

Loving Others

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 May 2022

Preacher: Vijay Henderson

[0:00] Originally, I looked at the first three a couple of weeks ago. Andrew looked at Sabbath last week. And today we'll finish with commandments 5 to 10. That's 10 in all.

And at first glance, the commandments seem like a random bunch of morals, don't they? But God thinks if you want the key to a better society, commandments 5 to 10 are a good place to start.

Because notice how other person-centered the commandments are. So honor your father and mother, don't murder, don't steal, don't lie, don't commit adultery, and do not covet.

We won't have time to do all six of them today. I'll just do four of them. But your handout is the place to go. But before we begin the commandments, just a couple of instructions, a couple of, I guess, health warnings for you.

Firstly, we are New Testament Christians, not Old Testament Jews. We're under the covenant of Jesus, not the covenant of Moses. Andrew said last week that Jesus fulfills the law.

[1:03] Therefore, he releases us from having to obey the Ten Commandments. But that doesn't mean we forget that they exist. Because Jesus takes the heart of these commandments and reapplies them for New Testament believers, for us today.

In our New Testament passage, Jesus says, Love your neighbor as yourself. That is his summary of Commandments 5 to 10. That is the heart of those commandments.

When you're dealing with others, if your ethic is love, you are well within the boundaries of Commandments 5 to 10 in Exodus. The second thing to remember, we've said this before, the second thing to remember is Commandment 0.

And Commandment 0 is this. It's chapter 20, verse 2 in your Bibles. Commandment 0. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

It's really important to remember, Commandment 0, that Israel were rescued first. They were brought out of Egypt first. Their obedience comes afterwards.

[2:09] The Ten Commandments, that's chapter 20. That is the relationship. But chapters 1 to 17, that is the rescue. It is rescue first, relationship, obedience, service.

That comes afterwards. And that is a really important distinction to get right because many religions in the world have it the other way around. You serve and worship and obey your way upwards.

If you honor your parents well enough, if you don't steal, if you don't murder, perhaps God will be pleased to have you. That is a righteousness by works. That is a performance narrative.

But with Yahweh, it's a grace narrative. Israel are already saved. By grace it was. He famously says in 19, verse 4, You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

It was all of grace. God did it all by himself. It's rescue first, relationship, obedience, service. That comes afterwards.

[3:12] We must be clear about the order. You need to read all the commandments in light of commandment zero. God saved them first by grace. And so here are commandments 5 to 10.

Let me just read them quickly. Verse 12. Honor your father and mother so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male or female servant, his donkey, his ox or donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

These are the beginnings of a great society of what it would look like to love your neighbor as yourself. We're going to look at honor your father and mother. And the way verse 12 sets this out, it suggests that our parents are a reflection of God in our lives, which I think is why this command has got a promise attached.

Honor your father and mother so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. That is a similar blessing you get in relation to honoring God in your life. Dishonor your parents and that is like dishonoring God.

[4:27] No wonder it would threaten Israel's possession of the land. Our parents, they give us life, they nurture, protect, they raise us, they make sacrifices for our good and of course they love us.

We honor our parents because they reflect God in our lives. And notice that honoring is quite an open-ended idea. It could be glory, it could be obedience, it could be help with practical stuff.

It seems deliberately open-ended. We're to honor father and mother in all our dealings with a similar attitude as though we're dealing with God. He takes this command so seriously that to break it would threaten Israel's inheritance of the promised land.

But we are not Old Testament Jews. And so Jesus reapplies the heart of this command with the love principle. If you want to know if something is honoring mum or dad, the key is, is this loving my parents as I would love myself?

That is the key. And there are so many applications of this. I ran out of room. And so it would be a great one for you to chat with your neighbour over chicken and chips.

[5:45] So what I'm going to do is I'm going to apply this in the places that my own conscience is pricked by this command because I think it will be challenging for you in the same places as well.

So firstly, even Jesus had a mother and father. In Luke chapter 2, he obeyed and submitted to them even though he was God himself.

And I don't know what your relationship is like with your mum and dad, whether they push your buttons, whether you can't wait for them to leave when they come for a visit.

But I wonder if part of the breakdown is because we never obeyed our parents in the first place. Are we so sure that they are the problem and we are a delight to have as children?

Are we so sure that that is the case? In marriage, do you ever say to your spouse, your mother is coming around later and you roll your eyes?

[6:48] You're married, remember? So their mother is your mother because you are one flesh. And so it would be loving even at your age to still obey mum and dad.

to let them win the argument, to not grumble about them, especially in public, even if they're deceased, to speak about them still, to live in a way still that would honour them even though they've passed away.

All of that honours them. Even Jesus had a mum and dad and he still obeyed and submitted to them even though he was God in flesh. In Mark chapter 7, Jesus rebukes the religious leaders who try to stop people from looking after their parents in their old age.

And aged care for mum and dad is quite a big issue these days. I'm not suggesting that you have shipped your parents off to forget about them or anything like that.

