

Guide To Grace

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[0:00] Hey, good morning and welcome. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. And as always, we'd love for you to check us out at FCCGreensburg.com or you can go to the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But our heart every week is simply this. As we get into the Word of God, we pray that the Word of God will get into us and transform these hearts more and more into the image of Christ.

Now, welcome to the first week of our series called 10. And I wonder where your mind goes when you think of the number 10. I can't help but to think of a cheesy pickup line that I've used on my wife.

Some of you may not be aware that she went to college outside of Knoxville, Tennessee. We even lived in Tennessee for three years before coming back home to Greensburg. But I've looked at my wife before and I said, are you from Tennessee? And she says, no, why?

And I'm like, because listen, baby, you're the only 10 I see. Classic pickup line. See, 10 is a number that we use to grade different things.

[1:06] On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate that restaurant? And if somebody says, man, I'd give it a 10, that's perfection. That means you absolutely love this place and you're going back and probably telling others about it.

For a new parent, when you first see your baby, you want to make sure that there are 10 fingers and 10 toes. In fact, I recently heard a powerful story of a teenage girl who got pregnant.

And the people around her were coaxing her to go get an abortion. She was so confused and scared. So she set up the appointment. She pulled into the parking lot.

She was being ushered in by an employee and someone yells out to her, don't do it. Your baby has 10 fingers and 10 toes.

And do you know, that's what made her change her mind. She decided to carry her baby for nine months. And then in a sacrifice of love, she gave him up for adoption.

[2:06] So he could have a better life than she could offer at such a young age. Now, in this series, the number 10 is significant for another reason. It represents the 10 commandments that we see in the book of Exodus chapter 20.

And yet there's a lot of confusion around the 10 commandments in our church culture. Some believe that this moral law was great for the Israelites, but it no longer matters to Christians today.

Some believe that the 10 commandments have been abolished by the command to simply love.

And it's usually not a biblical definition either. Others believe that following the 10 commandments is in fact your meal ticket or your good works to get you to heaven.

And some think their only purpose is to be a cornerstone of public law and behavior. And yet each of these beliefs don't quite match the word of God.

So as we take this 11 week journey together, starting today, where we're going to do a little bit of introduction today into the 10 commandments. And then over the next 10 weeks, we'll walk one by one talking through each one.

[3:16] But I have to tell you, I'm excited myself to grow through this series. Because I truly believe that sometimes it's the passages that you and I have heard all our life that we've missed out on truly understanding.

It's almost like they can become so commonplace that we never go deeper in their meaning. So if you would, grab your Bibles for me. And let's go to Exodus chapter 20.

This should be easy to find. It's the second book in your Bible in the Old Testament. You have Genesis, and then you come to Exodus. And guys, there's a good chance that you know this story of the Israelites being in bondage as slaves in Egypt for 400 years, mistreated in awful ways by the

Egyptians.

When God calls Moses to go to Pharaoh and deliver the message, let my people go. And Pharaoh, the most powerful man on the face of the earth, scoffs at that request.

Why would he give up perfectly good slave labor just because old Moses decided to show his face again after being a fugitive on the run? So when Pharaoh refuses, God begins to send plagues to get his attention.

[4 : 30] He turns water to blood, sends a plague of frogs upon the land, then gnats, then flies, a plague that killed their livestock, boils on their body, hail, locusts, darkness, and then Pharaoh still after each plague.

God gives him a chance, but Pharaoh refuses to let God's people go. So the last plague was the worst of all. Every firstborn son of the Egyptians would die.

And finally, this brought Pharaoh to his knees, and he let the Israelites leave. But it wasn't much later that his heart was hardened again. He changed his mind, and he sent his army to bring them back as the Exodus had begun.

But once again, God shows up. He uses Moses to part the Red Sea into, and God's people walk through on dry ground.

And yet he brought the water crashing back down on the Egyptian army. And this began what would become a 40-year journey in the desert where Israel's disobedience was great, but God's faithfulness was even greater.

[5 : 46] From turning bitter water into high-quality H₂O, to providing manna and quail to feed what was most likely 2 to 3 million people, bringing water from a rock to giving them the strength to defeat the Amalekites.

