

Andrews University

Digital Commons @ Andrews University

Faculty Publications

Church History

1-1-2010

Living Out the Principles of the Ten Commandments

Trevor O'Reggio

Andrews University, toreggio@andrews.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/church-history-pubs>



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

O'Reggio, Trevor, "Living Out the Principles of the Ten Commandments" (2010). *Faculty Publications*. 18.
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/church-history-pubs/18>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Church History at Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.

Living out the Principles of the Ten Commandments

Trevor O'Reggio

The Ten Commandments are the principles of God's kingdom and the rule by which all His creatures govern their lives. The basic, fundamental principle of these commands is love - supreme love for our Creator God and unselfish love for our fellow humans. This principle of unselfish love must be firmly entrenched into the fiber of our being, into the very core of our existence in order for us to be fitted for God's kingdom. The Ten Commandments are the practical outworking of this principle and their adaption to the sinful context of human life. These commands also express in more detail important principles of living according to God's rule as they flow from the foundational love principle. The purpose of this brief study is to expound on and practically apply these principles to human life. It endeavors to show how critical it is for us to imbibe these principles if we intend to live under the rule of the great Sovereign of the universe.

The Principle of First Priority and Primary Love

The first commandment says: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

God's work of transforming the sinner from a rebel into a loyal citizen prepared for His kingdom is an arduous but joyous task. He takes pleasure in this work. What is involved in this work? I propose that God seeks to inculcate within the believer the principles of the commandments which are the same as that of heaven so that one can be fitted to live in an atmosphere devoid of selfishness and filled with selfless love.

Practical Implications of the Ten Commandments Trevor O'Reggio - 2

Man's Problem

The sinner in his natural state operates by the principle of selfishness and driven primarily by his own self-interest. His whole life's agenda is motivated by self-seeking and self-gratification. He sees himself as the sovereign of his life. He puts himself in the place of God. He thinks he knows what is best for his life. His entire life is at variance with the fundamental law of Heaven. He lives for himself. Heaven's law is to live for others. God is not first priority or primary love of his life, his needs, interests and desires - these are his first priorities and primary love of his life.

The principle of first priority and primary love for God is the foundation principle of the sovereign rule of God throughout His creation. He must be first and best in our lives. He cannot be second place. He must either be first place or no place at all. The Bible spells it out very clearly. You shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. On this bedrock principle lies heaven's foundation. As creatures from the hand of our Creator, our supreme happiness and joy is found only in rendering service to our God. He says to us "I am the Lord thy God. which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shall have no other God's before me".

God identifies Himself as the God who delivers his people from bondage and He declares to us his place in our lives - you shall have no other gods before me. In other words, God says, "You shall have me alone as your God. You shall not have any other gods after me before me, or in addition to me. I must not be the chief god nor the best God nor the highest God of your life. I must be the only God, the only one worthy of your supreme worship, affection and allegiance. I tolerate no rivals. It is I and no other. I must have total supremacy and exclusivity in your life.

Practical Implications of the Ten Commandments
Trevor O'Reggio - 3

Only when God is in his proper place in our lives is there value to our lives. Let me illustrate. Imagine that you have three zeroes and you place them all in a straight line (000). You then put a number after the zeroes. Let's put the number 7 after the zeroes (0007). The value of these zeroes remain unchanged. They are zeroes. But let's say we put the number at the beginning of the zeroes (7000). Suddenly the zeroes attain a significant value because of the placing of the numeral 7. It is the same with God. Only when He is in the first place can our lives become truly significant and valuable. All of our human activities and assets are worth nothing if God doesn't have his proper place in our lives. They are like zeroes -worthless to our Creator.

The placement of this first principle is not coincidental but divinely intentional for this first principle addresses the fundamental problem of sin. Sin is really self-idolatry. Man has made himself into his own god. He has taken the position and place of God in his life. Sin is really a form of self-worship. In order for humans to begin their journey back from the dark region of sin to the glorious land of righteousness, they must first inculcate this foundational principle that God, the Creator of all must take His rightful place in their lives. He must be the supreme and only object of worship, adoration, and praise. The imbibing of this foundational principle has far reaching implications for the believer and I want to elaborate on some of them.

