

LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

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HOW TO LOVE GOD (#2)

Several years ago we ran an article in *Living Waters Newsletter* with the same title as this one showing the first four commandments teach us how to love God. In this issue we will show how the last six commandments also teach us how to love God. When Jesus answered the lawyer's question about the greatest commandment (Matt. 22:36-40) he summarized the Ten Commandments as loving God and loving our neighbor. In I John 4:20 it is stated: "The one who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen." The way we love God is to love our neighbor. How to love our neighbor is spelled out in the last six of the Ten Commandments. There is a divine spiritual logic in the way the commandments fit together. Get the first commandment right—no other gods—and all the other commandments flow from it. Get our relationship with God right (first four) our relationship with our neighbor falls in place (last six). The first four begins by honoring our Father in heaven, God. The last six begins by honoring our earthly father and mother. Each commandment is contained in the one before it and each one expands upon what the other one said. If you want to keep the sixth commandment (Do not murder, or don't destroy your neighbor) then begin by keeping the fifth commandment---protect the family, honor your parents. Protecting your neighbor is an extension of protecting your family. If you want to keep the seventh commandment (no adultery) begin by learning how to keep the sixth commandment, do not destroy your neighbor. Committing adultery is a form of destroying your neighbor that is as insidious as murder itself. If you want to keep the eighth commandment (do not steal another's possessions), begin by keeping the seventh commandment---do not steal another person's spouse. If you want to keep the ninth commandment (you shall not bear false witness; or do not steal your neighbor's good name) start by keeping the eighth commandment, do not steal at all! If you want to keep the tenth commandment (you shall not covet) you must keep the other five of the last six commandments. The tenth commandment recapitulates the last six, loving your neighbor as yourself.

If "loving your neighbor" summarizes the second commandment as stated by Jesus (Matt. 22:39) and if "the whole law is fulfilled in one word "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Gal. 5:14), then the starting point of loving your neighbor is to obey the fifth commandment "honor your father and mother." It follows, then, that to honor our parents is to honor God. The parents represent God to the child. Ephesians 6:1-3 states: "Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long upon the earth." The word Paul uses for "children" is not the Greek word used for "little children" rather it is a word that simply refers to "offspring" with "emphasis regarded as true, genuine children" (*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the N.T.*) It certainly includes children who are grown up. Paul shows the law continues to be the expression of the will of God for conduct, even for those who are no longer under the law. Jesus condemns the Pharisees as those who "neglect the commandment of God

and invalidates the word of God" by not keeping this commandment. (Mark 7:8-10). By obeying this fifth commandment we show our love, not only to parents but also to God.

The sixth commandment is usually translated "you shall not kill." However the correct translation is "you shall not murder." Since the subject of this article is "How To Love God" we will look at the commandment as applicable to the Christian, not to pacifism (war), unilateral disarmament or abolition of the death penalty. There are two aspects of murder that is relative to the Christian: sinful attitude toward others and the wholesale acceptance of abortion of the unborn. Both of these subjects speak of our relation to our fellowman and thus our relation to God.

Jesus said: "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder' and 'whosoever commits murder shall be guilty before the court.' But I say unto you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty..." (Matt. 5:21,22). For a Christian to feel enmity in his heart is, according to Christ, to be guilty of something which, in the sight of God, is murder. To hate, be bitter and have resentment toward a person without a cause is murder.

The tragedy, the horror and the insanity of this generation is the killing of the innocent unborn population at the rate of 1.5 million a year. Rome abandoned unwanted children outside the city gate; Greeks gave pregnant women heavy doses of herbal and medicinal abortifacients; The Persians developed highly sophisticated surgical procedures; ancient Hindus and Arabs concocted chemical solutions and pumped them directly into the womb; the primitive Canaanites threw their children into the flames of sacrificial pits of Moloch; the Egyptians disposed of unwanted children by disemboweling them; Africans threw them to the crocodiles; Americans crush their heads surgically and throw them into a dumpster. We show our love to God by never committing murder, destroying those in the image of God.

We might question how does keeping the seventh commandment "You shall not commit adultery" show us how to love God? I John 5:2, 3 is as applicable to this commandment as it is to the other nine: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome." Keeping the seventh commandment shows that we love God by keeping our marriage vows. A marriage exists by covenant (Malachi 2:14). On the subject of covenant marriage Dallas Willard in *The Divine Conspiracy* speaks of the failure of the modern generation to realize responsibility of covenant love. He states: "The recent history of divorce is the key sign of the failure to sustain covenant accountability in marriage." Anyone who speaks in favor of the seventh commandment today is branded as being obscurant, hopelessly irrelevant and dangerously repressive. Not only has the Biblical view of sex and marriage been attacked in our society today, but so has the Christian for his profession of that view. That which is taken so lightly today carried the heavy penalty of death in Israel (Lev. 20:10; Deut 22:22), although this

sentence was seldom carried out. Adultery, then, is placed on the same level as murder. William Graham Cole in *Sex and Love in the Bible* expresses the New Testament view in these words: "Adultery was not merely the violation of another man's household, the trespass upon the rights of a fellow male but a violation of his unity with his wife the breaking of his state of 'one flesh'. Adultery is not of the body only but also of the heart, 'for out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication' (Matt. 15:19). Since this is true, adultery had already been committed by a lustful look or a libidinous desire (Matt. 5:27-28)." When David confessed his sin of adultery to God he said "Against Thee and Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight" (Psalm 51:4). We show our love to God by obeying the seventh commandment.