And then, in the third month of their journey, they camped next to Mount Sinai. As Moses sought the Lord, God made it clear that if they were faithful in keeping his commands, they would be his treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

And this is when Moses goes up at God's request on the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments. So, let's just simply do this. Let's read these commandments for ourselves, starting in Exodus 20, verse 1.

And we're going to read all the way through verse 17. So, just kind of stick with me, because I want you to hear this. Here's what it says. And God spoke all these words. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything, in heaven above, or on the earth beneath, or in the waters below.

[7 : 04] You shall not bow down to them or worship them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for sin of their parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hated me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.

For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blesses the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Honor your father and mother so that you may live long in the land your God has given you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

[8 : 16] 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. Okay, so today I simply want us to wrestle with two questions about the Ten Commandments.

And here's the first one. Are the Ten Commandments relevant for today? And here's what some of the confusion, here's where some of it lies. Romans 6.14 For sin shall no longer be your master because you are not under the law, but you are under grace.

Galatians 3.11 Clearly, no one who relies on the law is justified before God because the righteous will live by faith. And yet at first it seems kind of confusing when Jesus says this in Matthew 5.17 Do

not think that I have come to abolish the law of the prophets.

I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. So to take what could be probably an hour-long conversation, theological discussion, and make it probably way too simple, Jesus didn't come to say that the moral law of the Ten Commandments is no longer important, because it is.

He didn't come to abolish it, but instead to fulfill it. But here's what we need to understand.

Following this set of rules does not make us right before God. We cannot be justified by the moral law because every one of us fall short of it.

[9 : 44] We've all sinned. We've all broken God's commands. And we are in need of the ultimate sacrificial Lamb of Christ when He gave His life on the cross in our place.

So, let me speak to two different crowds today. To unbelievers who may be searching, and we're glad that you're listening today, but maybe you've never truly surrendered your heart to Christ.

And then, I'm going to speak second to followers of Jesus as well. So, for unbelievers, the Ten Commandments show our great need for a Savior. So, let me prove this to you.

Let's walk through these Ten Commandments. And to make it easier, I'm going to leave out some of what Jesus later adds to them, for now at least. I also want you to just kind of keep a mental note of how many of these Ten Commandments that you have kept perfectly your whole life.

And then, we'll see how holy y'all are, okay? So, here's the first one. No other gods. Number two, no idols. Now, you can almost group these two together. You've never worshipped any false gods, made things in your life into idols, where honestly, they actually came before God.

[10 : 59] Usually, your schedule book and your checkbook will tell you what you worship. Number three, do not take the Lord's name in vain. Number four, keep the Sabbath day holy.

Number five, honor your father and mother. That means that you've never talked back, talked about them behind their back, or just ignored their needs. Number six, you shall not murder. Jesus adds to that, but we'll hold off on that for now.

He also adds to number seven, you shall not commit adultery. Number eight, you shall not steal.

Number nine, bear false witness against your neighbor. That means to lie. Number ten, you shall not covet, not desire what others have, whether that's a car, a house, a spouse, or whatever.

So, right there from home, wherever you are, raise your hand if you've kept all ten. And although I can't see you, I'm going to guarantee that no one who's not lying should be raising their hand, okay?

Have you kept nine, or eight, or seven, or even six? Yes, I seriously doubt it. I'm going to stop there to keep the shame from spreading. But I figured up, according to Exodus 20, that I have kept two.

[12 : 08] Now, let's see what James 2.10 says to us. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

So, yes, the Ten Commandments, they are still relevant to today to show us that we have indeed sinned against God. That if I'm honest with myself, I'm a liar, I'm a thief, I've coveted what others have, I've not always honored my mother and father, and we could keep going, but it all points us to the truths that we see in the book of Romans, starting here in chapter 3, verse 23.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. See, in the original language, this is actually a picture of an archery event.

For all have sinned, for all have missed the mark because of sin and are separated from a perfect heavenly father who cannot stand before our sin.

And then in Romans 6.23, it says, For the wages of sin is death. So, because we've sinned, that leads to eternal death. But listen to this part.

[13 : 18] But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. So, here's what all that means. If you're not a follower of Christ, this moral law shows us that we can't earn our way to heaven.