First, we no longer live our lives as if it was ours to live any way we want. Our lives will be lived for Him, for his glory and in His presence. The fulfillment of His will becomes the chief goal and desire of our lives. No decisions are made without consulting Him. It is our joy to carry out His wishes. We will say like Jesus, "it is my meat to do the will of my Father." Secondly we live to glorify and honor our God. Our lives are not our own. We live for the glory and honor of our God. In all of our actions, thoughts and words we are always asking the question, "Does

this glorify God?" Will this bring glory and honor to his name? Life is no longer a quest for self-aggrandizement or to fulfill our selfish ambitions but to for Gods' glory. We also live our lives continually in his presence. We are constantly aware that everything that we do falls under his divine scrutiny.

The Principle of Submission to Divine Sovereignty

The second commandment says: "'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

God cannot be manipulated, shaped, and fashioned after our own design. Man has always wanted to manipulate and control his environment. No wonder he has created gods after his image. He has made gods of wood and stone. He has also made gods out of the natural forces like the wind, rain and fire. These gods are more problematic for they seem outside of his control and only continual appeasement can help in winning their favor. So he has resorted to offering his fair maidens, young men, food and the blood of his captives to win the favor of these gods. These societies continually live in fear of their gods. By offering gifts to appease these gods humans are still attempting to control and manipulate the actions of those gods. The assumption of these actions is that those gods are not generous and kind, but are capricious and ready to send judgment on humans, so humans have to do something to change the minds of these gods

Practical Implications of the Ten Commandments
Trevor O'Reggio - 5

towards them. In other words our actions can influence the way we are treated by the gods. These gods must be bribed in order to act charitable towards humans. This is characteristic of pagan worship. It is not the gods who render good will towards humans but the actions of humans that must prompt or convince the gods to act generously towards them. This commandment strictly prohibits any kind of action in which we are attempting to manipulate God.

God strictly prohibits the representation of any object to portray Him. This is a very significant injunction because God is very much aware of our inclination to create things after our own image. The clearest example of this is how Christianity, which began in the pit hole of the Roman Empire,(Palestine in the Near East), has been coopted and westernized by the West so much so that it resembles nothing like the earliest manifestations. The West has recreated a Christianity after its image. We have made God into a Western Deity. God prohibits his physical representation because He is the God of all people, He is Savior to the whole world, Master and Sovereign of the entire universe. To create a picture of God is to restrict him to a specific group and would give this ethnic group an unfair advantage and an illusory feeling of superiority. God is not American, British, German, French, Chinese or Jewish. He transcends all nationalities, ethnicities, cultures and races.

In spite of this strict injunction against any pictorial representation of the Deity, there has appeared in the last five hundred years a picture that is purported to be Jesus who is considered God by all mainstream Christians. Why has Western Christianity put forward this picture and proclaimed it as Jesus? Is this not a clear violation of the sacred command that prohibits the material representation of God? Yet all over the Western World in churches, schools, museums

Practical Implications of the Ten Commandments Trevor O'Reggio - 6

and other institutions there is a so called picture of Jesus that is accepted by most people to be actually Jesus. No one seems to question this practice. Children are taught from infancy that this is indeed a picture of Jesus. Is there really a picture of Jesus? Do we know what Jesus looked like? Is it right to put this picture forth and call it Jesus? What is the historic basis for this picture? Since Jesus came from a common Jewish peasant family of the first century. He probably resembled an ordinary Jewish peasant of that time. Does the current accepted picture of Jesus fit? I think not. The long hair of the "Jesus picture" would be totally out of place for the peasant Jewish male of the first century for Jewish males did not wear their hair long except those who took the role of a Nasserite, e.g. (Samson) where the requirements of the vows prohibited them from cutting their hair. So this long-haired picture clearly does not match the physical appearance of the typical first century Jewish peasant male.

The larger issue however is the theological implication. For Christians to put forth a picture and call it a picture of Jesus (their God) is theological heresy and is a clear violation of the injunction against making image set forth in the second commandment.