The eighth commandment, one of the two shortest, declares "You shall not steal" (Ex.20:15; Deut 5:19). Stealing is on the same level as murder and adultery (Mark 10:19; Luke. 18:20; I Peter 4:15). Stealing is not only an offence against another person, but also an offence against God. The first recorded sin in the early church is that of Ananias and his wife Sapphira disobeying this eighth commandment by selling their property and keeping back some of the price for themselves and lying about it to Peter, who asked him: 'why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back some of the price of the land?...You have not lied to man, but to God'" (Acts 5:3, 4). Robbing God was nothing new. The last of the Old Testament prophets, Malachi asks: "Will a man rob God?" then he answers: "Yet you are robbing Me! (God) But you say, 'How have we robbed Thee?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you!" (Mal. 3:8, 9). It is no surprise to know many Christian people are thieves. Even one of the chosen Apostles was a thief (John 12:6). The Apostle Paul commands: "Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need" (Eph. 4:28).

God requires us to respect the life, marriage and property of our neighbor and we might also add our enemy, even if our neighbor and enemy are evil because God is the source of all our needs. The Christian will not steal anything if he believes Philippians 4:19: "And God shall supply all our needs according to the riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Rousas John Rushdoony in *The Institutes of Biblical Law* states: "Theft can be accomplished in a number of ways. *First*, in simple theft the thief robs the victim directly. *Second*, in complex but still direct theft, the thief robs the victim as part of a group of thieves. In such a case, a man may not be directly involved in the act of theft, but he is a party to it all the same as a knowing party in the corporate group of thieves. *Third*, theft can be accomplished by indirect and legal means, i.e. by passing a law which steals from the rich, the poor or the middle-classes, for the benefit of a particular group. The state then becomes the agency whereby theft is accomplished, and pseudo-moral cover is given by legal enactment." No wonder there is much political animosity toward the ten commandments.

We might also add that this commandment applies not only to the person and the state, but also to the church. When the church does not faithfully teach the whole counsel of God it is plainly robbing people of the truth of God.

The ninth commandment: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" is usually interpreted as "you shall not tell a lie" under any circumstance. However the wording concerns one "bearing false witness against a neighbor." The scriptures teach that God forbids lying (Prov. 12:22; Col. 3:9; Eph 4:25; Rev. 21:8 etc.). However Joshua 2:1-7 relates how Rahab lied to the king of Jericho concerning her hiding two spies Joshua had sent into the city. Rahab had to make a choice: 1) she could tell the truth and surrender the spies and two godly men would have been put to death. 2) She could lie and save their lives. James 2:25 and Hebrews 11:31 states this act was an act of faith. She also became an ancestress of Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:5). Furthermore scripture does not condemn Abraham and Isaac for lying to avoid murder and rape (Gen.12:13-20; 26:7). Also, the Israelite midwives lied to Pharaoh in order to save the lives of babies from being killed at birth (Exodus 1:15-21). Even God put a lying spirit in the mouths of false prophets in order to deceive a false king (I Kings 22:22,23). This does not say the scripture endorses lying. They show that God willed that lives be saved, not that the moralist individual could say, "I never lie." The ninth commandment simply shows how to treat your neighbor. It is very specific. Bearing false witness is a matter of destroying another's reputation, defaming character and ultimately stealing their good name. When we bear false witness we aim the most dangerous weapon on earth at someone else. We fire that weapon when we add to the truth, leave something out, or twist it a little and create a false impression and sometimes by refusing to speak when we should. Again, we are shown how to love God by loving our neighbor. If we love our neighbor we will never bear a false witness.

The tenth commandment, "You shall not covet..." recapitulates everything in the last six, but speaks in terms of attitudes rather than actions. The Apostle Paul said: "I would not have known about coveting if the law had not said, 'you shall not covet'" (Rom. 7:7). Biblically speaking, covetousness refers to an illicit craving of another person's possessions, including their station in life. It can also involve the actual theft of someone's property (Josh. 7:21). There are two basic sins involved in the 10th commandment: 1) Discontent with our own estate and position in life (Phil. 4:11-13; I Tim. 6:6-10). Any external condition is acceptable in life when we are content with our present role in God's plan. 2) Resentment. A covetous person resents his station in life and is dissatisfied with the role he is playing in God's plan. Paul deals with resentment in I Corinthians 7:20-24). Besides these two basic sins involved in coveting, coveting leads to other sins. Coveting is the first step in theft (eighth commandment) and also the first step before adultery (seventh commandment: "thy neighbors wife") and can also lead to murder (sixth commandment, David's murder of Uriah). The story of Ahab's theft of Naboth's vineyard (I Kings 21) shows how coveting led to the hiring of false witnesses and the murder of a good man.

The tenth commandment, perhaps more than any other speaks of our relationship to our neighbor, and thus our relationship to God. Jesus shows in the Sermon on the Mount that the beginning of any sin is in the heart. The Scriptures are quite plain, to desire to sin is sin. One can sin in his imagination and thought. When we keep the tenth commandment we show our love for God by keeping our heart pure.

