

Zoom Bible Study

led by Mary Lowman

Growing Closer to God

The life of Moses

April 9, 2024

Exodus 20 - Moses and the Ten Commandments

Introduction

Last week we looked at how God gave Moses these commandments, and we focused on the first four commandments, which are focused on our relationship with God. Those four are:

Commandment 1: You shall have no other gods before me.

Commandment 2: You shall not make any idols.

Commandment 3: You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.

Commandment 4: Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

Which of those four commandments spoke to you particularly?

In this session we'll look at the remaining six commandments which focus more on our conduct before God and man.

Exodus 20:12 - 17

¹² "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

¹³ "You shall not murder.

¹⁴ "You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵ "You shall not steal.

¹⁶ "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

¹⁷ "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Commandment 5: Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

Honoring parents is an essential building block for the stability and health of all society. How do you honor someone?

There is an interesting promise with this command: long life.

Ephesians 6:2-3

"Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise—so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

This command installs the family as the core organizing unit for God's administration of self-governance. When any culture ignores this commandment, they are inviting that country's demise.

Does this command still apply to you if your parents were not deserving of honor?

Commandment 6: You shall not murder.

In Hebrew as well as in English there is a distinction between *to kill* and *to murder*. As opposed to killing, murder is the taking of life without legal justification or moral justification.

Matthew 5:21-22

"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Jesus showed that this commandment also prohibits us from *hating* someone else because we can wish someone dead in our hearts, yet never have the nerve to commit the deed.

Command 7: You shall not commit adultery.

How many excuses have you heard for committing adultery? All of them are wrong. There is no excuse that justifies this sin or any other sin for that matter.

Galatians 5:19

The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery.

Proverbs 6:32

But a man who commits adultery has no sense; whoever does so destroys himself.

Matthew 5:27 – 28

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Does this apply only to men? Can a woman look at a man lustfully?

Commandment 8: You shall not steal.

Why do we see the wanton stealing we see today?

When the laws of God are disrespected and ignored, it begins a deterioration of civility, and it destroys lives and families and countries.

But what are some of the ways we can steal "on the sly"? Some ways that stealing has been made acceptable?

What can we steal besides money?

How can we steal from God?

Malachi 3:8

"Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?' "In tithes and offerings."

But we can also rob God by refusing to give him ourselves for obedience and his service, because he bought us and owns us:

Ephesians 2:10

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 4:28

Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

Commandment 9: You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

This, of course, extends to legal testimony given in court. But for us, it is the false things we say against someone. How many times have you repeated a story which brings discredit and dishonor to another person without making sure of the facts? That is breaking this commandment.

Colossians 3:9

Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices.

Satan is always there to encourage a lie:

John 8:44

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Acts 5:3

Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?"

Jesus Himself was the victim of false witnesses at his trial:

Mark 14:57

Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him.

In some ways, we might say this was the sin that sent Jesus to the cross.

Commander 10: "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

The word for covet here means to pant after. As this commandment points out, covetousness can be expressed towards all sorts of things. It speaks of a dissatisfaction with what we have, and a jealousy towards those who have something better.

Hebrews 13:5

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

This last commandment is closely connected with the first commandment against idolatry:

Ephesians 5:5

For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Jesus gave a special warning about covetousness:

Luke 12:15

Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

Exodus 20:18 – 26

When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance ¹⁹and said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.”

²⁰ Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.”

²¹ The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.

²² Then the Lord said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites this: ‘You have seen for yourselves that I have spoken to you from heaven: ²³Do not make any gods to be alongside me; do not make for yourselves gods of silver or gods of gold.

²⁴ “‘Make an altar of earth for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, your sheep and goats and your cattle. Wherever I cause my name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you. ²⁵If you make an altar of stones for me, do not build it with dressed stones, for you will defile it if you use a tool on it. ²⁶And do not go up to my altar on steps, or your private parts may be exposed.’

An up-close encounter with God could just as often be troubling as it might be comforting. This is a typical reaction of those who came into the presence of God, such as Isaiah who felt undone before God:

Isaiah 6:1 – 5

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ²Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

⁴At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. ⁵“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”

John fell as a dead man before the Lord:

Revelation 1:17

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.

The people promised to hear and obey the word of God that came to them by Moses. They failed in this promise, both soon after this and in the longer term.

These last six commandments are not to be ignored by us. In fact, our standards should be even higher. Why is that?