That's already waved bye-bye to you and me both. And listen, you'd be surprised how many people who profess to follow Jesus sit in church every week and somehow still think their good deeds will get them to heaven, which means there is a major disconnect of understanding, or even the heart, but understanding the whole purpose of why Jesus died on the cross for you.

See, while it seems strong to say that our sin is leading us to hell, that's what God's Word teaches.

And the passage we just read makes it clear that Jesus loved us so much that He didn't want that to be the case.

He went to the cross and He died to take our place. That if we, He will not force us to follow Him.

We have that free will. So, if we, by faith, through His grace, surrender our lives to His Lordship, we

will be forgiven and walk in His life on this earth and in eternity.

So, the Ten Commandments simply show us how far we've fallen, and they point us to Jesus where we can discover hope in His name.

[14 : 44] Now, why are the Ten Commandments important for believers who've already repented of sin and been baptized into Christ, who are filled with the Holy Spirit, daily walking with the Lord?

Well, I don't think I can say it any better than a Puritan author named Samuel Bolton. He once said, The law sends us to the gospel so that we may be justified.

That means to be made right. And the gospel sends us back to the law again to inquire what is our duty as those who are justified.

In other words, the law shows me that I need Jesus. And once I surrender my life to Him, then I have all of God's Word to teach me how I can honor my Savior with my life 24-7.

And the Ten Commandments are a piece of that. I am saved by the grace of God, but now what? I go back to those commandments and I learn what it means to put God on the throne of my heart and make Him numero uno.

[15 : 51] I learn how to honor His name and glorify Him. I discover the importance of rest and worship. I realize that life is sacred, that family and how we treat one another matters to God.

And guys, we could keep going, but I don't want to spoil the rest of this series. So to put it simply, the Ten Commandments lead me to the cross to discover life in Jesus.

The cross then leads me back to the Ten Commandments to learn how to live for Him. Or in the words of a poem by the 18th century Scottish preacher named Ralph Erskine, He said, So yes, they're relevant to your life and mine today.

Now here's the last question. What's the big picture of the Ten Commandments? So what's the big picture? Now, I have to preface this by saying that we've all done what I'm getting ready to share, okay?

Some are worse than others, but we've all done it. Have you ever been around someone who's telling a story and they just feel the need to tell all these unnecessary details, like exactly what everybody was eating when it doesn't even matter at all to the story?

[17 : 17] Or they take these detours constantly and they're just all over the place and they forget why they even started telling the story in the first place? Now listen, I've done it many times.

I'm guilty too, so not pointing fingers here. But we have a little under three months in this series to go into great depth on each of these commandments. But today, I don't want to go on all these different rabbit trails, okay?

I want to fly a little bit higher and just talk about the big picture for a moment. And Jesus does this too with the Ten Commandments. So if you would, grab your Bibles and flip about two-thirds the way to the first book of the New Testament, the book of Matthew, chapter 22, starting in verse 37. And as you're getting there, here are the religious leaders called Pharisees. They're up to no good. They were always coming against Jesus, trying to discredit Him, get people to stop following Him. And here was another trap that they set that didn't work. They asked Him, which is the greatest commandment in the law? And here's what Jesus says. He replied, love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind.

[18 : 29] This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and prophets hang on these two commandments.

Now, some misunderstand this and basically want to do away with the Ten Commandments. But He wasn't taking the Ten and saying, now there's only two commandments. What He's doing is what preachers do all the time.

What we do all the time in life. He is summarizing. He's giving the big picture. Of course, there's value in going through all ten and you're about ready to see that over the next ten or eleven weeks. But you could sum them up by saying, love God with all your heart, soul, and mind. And then love your neighbor as yourself. You could take it further and just say, love God and love people.

And while that's helpful, there's still going to be great profit in studying these more closely as we go forward in the future weeks.

[19 : 26] As we dig deep and seek to look more like Jesus in our daily walk. But listen, here's the big picture. Jesus could sum these up into two by dividing them up.

So the first four, which are no other gods, no idols, don't take the Lord's name in vain, keep the Sabbath day holy. These all teach us how to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and

mind.

And then the next six commandments, honor your father and mother, no murder, no adultery, don't steal, don't lie, no coveting. They all fit what it looks like to love your neighbors yourself.

So while some people see these commandments as this awful list of do's and don'ts, the reality is that this list has always been guided by the grace of God.