The sociological implications are also far reaching, for the restriction of the Christian God to an ethnic group or race excludes 90% of the world's population and gives the 10% a certain feeling of smugness and superiority. We have created a god after our image. A god that looks like us, a god that is convenient and politically correct, a god that is a consensus candidate, acceptable to most, a god with a good public relations image, a god that we can manipulate and control to suit our own purposes.

The commandment is clear and explicit, "thou shall not make unto one any graven image or any likeness of anything that is in the heaven above or that is in the earth below or that is in the

Practical Implications of the Ten Commandments
Trevor O'Reggio - 7

water under the earth.”

I think that what this command asks of us is tied to the first. In the first command, we are called to acknowledge God as the Supreme One in our lives—the one and only God who is worthy of our affections. This second command calls us to total surrender and submission to the one who is described in the *Principle of Submission to Divine Sovereignty*, an acceptance of who God is without any attempt on our part to try to shape and mold Him after an image of our own making. To try and create an image or picture of God and present it as representing God is really another form of self-worship. For what we are creating is our own creation, the works of our own hand, indeed ourselves, which goes back again to the major characteristic of sin—self-worship. By insisting on the second commandment God is again seeking to uproot that proclivity in us to want to worship ourselves and the works of our hand. Remember it was Eve's desire to be like God that prompted her to take and eat of the forbidden fruit - so deep within the human psyche lies that desire to be like God - to be powerful, venerated and to be worshiped. We have not only the need to worship someone but we also desire to worship ourselves.

This commandment, prepares us for heaven by pointing us away from any form of self-aggrandizement, self-promotion, self-honor or self-glory. Like the angels of heaven our life's motto is “Glory and honor, Praise and worship be to the only true God and Father of us all.” Those preparing to spend eternity with their heavenly Father walk in constant humility and meekness before God. They don't boast of their accomplishments and broadcast their good deeds before the world. They engage in no form of self-promotion in furthering their own interest, they seek only to advance the kingdom of God. When they do their great deeds they never take the glory for themselves, they always point back to the God who gave them the vision, strength and

resources to carry out His will.

They live for the glory of their Creator and Redeemer. They never accept any worship or reverential awe from anyone for they are well aware of the danger of self-worship. Constantly vigilant, constantly on guard they are jealous not for their own glory but for the glory of God. They live not for themselves but to carry out the will and purpose of God. They find their joy and fulfillment not in their agenda but in God's agenda for their lives.

Principle of Respect and Honor for the Sacred.

The third commandment says: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

The third commandment says you shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain for the Lord you God will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. I call this commandment the principle of respect and honor for the sacred. Once we have acknowledged His place in our lives and our duty to surrender to Him, He now calls us to respect and honor the sacred, in particular, His name. All true respect and honor for the sacred begins with respecting God's name. His name is not the letters written on a book but who He is, what He represents, God's name is His Divine character. We are called to respect God's character, not glibly repeat his name and casually claim his name as our own. To claim the name of God by our profession or words and contradict it by our lives violates this third command and we will be held accountable for our actions.

The command speaks of the seriousness with which we ought to deal with God. He is not a God to be trifled with, where we wear him on our sleeves when it is convenient for us or hide

Practical Implications of the Ten Commandments
Trevor O'Reggio - 9

Him away when it is inconvenient and embarrassing. Nothing is more important in our lives than our relationship to God. Nothing should take priority over our relationship with Him. Here we see this commandment tied to the first. The seriousness with which we treat God will be reflected in our relationship with Him. Are we serious enough to spend time with Him every day, faithfully studying His word and carrying out his commands to minister to those in need?

So many Christians in the world have taken unto themselves the name of God, they professed with their lips that they are children of God but contradict Him by their conduct. Every day they besmirch the name of God by their flagrant contradiction. They dishonor and disrespect Him. They bear His name in vain. This respect for the sacred also extends itself beyond God to a respect for God's creation, whether this be human, animal or plant life. There is a respect for all forms of life, for life is seen as a sacred gift from the hands of the Creator. Those who know and love their creator will cherish and nurture life in all its forms. They will be advocates for the environment, the unborn fetus, the endangered species, the poor and the underprivileged. They will fight against those who would want to endanger, threaten or extinguish life for the sake of profit and other selfish reasons.