Aged care facilities, they have the training and the staff and the resources to give them proper care that we can't given their situation. It's perfectly a good situation.

[8 : 00] But the guiding principle of aged care is this loving my parents as I would love myself. The idea in Exodus is how we honour our parents reflects what we think of God in our lives.

They are the closest people to being like God to us. For some of us though, honouring parents might clash with honouring God. So, some of our Asian brothers and sisters, you might have come from a family that practised ancestor worship where your parents encourage you to pray to your ancestors for blessings and prosperity and health and safety, these sorts of things.

As a Christian, you'll have to respectfully tell your parents that while you'll pray for those things, you won't pray to anyone who isn't God. By the same token, there'll be others here today whose parents aren't happy with the fact that you're Christians or perhaps they think you're too radical in your faith.

The right application here is to gently and respectfully carry on with your Christian life business as usual. It might mean that you say you can't come to that family gathering till church is finished, that you've got Bible study on that night and those events are blocked out in your diary.

But afterwards, you can come for sure. We honour our parents, but we honour God first. Just a final thing on mums and dads.

[9 : 32] If your parents are not Christians, I couldn't think of a more loving thing to do than to lead them to the Lord. Are we praying for our parents to be saved?

Are we thinking how every phone call, every visit, every interaction is building towards you, sharing your faith with mum and dad? Would you be willing to say sorry for things that even aren't your fault if that meant winning a hearing for Jesus?

The idea in Exodus, how we treat our parents, reflects how we treat God in our lives. The guiding principle is love. That's parents. As I said, please chat over chicken and chips.

There'll be a ton of other applications that I haven't looked at. Please chat with the person you're eating with about what challenges you find with mum and dad. We're going to look at commandment number 6, which is verse 13.

You shall not murder. And straight away with this command, I don't know what you said about the easiest command. Maybe you thought this is the easiest one to obey because you say, well, I'm not a murderer. Until you realise what Jesus does when he looks at this command.

[10 : 39] So on the screen, you've heard it said long ago, this is Jesus, to people long ago, you shall not murder. But I tell you, anyone who's angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. And anyone who says, you fool, will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Jesus takes Old Testament murder and raises the bar to include even insulting somebody. He's warning us of the danger of hatred. That is the heart of this command.

He's trying to prevent a lack of love that God requires towards our neighbours. And so while no one here is a murderer, that's right, that's right, no one could, because I've got the police on speed dial.

But that's, no one's a murderer. But Jesus thinks the same seed of murder lies in the attitude even when we call someone a fool.

It's the same hatred that could one day germinate even to actual murder. You see, the sixth command isn't necessarily about killing people.

[11:41] It points to the problem of hate in the human heart. We started by saying, well, I'm not a murderer. And by Melbourne standards, that is correct. No one here has killed anyone.

But I wonder when Jesus looks at our hearts if he sees a room of mass murderers instead. He says on the screen, therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there, remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar.

First, go and be reconciled to them. Then come and offer your gift. In other words, if you want to do something super spiritual, don't worry about huge gifts at the altar and sacrifices and these things.

Just go and say sorry to your brother and sister. In Melbourne, we believe in right and wrong. That is the key. But will you be willing to be wrong for the sake of peace?

Would you be willing to say sorry even if it's not your fault because that would be more loving and lead to reconciliation between your brothers? Instead of acting in anger, the guiding ethic is love.

[12:46] In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul says even when we were deserving of wrath because of his great love for us, God made us alive in Christ.

If God chose to love us instead of giving us his wrath, then we can do that too. That's the principle. Forgiven people should be more forgiving.

That is the idea. So that is Commandment 6. I'm going to jump ahead to Commandment 9. It says, You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.

And this is about lying, but the picture in the passage is of a courtroom. The idea is that you are called in as a witness to help establish the truth.

The defendant, that's your neighbour, they're on trial. They need you to tell the truth so justice can prevail. And whether it's Old Testament Melbourne or modern, sorry, Old Testament Israel or modern day Melbourne, everyone hates lies.

[13:45] We all agree that they destroy the fabric of relationships and society. It's not hard to prove that to you, but I wonder if some lies are more acceptable than others.

So, it is tax time soon. Will our tax returns be a truthful account of our income and deductions? Are our Centrelink benefits a truthful record of what we're entitled to receive?

Are our insurance claims a truthful claim of what we really lost? Now, are we economical with the truth when we speak? Are we fast and loose with our language?

Do we say one thing to someone's face and then another thing behind their backs? Are we quick to over-promise because we're people-pleasers and we're fearful?

Jesus speaks more generally about lies and breaking our word in the next passage on the screen. He says, Again you've heard it was said to the people, Do not break your oath but fulfil to the Lord the vows you have made.

[14:51] But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all, either by heaven for it is God's throne or by the earth for it is his footstool or by Jerusalem for it is the city of the great king. And do not swear by your head for you cannot make even one hair white or black.