See, when God heard the prayers of his people in Egypt, as they were suffering at the hand of the Egyptians, he answered them by his grace-filled calling on Moses through a burning bush.

[20 : 31] By his grace, he used this man who claimed that he couldn't speak very well to confront the most powerful man in the world and lead the nation of Israel.

By his grace, the death angel passed over the Israelite homes because of the blood on the doorpost. By grace, God parted the Red Sea so that he could escape the Egyptian army.

By grace, he provided for two to three million people. In a desert, he provided food, water, clothing, protection from enemies, and even the Decalogue, which is the Hebrew word for the Ten Commandments or ten words as these godly parameters to guide them.

And even in their disobedience, which caused this trip to last way longer than it should have, God showed them daily grace and would eventually take his people into the promised land.

And you know what? As we reflect upon the Ten Commandments, we can't help probably but think of our own specific moments in our life where we've broken these godly commands.

[21 : 36] One that very quickly comes to my mind, and I don't know why I still think about this all these years later, but when I was a fifth or sixth grader at North Decatur, and I'll preface this by saying that I was taught never to steal, and yet it was hard sometimes when other kids had money to buy candy and stuff, and I didn't.

We just didn't have a lot of money. But one thing they did in upper elementary is all the boys who wanted to play basketball would sign up, and they would put together several teams.

And after school, you'd play games against your fellow classmates. It was a big deal for kids like me who loved basketball. Well, one time after a game, I was in the locker room getting dressed, and a kid next to me dropped a dollar on the floor.

Now, I know that doesn't go very far nowadays, but then you could actually get a pop and a bag of Skittles for that, maybe even have a quarter left over. And by the way, he had no idea that he dropped that dollar bill.

And I simply shouldn't have done it, but I did, simply moved my foot over top the dollar, and slid it over as smooth as can be. And I saw him a moment later start searching for his dollar, and I just played it cool like I had no idea what he was doing.

[22 : 50] And then after he left, I grabbed that dollar, I went to the concession stand, and yet the whole time, I knew it was wrong. I broke that commandment, and regretfully enjoyed every Skittle and drink of that Mountain Dew in the process.

But I am so thankful for these commands that teach me what is right in God's eyes. See, Psalm 19, starting here in verse 7, puts it like this.

The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous.

So I hope today that you can see that the Ten Commandments are a guide that lead us to the cross where we discover hope in Jesus. They truly are a guide to grace.

[23 : 56] Will you pray with me? Heavenly Father, thank you so much for these words of hope and these words of life today. I know the Ten Commandments are something that we've all heard all our life, and maybe they've become so commonplace that we've missed the true power in them.

So thank you for this message today through your word that talks all about just what are the Ten Commandments all about, answer some common questions that people have.

And Father, I thank you for speaking this truth into our hearts today. And may we realize that this moral law still applies, and that it leads us to the cross, and then it sends us back out to live for you in everything we do.

We thank you for the big picture of these commands, to love God and to love people. That's what you call us to do. So Father, our prayer throughout this series is that you will have your way, that you will speak into our hearts, and that we may surrender whatever needs to be laid at your feet,

and we may follow you faithfully.

So thank you for your words of hope and your words of life. We pray this in Jesus' name. God's people said, Amen and Amen. Hey, I want to give you a simple invitation today.

[25 : 22] As we were looking at the Ten Commandments, if you were able to say, Yep, I've broken that one. I've broken that one. I've broken that one. And yet you've never given your heart to the Lord.

I want you to know that God is showing you this because He loves you, and He desires a relationship with you. He doesn't want to see you cast away from Him for all eternity. He wants you to be with Him. Right now on this earth, He wants you as His child, and He wants you in all eternity to enjoy that relationship with Him.

And so if you're ready to have that conversation, we as a church would love to come alongside you.

Once again, my name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana.

We would love to come alongside you and just show you what the Scriptures teach, help you to think through that a little bit, and hopefully get you baptized really soon.

[26 : 20] Maybe you just have some questions about your faith. We'd love to come alongside you with that. So please, reach out to us. You can do that in a couple different ways. You can call the church office at 812-663-8488, or you can email me at ray at fccgreensburg.com.

Hey, we're so thankful that you tuned in today. God bless you, and have a great day.