The preservation of God's awesome creation will be the concern for those who are living out this third principle in their lives. They cannot be silent when selfish men and women pollute the rivers, seas and lakes, contaminate our soils, exterminate indiscriminately our wildlife population, selfish exploit our natural resources without any thought of consequences to the environment. They will feel a strong sense of stewardship for God's magnificent gift of nature. In their own personal practices they will practice recycling, never throw garbage around, never waste the resources, practice wise water conservation and always encourage others in the wise

use of God's gift, beginning especially with members of their own families.

This third principle prepares us for heaven by nurturing in us a respect and reverence for the Supreme Being of the universe and for his magnificent creation. In God's vast universe this is a standard operating principle. All of his creatures constantly worship and revere his sacred person. Angels fall prostrate upon their faces in His presence crying "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty". This reverence for God extends to His creation, not in the same sense of worshiping His creation, but in a sacred respect for his works and a stewardship of His precious resources. We begin to see and experience life through God's eyes. We see ourselves as God's special caretakers, managers of all His resources, never to squander or waste any of His gifts. We see His handiwork in nature even among the destructive forces that are often used by God to carry out His purpose. We see God's face in every human face no matter how different they are from us. Everyone is our brother and sister, none is to be reviled or despised regardless how sinful they are. All are precious in our sight and deserve equal respect and love.

Principles of Divine Rest and Celebration in Relationship and Fellowship. God's Temple in Time.

The fourth Commandment says: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all they work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: Wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

The fourth commandment calls for us to remember and keep the seventh-day as the Sabbath

Practical Implications of the Ten Commandments
Trevor O'Reggio - 11

of the Lord God as a memorial of His creation. I call this the principle of divine rest and celebration for the nurturing of love. The first three commandments start with a negative injunction. The fourth commandment is a positive command to remember and keep God's Sabbath.

Implication of the Positive as Opposed to the Negative.

The first three principles focus primarily on relationship to God with secondary implications for our fellow men. This fourth principle binds the two tables together, for while it is a call to build a relationship with God, it is equally insistent on calling humans to be in fellowship with each other. It's like an equilateral triangle whose sides are equal God .There can be no relationship with God without fellowship with our fellow human beings and there can be no fellowship with each other without relationship with God. God sits at the apex of the triangle and humans are joined together at the base. The Sabbath is a call by God to create this context for fellowship and growth.

In the first commandment God calls for primary acknowledgment of his place in the life of the believer. In the second commandment He calls for surrender to the divine sovereignty. In the third commandment He calls for respect for the sacred. In this fourth commandment He calls for a place in time to nurture the relationship so love can grow between Himself and His creation and between themselves. Notice, no one is excluded in this temple in time. Children, servants, animals and even the strangers. This is God's affirmation of the value he places on all of his creation. He desires relationship with all regardless of status, race, age, social standing, occupation or religious affiliation.

On the basis of spiritual renewal and rest, exclusivity has no place. This speaks to the essence

Practical Implications of the Ten Commandments
Trevor O'Reggio - 12

of true and acceptable worship before God. Unless our places of worship are accepting of all God's creatures, all humanity, then our worship is a vain thing and harkens back to self-worship, worship of a god that looks like us, created after our own image.

None of the commandments reflects more of the nature of God than the Sabbath commandment, for it denies us the ability to concretize and make an image out of our own likeness. God did not choose a thing or a place by which to memorialize His creation and establish a relationship with them. He knows our tendencies to make gods after our own images and worship them. God chose time. The universality of time prevents us from claiming any exclusive rights to it, for time is available to all in equal portions. It cannot be Westernized or Africanized. We cannot paint time in a picture like ourselves and proclaim it a god resembling ourselves. We cannot control time, for it is beyond our grasp to manipulate or coerce. Time is subject to no one. We cannot speed it up or slow it down. We cannot go ahead of it or retrace our steps into it. We can't squeeze it out in large and small portions and use it when it is convenient. We are forced into one option. We must be subjected to the universal march of time. From the king to the slave, all are subjected to time. Time is the ultimate master, subjected to no one but God.

