The OBJECT of your coveting - what is it? The REASONS for your coveting - why is it? The CIRCUMSTANCES of your coveting - what are you doing about it?

James 4:1-3: Do not focus on what you want inside of yourself, focus on what you want as a God-honoring individual. This is how objective morality can shine far above subjective morality.

Respect all that your neighbor is and has as their own so they can do the same!

5

Honor thy father and thy mother

This seems to be a "transition" Commandment. The first four were focused on our relationship with God Almighty - helping us to give Him all the praise, honor and worship that He rightly deserves. It is as if God is telling us, "Okay, you now know who, how and why to honor your Creator in heaven. Now bring that knowledge down to your earthly family and give the proper honor to your parents." If we had parental respect in our society today, life would be different. We have really lost that principle.

Ephesians 6:1-4: The human family is a picture of the heavenly family. If we do not respect the concept of honor in the earthly family environment, then how can we be expected to respect it in the heavenly? So, what does coveting have to do with honoring parents? The main reason for disrespect to parents is that we want something other than what our parents will allow. We want it, we obsess over it and then we disrespect our parents, because, "What do they know anyway?" Violation of this commandment is a deeply troubling event, for it shows an undeveloped or wrongly-tuned conscience, destined for sorrow and grief.

6

Thou shalt not kill

Jesus taught us to elevate this commandment to a higher level than physical murder: 1 John 3:13-15: Murder, whether literal or figurative, is a symptom of a society that truly lacks respect for fellow man, which of course has its roots in a lack of respect for God. Why should we bother with the Ten Commandments and Golden Rule? Because they will transform the way we think and live if we understand the reasoning behind them. **Murder has its seeds in a bitter, deceptive heart:** Proverbs 26:24-26: Violation of this Commandment is obviously based in utter lack of respect for others and stems from our focused attention on our own ego (coveting again!). In many ways we become like Satan, *the father of lies* and the first murderer. No wonder this sin is explained in the context of Gehenna (the garbage pit in Jerusalem representing utter destruction - **also please refer to our complete analysis of this word in the program called, "Do the Fires of Hell Come From God? Part II"**) when Jesus teaches about it in Matthew 5!

We cannot hate because it leads to figurative murder. Remember, if we put God first, it is so much easier to deal with our fellow man.

Honor the sacredness of human life and commitments and you, too, can be honored.

7

Thou shalt not commit adultery

Matthew 5:27-28: Jesus elevated this Commandment, just like the last one. Not only should one not commit the physical act, but not even the mental, internal, coveting act. Adultery is ultimate



selfishness - denying the sacredness of the marriage covenant and an overwhelming evidence of coveting gone bad. Coveting is more easily out of control when God is not honored!

What about adultery on a spiritual level? James 4:4-10: When we put ourselves first, pride gets in the way and the most important thing is "you." You decide what is right for you (subjective). "God first" helps put all of our relationships in an honorable perspective.

Humanity is fallen and broken in this area of adultery. Violation of this Commandment carries not only disgrace, but like the previous Commandment, it carries the liability to Gehenna, for it is a blatant example of godless, covetous actions that can only bring grief.

8

Thou shalt not steal

It has been said that ownership is nine tenths of the law. Stealing disrupts ownership. We can steal by taking that which is not ours, false advertising, omitting important information or misrepresentation.

Deuteronomy 25:13-16: Who is it hurting? It does not matter. Stealing does not honor God.

Matthew 21:12-13: Throughout his ministry, Jesus stood up for righteousness in its purest sense. The money changers were cheating the people and needed to be stopped.

Violation of this Commandment can be subtle in some cases, but in all cases it violates our own person just as it violates the one from whom we steal. Sometimes the "stealing" can be motivated by not wanting someone to have something and other times it can be motivated by our wanting something someone else has. In either case, we covet, sin and fall.

 **Introduction, Subjective Morality vs. Objective Morality, Mark Passio, Moral Relativism**

- *Human freedom is being destroyed and lost at the rate that it is being destroyed and lost at for one basic over-arching reason. Human beings, unfortunately, have come to a point in their consciousness where most of them no longer know the difference between right and wrong. That's it folks, that's it.*

Society no longer knows right from wrong because we assume we can create right and wrong in our own minds for what is good for "me." That assumption takes the value of right and wrong and cuts the legs out from under it. Right and wrong cannot stand on anything because inevitably it comes to a point where what YOU think is right is not what I think is right and yet we need to co-exist.

9

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor

We can bear false witness (which is a form of stealing) by assigning credit for a task to the wrong place, ruining someone's reputation or misrepresenting someone or something (slander or libel).

Leviticus 19:16: It is so easy to bear false witness. Sometimes we do *not* say something that would be supportive of someone - not giving someone the facts they need. Bearing false witness is easy, common and acceptable...but wrong! Ephesians 4:26-32: Violation of this Commandment indicates a deep lack of respect for truth. To achieve a level of not bearing false witness can be a monumental task, for the terrain one must trek is not only slippery but very deceptive as well. **The best way to avoid this trap of bearing false witness is to continually reaffirm the two greatest Commandments in our minds: Matthew 22:37-40**

Matthew 7:12: (NASB) *In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

Jesus built on the foundation of the Old Testament in order to teach us that the basic, core moral values given to us specifically in the Ten Commandments are *objective*. They put God first and God always. Once we get that right, the last six Commandments tell us how to treat one another. If God is in the picture first in our place of greatest honor, our respect for one another is much greater.

***So, the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule - why bother?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!***