

## Series - The Ten Commandments



What I am about to tell you is going to change your life. Over the next three weeks your life and your faith will never be the same - in a good way too. This is ancient wisdom that has been lost over time. Muddled by philosophies and theologies, cultures and societies. Even by churches and some church traditions.

When I mention something like the 10 Commandments, what do we think of? “I know all about them? I know of them? I know that there are ten of them?” These Commandments are essential to our faith. So let’s if we know them all... in order!

You shall have no other gods but me.  
You shall not make yourself a carved image.  
You shall not misuse the name of Yahweh your God  
Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.  
Honour your father and your mother  
You shall not kill.  
You shall not commit adultery.  
You shall not steal.  
You shall not give false evidence against your neighbour.  
You shall not set your heart on your neighbour's house, etc.

These Commandments, when we truly understand them, changes our life like nothing else in this world. They work hand in hand with the Holy Spirit within and creates what we sometimes call a new creation because it is so radical. We change so much from our old self and from those who do not follow these Commandments.

What I am saying is that modern Christianity has forgotten not only the importance of these Commandments. But how we apply them to our life in the way they were intended.

What I hope will happen is that we appreciate even deeper these words upon which our faith is based. And the first thing we need to realise and understand that this foundation of Israel’s faith is **not legalistic**, but pure grace. These Commandments came from the hand of God through Moses as a gift to help people realise the incredible life God was offering them and to us.

So let’s take a look at this first Commandment and what it actually means for us.

The Ten Commandments don’t simply start with, “Thou shall not...” It begins with:

**Exodus 20:1-2** Then God gave the people all these instructions:

"I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery.

In the Bible we see the emphasis upon God speaking, **God’s word reaching out to people** – instructing, guiding, helping. And these words begin with what God did for these people, these Israelites.

“I am” – an echo to Moses and the burning bush. I am the Lord, your God. The word Lord is YHWH and in Hebrew it is Israel’s special name, unique name for God. Their God rescued them from Egypt, the place where they were in slavery. The same can be said of us too. This same God is a God who rescued us from our Egypt, our place of slavery - our fears, anxieties, pre-occupations... to a Promised Land. And the way that God does this is through the instructions God provides – the guidelines, the signposts, the direction, the teaching that brings true life, true relationship with God.

The first Commandment is essential, the foundation stone upon all the rest stand (or fall). “You must not have any other god but me.” What does this mean? Don’t get mixed up with Islam, Hinduism? Or could it be other kinds of gods like having **priorities** over God? So the first thing we need to ask ourselves are what are our priorities in life? What are the most important things in your life? What do you get most upset over if things don’t go your way? If you can’t get to church n time? If someone breaks something of yours? If you lose money? The opposite can also work. What makes you happiest? Getting to church on time to hear me preach? Having enough money - winning lotto? Seeing new people at church?

The word that comes to mind with this Commandment is devotion. This devotion isn’t second class, a passing interest, a casual acquaintance, a “one morning a week” commitment. This commandment is the first devotion, the highest devotion – before all other things in our life.

So before anything else happens in our faith we should ponder our first priority in this life? And if God isn’t – if God becomes something of a backstop, a backup plan, a mere genie to help us get what we want, then perhaps we need to rethink who this God is. Because this God is so much more. It isn’t simply that this God demands our utter respect and devotion. But this God *deserves* it beyond any doubt. And our life can be more because of this also.

Perhaps what this Commandment is truly saying is in who or what do you place your trust? We know that fear is a very strong influence on people’s lives. People can put up with all kinds of things because of fear. They stay in a job they hate because they fear losing the pay-check, they put up with abuse from another, because they fear being alone, one fears trusting others because they may let them down. They fear trusting God because what if they were wrong? What if God doesn’t come through? What if their idea of God is wrong?

Of course we can justify such a life as being sensible and secure and safe. The Israelites wanted to return to **Egypt** because of this time and time again. But is it the life God intended us to live? Faith doesn’t always keep our life safe. It doesn’t always give us what we want. Faith is living a life bigger than ourselves - to serve God. In some ways this commandment is echoed in Jesus’ own words when he talks about dying to oneself, taking up one’s cross, sacrifice and service. Only then do we realise the true reality of this incredible faith.

The point the Bible makes time and time again is this – when we put God first – truly and honestly – we discover what our life is for. The things of this world pale in comparison to the things of God... even Lotto.

This Commandment is a vital for us today as it was for Israel. “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of slavery. You shall have no other Gods, before me.” When this becomes our reality our life changes - our priorities, our fears, our desires. When we begin to see God for who God truly is then there is nothing in this world to compare to this.

It marks the beginning of a life journey that can be challenging and hard - but it is a life devoted to God and in the end nothing else compares to this. So this week think about your priorities. Think about how your devotion to God is lived out. Think about how we serve God as individuals and as a local church. Devotion. Priorities. Service.

Next week we look at idol making - which I think maybe a little different than what some think.