Time is also accessible to all. It brings its gift to everyone, no matter their state in life. It comes to all, everywhere, every place, no physical distance or disability can limit its access. So God by creating this context in time expresses Himself universally; He proclaims his sovereignty and He expresses accessibility.

Man's first full day of existence was on a Sabbath. Eve's first sunset was a Sabbath, her first sunrise was on a Sabbath. They rested before they worked to show the Sabbath was not about

Practical Implications of the Ten Commandments
Trevor O'Reggio - 13

resting from work but was primarily celebrating God's creation and sharing fellowship with Him and with each other. The real motive of Sabbath is nurturing love. If that is the case, then exercising the five languages of love becomes critical in Sabbath keeping. According to family life educators there are five languages of love: Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Physical Touch, Gifts, and Acts of Service. The exercise of these gifts are especially relevant on the Sabbath, if the Sabbath indeed is the supreme day for nurturing love to God and our fellow man.

Words of affirmation speak of the praise that is due to God on the Sabbath. The Sabbath is about praising and extolling the great God who has done such marvelous things for his creatures. The wonders of his creation should continually draw from our lips praise but especially on the day he set apart to memorialize his creation. Let words of affirmation rise from our lips towards God in appreciation for his creation. But this praise should also be for his redemption for us. For the Sabbath speaks to us of his finished and completed work for our salvation. After he completed his work of creation he rested, after completing his work of redemption on the cross he rested. The Sabbath gives us a foretaste of the eternal rest that is yet future when we shall rest from all of life's burdens, sorrows, toil and pain.

The words of affirmation are not directed only towards God but towards each other. Every Sabbath gives us opportunity as fellow humans to affirm each other in love. The Sabbath itself is an affirmation of our common humanity, showing we are all family having one father. We affirm while being affirmed.

The Sabbath speaks also of quality time. It is the temple in time that God has chosen to nurture his love relationship with Him. Love cannot be manifested or mass produced. Love is a living organism that needs time to grow and mature. Each Sabbath provides a special oasis in

Practical Implications of the Ten Commandments
Trevor O'Reggio - 14

time when God takes delight in nurturing and tending His holy plant of love. We must take this time each week, time from our mundane and everyday activities, time from the pressures and stresses of work and concerns for our own sustenance and spend it with God in order for the holy plant to thrive. As time must be spent with God to develop this relationship, the Sabbath also affords time to be spent with each other to develop and strengthen our relationship.

Physical touch, another language of love, speaks of God's desire to have an intimate and close relationship. God's choice that the Sabbath would be human's first full day of existence speaks about the heart of a God like ours who hungers and longs for sweet communion and fellowship with us. Although we cannot touch Him or feel Him, his presence with us is no less real. It is closer than physical touch for He dwells within our heart through His Spirit. This physical touch we extend to others as we fellowship each Sabbath. There is no true Sabbath keeping without joyous fellowship between brothers and sisters. On Sabbath the church must not be an ice box for freezing saints. It must be a warm, homey atmosphere where members are embraced and loved. Even the love language of physical touch on the Sabbath is a divine imperative. Without it we would soon wither and die.

Gifts, another love language, must flow freely on the Sabbath. The Sabbath itself is a gift of love to us from the hands of our creator. The Sabbath gift itself is a reminder to us of all the other wonderful gifts that He has poured down upon us. The Sabbath is a special day that God invites us to bring our gifts to Him - our gifts of time, resources and the gift of ourselves. It should be a time of joyous sharing among brothers and sisters. It is the sharing of laughter, joy, sorrows, resources, food and ourselves. Whoever is in need on Sabbath, whether for love, fellowship, food or money should not leave empty handed, for Sabbath is the special day of gift giving, for it is

the day of love.

The fifth language of love is Acts of Service. It was made especially to be done on Sabbath. What more appropriate day to carry out acts of mercy and love for God on behalf of each other. Jesus performed most of his miracles on the Sabbath. The Sabbath is the best day, the ideal day to work miracles of love on God's behalf. Instead of sleeping away the Sabbath hours let us cheer up the lonely face of a prisoner, bring joy to the sick and the shut in, visit our missing members, write letters of encouragement to the discouraged, pray for the wayward members, sing to the depressed and despondent, seek out the widows and the orphans, invite the singles home for dinner, call a forgotten family member, heal a broken relationship, get rid of a grudge and bind up the wounds of the broken hearted.