All you need to do is simply say yes or no. Anything beyond this comes from the evil one. The point is, the whole earth is God's. Any promise you make is ultimately to him and so don't promise anything because you can't control anything.

You'll only end up breaking your word and being a liar. So just say yes and do something or just say no and don't do it. And the idea behind these verses and this command is truthfulness.

It's honesty. It's reliability and constancy. It would massively benefit your neighbours if you were a person of dependability in their lives.

If they could rely on your words. If when you spoke you did it and you knew and people knew that that's what you were like. Or when you accepted an invitation you committed to it even if a better offer came in afterwards.

[16:04] It would be a loving thing to your neighbour to be a reliable, dependable, honest person in their lives. That would be a loving thing to do. We'll do commandment 10 as the last one.

Commandment 10 is verse 17. You shall not covet your neighbour's house, you shall not covet your neighbour's wife or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

Notice that these things, this list, it's all the things an Israelite could covet, could want but notice how all-inclusive it is. It says anything that you could, that belongs to your neighbour and that means it's anything that a Melburnian could covet as well.

The word covet here, it means to envy, it means to desire or crave to possess something but whatever word you use, the goal of coveting is me first.

It's about getting something for me, it's putting ourselves first and the things we want and God second. In the New Testament Paul speaks about greed and coveting and he lines them up alongside idolatry because it moves God out of the number one seat in our hearts and puts ourselves and the stuff we want there instead.

[17:24] But like all idolatry, if you did in fact end up possessing your neighbour's stuff, it would not make you more content because that space in your heart is reserved for God alone.

He is the source of contentment. What's more, none of the things that you desire will be able to bear the weight of your God-like expectations. They will be crushed under the weight of your desire.

What's more, you will be crushed when all of these things turn out to be less than God because you've tried to stuff them in a God-shaped hole that's reserved only for him.

Coveting begins with me first, this other stuff I want first and boots God out of his seat in our hearts. And so here are some questions to help diagnose coveting in our hearts.

I put them on your handout. To who or what do you look for life-sustaining stability, security and acceptance? What do you really want out of life?

[18:28] What would really make you happy? What would make you worthy of acceptance in your eyes? These questions tease out whether we really desire God in our lives or whether we've begun to boot him out and replace him with ourselves and our neighbours stuff around us.

Just a couple of words to finish the Ten Commandments. I don't know which one of the commandments pricks your conscience most or convicts you of sin. At first glance, some of them appear really easy, but by the time Jesus gets a hold of them in the New Testament, we're all left feeling guilty of disobedience.

But the good news is God couldn't be more on your side to help you get this right. In Jesus, he has forgiven you of your sins by his Spirit.

He convicts you when you're disobeying. The Spirit chips away all the parts of Vijay so they end up looking more like his son. On the screen, this is from Titus 2, a really important passage.

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own eager to do what is right.

[19:59] That is a New Testament summary of the Exodus and everything that happens there. Salvation rescued for a relationship. And notice some of the words in the passage.

It is forgiveness, redemption, teaching, salvation, purification. The idea is even with challenging commands in Jesus' hands, God couldn't be more on our side to help us get these right.

The final thing about Ten Commandments is this. If you want to follow commands five to ten, you need to be clear about commandments one to four.

If five to ten are about loving your neighbour, commandments one to ten are about loving God. Our most foundational relationship is not with our neighbours but with him first.

The commandments are how to live well in the world he has made. When Jesus looks at the first four commandments he summarises them famously. He says, Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

[21:04] The idea is an overflowing love for God will spill out into a love for your neighbour. In fact, he says something similar in John's Gospel. He says, My command is this, Love each other as I have loved you.

If you want to love your neighbour, you need to know how much Jesus has loved you first. If you want to honour your mum and dad, you have to be clear about your heavenly father and how much he's loved you first.

If you want to not covet or not steal, you need to know how much you already have in Jesus. The more you love God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength, the less room in here there will be for other stuff.

If you want to remedy the hate in your heart, remember how God's love went further than his wrath towards you. Forgiven people should be more forgiving.

That's the idea. Loving our neighbour, commandments 5-10, it begins with loving God first, commandments 1-4. Jesus says, Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

[22:12] This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it. Love your neighbour as yourself, all the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments. So let's pray that we would be a church that loves.

Let's pray. Father God, thank you that an ancient text in Exodus is still just as relevant to us today.

Father, thank you that you loved us, that you sent us your son. Father, would we know how much we are loved by you so that we would love other people.

By your spirit, Father, please chip away the parts of us so that we look more like Jesus. Please, Father, over this week, over our lives, keep convicting us of ways we're not honouring our parents, of ways we're coveting, of ways we're lying or stealing or committing adultery, these sorts of things.

Chip away at us, Father, convict us so that we look more like Jesus. And we ask this for his sake and not ours. Amen.