

God's Commands
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Exodus 20:1-17

Let's begin by reading this very familiar passage. I'm reading from the NLT:

1 Then God gave the people all these instructions: **2** "I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery. **3** "You must not have any other god but me. **4** "You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. **5** You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me. **6** But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands. **7** "You must not misuse the name of the Lord your God. The Lord will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name. **8** "Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. **9** You have six days each week for your ordinary work, **10** but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. **11** For in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy. **12** "Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the Lord your God is giving you. **13** "You must not murder. **14** "You must not commit adultery. **15** "You must not steal. **16** "You must not testify falsely against your neighbor. **17** "You must not covet your neighbor's house. You must not covet your neighbor's wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor."

Sometimes everyday household objects come with bizarre warning labels. For example:

- *Iron warning: "Do Not Iron Clothes While Wearing Them."*
- *Hair Dryer: "Do Not Use While Sleeping."*
- *Superman Costume: "Wearing of this garment does not enable you to fly."*
- *Stroller: "Remove Child Before Folding."*
- *Rotary Tool: "This product not intended for use as a dental drill."*
- *Egg Carton: "This product may contain eggs."*
- *Pencils: "May be sharp after sharpened."*
- *Christmas Lights: "For indoor or outdoor use only"*
- *My personal favorite on a Microwave: "Do Not Use for Drying Pets."*

- Why do strange warning labels like those exist? What caused them?
- In a lesson last May I said that Susan has declared we will NOT take our grandsons to the Grand Canyon while they are small. Anyone remember why?
- The point: All humans are flawed and need warnings and guard rails. That is why God gave His chosen people the nation of Israel the Ten Commandments.

- We are going to get very practical but first let's deal with a question many people debate: Do the Ten Commandments apply to New Testament Christ followers?
- Some Christian teachers say these commands have been replaced by Jesus' teaching in **Matthew 22:37–40 (ESV)** — **37** *And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. **38** This is the great and first commandment. **39** And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. **40** On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*
- Loving God and loving others was God's intended outcome of the Ten Commandments. Note that the first four commandments focus on our relationship with God; the last six pertain to our interactions with others.
- Jesus also said in **Matthew 5:17** *"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."*
- Let's consider how Jesus fulfilled the law.
- We don't have time to read the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, but you are Bible scholars; what did Jesus say in Matthew 5 about murder? Adultery?
- Why do you think Jesus raised the standard? (Spirit vs letter of the law)
- Illustration: W.C. Fields just before he died in 1946, *"looking for loopholes."*ⁱⁱ
- The religious people of Jesus' day had perverted the purpose of the law and turned serving God into legalism. Legalism leads to looking for "loopholes."
- Jesus fulfilled the true meaning of the law by raising the standard beyond the "letter" of the law to the "spirit" of the law. Not rules but what is in our hearts.
- When people debate the question: Do the Ten Commandments apply to New Testament Christ followers? I think it's the wrong question. The better question is HOW do the Ten Commandments apply to New Testament followers of Christ.
- In Romans 6:15 the Apostle Paul wrote, *"we are not under law but under grace."*
- Paul wrote in **Galatians 3:24 (ESV)** — **24** *...the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.*
- So, what is the purpose of the 10 Commandments for New Testament Christians? Dr. Robert Jeffress summarized it with three points:
 - *The Law Was Given to Maintain Order, Not to Transform Our Heart* ([Genesis 9:6](#); [Romans 13:1-7](#))
 - *The Law Was Given to Reveal Our Unrighteousness, not to Make Us Righteous* ([James 1:23-25](#); [Galatians 2:21](#)) [The law is like a mirror.]
 - *The Law Was Given to Lead Us to Our Savior, Not to Replace Our Savior*ⁱⁱⁱ
- Now that we've settled that, let's see how the Ten Commandments apply to us.
- What Paul actually said in Romans 6:15 was, **(ESV)** — **15** *What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!*
- Why do some Christ followers sort of gloss over the Ten Commandments?
- We may not be stupid enough to dry our poodle in the microwave but are we naïve about how Satan tempts us to sin? He is crafty and one of his favorite methods is convincing us we're "good people."
- Those who arrogantly say, *"I would never break any of the Ten Commandments"* have likely not really studied the subtle ways we can be more guilty than we believe.