While the Sabbath eloquently proclaims God's completed work on man's behalf it also challenges us to act as God's ambassadors. We can only act after having contemplated and rest in God's finished work for us. So our acts for God are not to find his favor but grow out of our deep and profound appreciation for what he has already done for us God never asks us to do anything that He has not already done on our behalf. It is his actions, his work that draws and motivates us. So it is not coincidentally that human history begins by resting in God's finished act. We rest in order to work. We rest before we work. In God's scheme, rest always precedes work, for rest is really God's grace given freely to us. We cannot work for it but once we receive we cannot but work for it always draws the believer to work.

Principle of Respect and Honor for Lawful Authority

The fifth command says: "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long

upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”

The fifth commandment like the fourth is the only two positive commandments. There must be a divine design here. The Sabbath commandment is God's home in time to nurture love. The fifth commandment was linked to the fourth from creation week for it was nearing the Sabbath or on the Sabbath that God created the institution of marriage and the home and these two institutions continue to be the pillars of home religion and human society respectively. Together they form the linchpin of the ten commandments as illustrated in the following diagrams diagram

4 Sabbath - God's home in time	Love for God and man	5 Honor father and mother
3 Don't take God's name in vain	Giving up life; taking life	6 Do not kill
2 No graven images	Adultery	7 Do not commit adultery
1 No other God's before me	Action	8 Do not steal
	Words	9 Do not lie
	Thought	10 Do not covet

The fifth commandment is what I call the principle of honor for lawful authority. God in his wisdom has placed our parents or guardians or whoever they may be over us. We are commanded to respect and honor their authority over us, it is within the home that we learn the skills necessary to function as a law-abiding, God-fearing citizens. Woe be to that nation when such values are not transmitted at home. Such a nation will not long survive, for its pillars will crumble and the nation will dissolve. The family and home is God's ordained space to learn the laws of life. Whenever

Practical Implications of the Ten Commandments
Trevor O'Reggio - 17

these lessons are not taught and not learned we witness the baleful increase of crime, violence, immorality, wars and the unspeakable horrors of unrestrained evil.

The fifth principle provides the building block for the establishment of civilized society for it speaks of the home and the necessity of teaching values and skills to children so they can function as whole individuals.

On principle five begins the second table of the commandments which focuses on our relationship to each other. Principles 5-10 determine how we relate to each other. How we are socialized and trained at home shapes how we relate to each other in society.

Looking at the diagram we see that the foot of it is the command "Thou shalt not covet." This is the key command for all sin begins in the mind. If sin can be eliminated at its most basic level then what countless miseries could be avoided? From the tenth to the fifth commandment we notice an upward progression of escalating action. The tenth commandment speaks to the mind - it's attitudinal and internal. The ninth commandment addresses - words - word that seeks to destroy someone's reputation or character. In the eighth commandment it has progressed from words to actions, now it's a command against stealing someone's possessions - more serious action sin as opposed to simply lying. In the seventh commandment, the prohibition is against adultery which is destroying another's home, partner and love (another serious action sin, more serious than stealing). This sequence of action culminates with the prohibition against taking another person's life, probably the ultimate action of destruction against an individual. What we see then, in these last five commandments is a clear progression from the internal thought of covetousness culminating in the devastating and deadly sin of murder. The message is clear. Sin can only be destroyed when it is attacked at its root, its source - in the mind and the heart of

Practical Implications of the Ten Commandments Trevor O'Reggio - 18

human beings. Simple external behavioral change is never adequate. It is no wonder the Bible says we need a new heart, a new nature. The transformation must begin from the inside in order for it to be effective. However, what kind of human beings we turn out to be depends in large measure to the home we were reared in, that's why the principle of lawful authority to one's parents is a vital principle in determining the character of a nation's citizens. If children learn to honor and respect their parents, the whole world would be a much better place. Building bigger prisons, adding more police officers, increasing the fines and the sentences for crimes are ineffective deterrents because they are dealing with the problem when it's too late in its mature state. The root of the problem must be dealt with at its basic level - the home. When parents neglect their parental responsibilities and children flagrantly disobey their parents then we are initiating the process for the violence, chaos and immorality that blossom later in society. Disobedience to lawful authority at home later translates into disobedience to any authority in society.

Principle of Sacredness and Celebration of Life.

The sixth commandment says: "Thou shalt not kill."

This principle is a call to respect the sacredness of life and celebrate the joy of life. God's nature is to create and nurture life. God's adversary the devil seeks to destroy all life forms. He revels in destruction and death. If we are children of our Creator, then we will imitate our heavenly Father by doing all we can in the nurturing and protection of life. We will be unabashedly pro-life. This pro-life stance is not simply to curse the abortionist and defend the unborn fetus, but to defend and protect the weak, sick, orphans, poor, homeless and the rejected.

Practical Implications of the Ten Commandments
Trevor O'Reggio - 19

How can we claim to defend the unborn fetus when we are indifferent to the plight of the “born?”

The poor children, of single mothers, the orphans, and other children need our help. This pro-life stance leads us not just to be vigorous defenders of life for the unborn but ardent advocates for a quality of life that is healthy and nurturing for those born under unfortunate circumstances.

This principle also celebrates life. Life is to be lived with passion, joy and enthusiasm. In all of God's marvelous creation we see joy and hope. The innocent smile of a baby's face, the mating dance of the birds, the rebirth of nature during spring after the long, cold winter, the warm summer sunshine upon our skin, the delicious golden apples falling from the tree. Life testifies of beauty, joy and power. But even in nature we experience dark forces. The wind and fire destroys millions of trees, there are devastating tornadoes, earthquakes, cyclones, hurricanes that caused millions of dollars in damage and produced untold misery for millions of people. How are we to interpret this? We cannot, but these events suggest that even nature itself has been affected by sin. But even amidst the destructive forces of nature we can still discern the hand of a loving God mitigating the forces of destruction and even directing them towards the fulfillment of His ultimate purpose.

Principle of Protecting Purity and Keeping Promises - commitment and loyalty to family.

The seventh commandment says: “Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

This principle speaks of protecting the purity of the family circle and keeping promises and commitment with the family. The family is God's design for the reproduction and perpetuation of the human race. The marriage of man and women draws an exclusive boundary around the family unit. Adultery is a violation of that exclusive relationship. It destroys love and relationships,

Practical Implications of the Ten Commandments
Trevor O'Reggio - 20

wrecks homes and lives and long after the act is carried out leaves its devastating legacy on generations yet unborn.

This principle focuses on loyalty and promise keeping. The Bible testifies that God keeps his promises towards his creatures, and is faithful and loyal to his subjects. If we plan on being citizens of his kingdom, we must also learn the lessons of fidelity and loyalty here. When we look in the eyes of another person and say "I do, until death do us part" those words must mean something. We must keep our words, no matter what. We are released from them only at the death of our spouse or if the person has deliberately decided to abandon the relationship and never return. Faithfulness and loyalty are essential virtues of those who will constitute the citizenry of the new earth. They have kept their promises to God and they have kept their word to each other. Their word is their bond, although vexed by the laws of men, harassed by the adversary and persecuted on all sides they remained loyal to God. Faithfulness and loyalty is the bond that holds the family together. At the heart of the marriage is the covenant concept which means a promise or commitment binding two parties together unconditionally. Marriage is used often in the Bible as an illustration of God's relationship with his people. The relationship between God and his people is a close, intimate and exclusive relationship. Covenant is unconditional commitment. Implicit within every covenant is the possibility of betrayal. Embedded in every act of covenant promise is the reality of dissolution, disobedience and disappointment because of the sinfulness of our humanity. Because of this possibility of failure we cannot live without forgiveness. Our sinful nature demands it. We must be willing to give and receive it.

Principle of Generosity and Giving.

The eighth commandment says: Thou shalt not steal.