- Pastor J.D. Greear gave some examples of those subtleties:
 - **No other gods before me:** “[Have I] often gotten more excited about a new relationship, or a job promotion, or a new possession, or even a new *TV program*—than I have about God and his Word [?]”
 - **No carved images:** “[Have I reshaped] God according to [my] liking, believing wrong things about him because [I’d] **prefer** that he be a different way.” [Are we tempted to create God in our image?]
 - **Don’t take God’s name in vain:** “This has to do with more than not saying, “G.D.” Can you say, “*I have **always** held God’s name in highest respect. I have **always** represented that name well—never, for example, calling myself a follower of his yet and not obeying him fully. I’ve **always** lived up to the name ‘Christian.’*” [BTW: Who has?]
 - **Don’t kill:** “Can you say, “*Not only have I never murdered anyone, but I have never had hateful thoughts nor taken the slightest pleasure in seeing harm or misfortune happen to another human?*” [BTW: What about “character assassination”?]
 - **Adultery:** Greear writes, “Jesus messed this up, too. He said...to think lustful thoughts about someone who isn’t your spouse is adultery *in your heart*, which is what God sees. Can you say, “*I have never entertained thoughts about physical intimacy with someone to whom I am not married?*” [Again, who can say that? Getting discouraged?]
 - **Stealing:** “Can you say, “*I have never taken **anything** that doesn’t belong to me—money or credit or praise I didn’t deserve, anything. [Can I say] I have always been completely truthful and fair in all of my dealings.*” [Why do I include references in the notes? I don’t want to “steal” from others.]
 - **Coveting:** “Can you say, “*I have never been greedy for something that wasn’t mine, nor jealous of the abilities, looks, position or possessions of others. I have always been fully content in what I have.*” I’m pretty sure the entire HGTV network is built on coveting.”^{iv}
- Wow! It’s a good thing we are saved by grace (Eph.2:8-9) and not by trying to perfectly keep God’s commands!
- So how do the commands of scripture compliment God’s saving grace?
- Think of it this way, the commands of scripture are guardrails, but every human is born already “over the cliff” and trapped in the canyon of our sinful nature.
- God’s grace is the “rescue crew” that pulls us up out of the canyon of our sin.
- God’s guardrails help us to live a Christ-like life. Not perfect, but more like Him.
- The commands of scripture don’t save us; they help us live in obedience to God.
- Other thoughts?

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- Even after God’s grace has pulled us out of the canyon of our sin, we still need warning signs and guardrails.
- **Proverbs 27:12 (ESV) — 12** The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.
- **1 Corinthians 10:12 (ESV) — 12** Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

- Some feel the guardrails of God’s commandments are restrictive.
- If you drove through the curves of the Blue Ridge parkway with no guardrails, would you feel confident or stressed? What about the Golden Gate bridge?
- Guardrails don’t limit our freedom; they allow us to safely enjoy it!
- God’s moral law doesn’t save us; in fact, we are not capable of perfectly keeping His moral law. Thank God when we trust Christ as Savior and Lord He gives us His Spirit living in us to us to fulfill His commands to love Him and others and His grace to offer forgiveness for when we fall short of His standard.
- Let’s use God’s commands in scripture as that mirror that reveals our sin so we can confess it and receive His forgiveness.

ⁱ [1] <https://people.howstuffworks.com/11-stupid-legal-warnings.htm>

[2] <https://www.hiltonsomer.com/the-weirdest-warning-labels-why-they-exist-and-the-cases-behind-them/>

[3] <https://udel.edu/~pollack/Acct350/Handouts/Wacky%20Warning%20Labels.htm>

[4] <https://www.roanoke-chowannewsherald.com/2012/07/12/warning-labels-for-morons-idiot-and-imbeciles-alike-2/>

[5] <https://www.rd.com/list/funny-warning-labels/>

[6] https://www.forbes.com/2011/02/23/dumbest-warning-labels-entrepreneurs-sales-marketing-warning-labels_slide.html

ⁱⁱ <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2016/05/08/loopholes/#f+13685+1+3>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://firstdallas.org/the-10-overview-a-study-of-the-10-commandments/>

^{iv} <https://jdgrear.com/how-do-you-measure-up-against-the-10-commandments/>