This principle is God's call to live lives of generosity and giving rather than grasping and taking. Taking that which does not belong to you or even misusing what is yours can be considered stealing. When the law of selflessness is operational within you, there will be no desire to take that which does not belong to you, for the operational principle at work in your life is not self-aggrandizement or self-fulfillment. Your life will be God-centered and other-centered. Your desires and wants are not important. They no longer steer the direction of your life. What is important now is what is your Father's will in the matter? How can I serve? How can I help to fulfill some human need? These are the questions that dominate your consciousness.

Stealing originates in selfishness, in grasping and taking for yourself with little thought of others. Stealing is the antithesis of heaven, where giving is the rule. It is never what I can take from you but what I can give you.

This principle then is best expressed in the opposition of the negative injunction (do not steal). It means to give generously of all that you are and that you have. If the command was written in the positive it could read - give generously of yourself, time, talents and resources to God and your neighbor; never neglect an opportunity to do good and render generosity to all.

The people of the kingdom that are not opportunists or takers. They are not looking out to advantage themselves or furthering their own interests. On the contrary, they are diligent opportunists of generosity, always seeking out those in need, always looking for opportunities to do good, always alert and ready to render acts of love and mercy. No one epitomized this principle more than Wilson Trickett, who for over twenty years gave food and clothing to the graduate students and their families at Andrews University. He was relentless in his desires to

help alleviate the needs of students. Through rain, snow or sunshine he brought food to hunger students. His legacy of generosity will live on forever.

If we see only the negative injunction not to steal we miss the point. The command is not just to refrain from doing something bad but it implies the embracing of the positive command to do the good. God calls us not to minimum standards of refraining from evil doing but to the high standard of positively and enthusiastically embracing the doing of the good. So instead of seeing this simply as not doing something, we must ask ourselves the question. What does it call me to do? The call not to steal therefore means a call to give wholeheartedly, generously and enthusiastically.

Principle of Personal Integrity and Truth Telling.

The ninth commandment says: “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.”

This principle of personal integrity and truth telling is a mark of God's people in every age. The life of God's children reads like an open book, transparent and sincere. The Bible describes them as not having deceit in their mouth. They act out of the sincerity of their convictions and the purity of their motives. They exemplify truthfulness and honesty in thought, word and conduct. In their relationship with others they do not lie about themselves or lie about others. They do not bear false witness against anyone, friend or foe. There is no manipulation of the truth for their own interest. They have no hidden agenda. They speak the truth all ways in love

Principle of Contentment and Living with an Attitude of Gratitude.

The tenth commandment says: “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not

covet they neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's."

The final principle in the golden chain is living contentedly with an attitude of gratitude. The command lies at the root of most evils. The desire to possess what others have, the unwillingness to be content with what we possess have driven humans to lie, cheat, steal, covet and even kill. Unless this pernicious and highly toxic weed is uprooted out of our hearts we will never escape doing all the other evils. This principle deals with matters of the heart, internal desires and motives. This principle gets to the root of our sinfulness.

God calls us to a life of contentment and gratitude. Like Paul we say, I have learned to be content in whatever state that I find myself. Living with this attitude leaves no place for the noxious weed of covetousness to flourish. There is no greedy, grasping or ambitious desires for that which is not ours. At the foundation of God's law is the principle of unselfishness. If this basic principle is operational in us there will be no desire on our part to covet another person's possessions. Our lives are lived not to satisfy our own selfish desires but to serve the interest and well-being of others.

In God's system each lives not for himself but for the other.

When one covets and receives that which is coveted, is this desire quenched? No!. The fulfillment of each new desire fuels new desires so that covetousness leads into the unquenchable hell of infinite and unfulfilled desires. God is very explicit in this command to not covet anything this is your neighbors. Cut sin off at its most basic level. Give evil no room to grow, for allowing the noxious weed of covetousness to mature will inevitably produce a harvest of evil.

How does one live out this principle of contentment in their lives?

Practical Implications of the Ten Commandments
Trevor O'Reggio - 24

- Accept all that God has given you with true and sincere spirit of gratitude.
- Do not fall prey to the “grass is greener on the other side” philosophy.
- Receive each new day as a gift and a privilege from your Creator’s hand.