

TEN | No Other Gods

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Introduction

Exodus 20:1–17

And God spoke all these words, saying: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.”

Watch a brief explanatory video on the Law [here](#).

The truth of God’s Law divides:

- The godly from the ungodly
- The wise man from the fool
- The sheep from the goats

What would it mean for us to study, meditate on, and love the Law of God?

Because above all else, the Law of God is good.

The Law of God Is Good

The Law of God is good and important for living today. It is the foundation of every civil society. All of our freedoms are based on the Law of God.

The Law of God is the standard our nation is built on.

- To our Founding Fathers, it was obvious, or “self-evident,” that self government, or a democratic republic, could only be perpetuated by the self governed.
- Reflecting these precepts, a German writer contemporaneous to the Founders, J. W. von Goethe, stated, “What is the best government?—That which teaches us to govern ourselves.”¹

¹ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (2015). “Maxims and Reflections,” p. 99

- A prominent 19th century minister, Henry Ward Beecher, simply said, “There is no liberty to men who know not how to govern themselves.”²
- George Washington said, “Virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government.”³
- Benjamin Franklin said, “Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom.”⁴

Psalm 1

Blessed is the man
 Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
 Nor stands in the path of sinners,
 Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
 But his delight is in the Law of the Lord,
 And in His Law he meditates day and night.
 He shall be like a tree
 Planted by the rivers of water,
 That brings forth its fruit in its season,
 Whose leaf also shall not wither;
 And whatever he does shall prosper.
 The ungodly are not so,
 But are like the chaff which the wind drives away.
 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,
 Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
 For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
 But the way of the ungodly shall perish.

**Walk in the Ten Commandments,
 and they will lead you to Jesus,
 and Jesus will give you the treasure trove of life.**

Questions—Aren’t we no longer under the Law that now we are under Christ? Should we cast off the Law and the Old Testament and live simply by the words of Jesus? If “love God and love others” sums up the Law and prophets, isn’t that all we need?

No.

Romans 6:12–14

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

- Between the cliffs of legalism and license is the narrow pathway of the Law. Both cliffs are destructive. Only the Law helps us safely navigate our way between them. How?
 - The Law leads us to Jesus
 - Jesus then returns us to the Law to live
- **The Law of God is best seen in the Person of Jesus Christ.**

² Henry Ward Beecher, William Drysdale (1887). “Proverbs from Plymouth Pulpit.”

³ George Washington (1855). “Maxims of Washington: Political, Social, Moral, and Religious,” p. 308

⁴ Benjamin Franklin (1840). “The Works of Benjamin Franklin: Containing Several Political and Historical Tracts Not Included in Any Former Edition, and Many Letters, Official and Private, Not Hitherto Published; with Notes and a Life of the Author,” p. 297

The Law of God is the pathway for navigating life.

It humbles us.

It teaches us.

It is our tutor, guiding us to Jesus.

Again, and again, and again.

Matthew 22:36–40

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, “**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.**”

What can’t the Law do?

- The Law can’t justify you.
- The Law can’t keep you righteous.
 - **Only the Person of Jesus can do these things.**

What does the Law do?

- Reveals God’s glory and holiness
- Reveals man’s sinfulness
- Marks Israel as God’s chosen people
- Prepares Israel for the coming Christ

Galatians 3:23–29

But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith, which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

- In verse 24, the word translated “tutor” is *paidagogos*. In Greek, *agogos* means “leader.” A *paidagogos* was a slave in Ancient Greece who led boys to school and back while also tutoring them after school.
- The Law of God is our *paidagogos*—it teaches us and leads us to God. The purpose of the Law is to teach us our need for a Savior and to lead us to Him.

Application—What does it look like to live in a world without the Law?

Watch the “Man on the Street” [video](#).

- This is an important video that highlights how confused and inconsistent the thinking is in our postmodern culture.
- **When the Word of God is eliminated from the world, the result is a world of chaos and confusion.**

Romans 1:18–32

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made

like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

- Paul shows us what the opposite of the Ten Commandments looks like in the world.
- The pattern is always the same: a loss of gratitude to and reverence for God, followed by futility of thought and darkened hearts, followed by prideful arrogance, and ending in sexual sin and depravity.
- **When the Word of God is eliminated from the world, the result is a world of chaos and confusion.**

No Other Gods

What is the first commandment? **You shall have no other gods before Me.**

Hear God speak these words in the tone and language of a wedding vow: "I choose you. You choose Me."

Why did God make this commandment for His people?

- As protection from pagan gods, which were were evil gods of child sacrifice, sex trafficking, and sexual perversion (see **1 Kings 18:20–40**).
- As the foundation for right and wrong, thus anchoring such determinations in God's truth and not in the opinions of men.
- As protection from pluralism. Don't mix evil pagan gods with the one true God.

Note—There is a distinction between the first and second commandments. The first commandment deals with worshipping other gods, while the second commandment deals with worshipping idols.

- A **god** is something that you place your trust in to take care of you.
- An **idol** is anything that diminishes, competes with, or distracts you from the one true God.

Question—How do I follow the first commandment and have no other gods before the one true God?

Think, meditate, pray on, and love the Law of God.

Here are some things that do **not** work:

- **Make a list and put God at the top of it.** The tyranny of the urgent will supplant God every time. God is above every list. The moment He is placed on a list, He is diminished. He is not small enough to fit on any list.
- **Make the God the center.** The center of what? He cannot be contained in the center of anything.
- **Achieve balance.** Balance is always and only an illusion.

- **Try harder and believe in yourself.** This just leads to insanity. The sooner you give up on yourself, the quicker Jesus can get to work.
- **Each of these efforts fail because they are predicated not on God but on self.**

A major obstacle to obeying the first commandment is our worship of the unholy trinity of me, myself, and I.

**The pathway of the Law will always lead us to Jesus and His Kingdom.
We can walk with God because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ
and the empowering of the Holy Spirit.
We need daily dependence on Christ.
Keep pressing on towards Jesus!**

Question—How do I know if I am worshipping other gods?

Reflect on these three questions to discover if you have other gods.

- When I am spiritually and emotionally hungry, where do I go for food?
- When I am hurting, where do I go for comfort?
- When I am tired, how do I find rest?

Conclusion

God promises that He will be faithful to complete what He has started in us. (**Phil 1:6**)

He is not content until we are walking with Him in paths of righteousness for His Name's sake. (**Psalm 23:3**)

Prayer

Father, thank you for Your Law. Show us how to meditate on it day and night. Help us to be planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither. May Your ways lead me to Jesus and teach me how to live in Your Kingdom.

Jesus, empower us by Your blood to walk in Your will with the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit. We put our trust in You alone to feed us, comfort us, and give us rest. Help us to follow You and You alone, by God's grace in Jesus's Name. Amen.

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss: The Law of God is good and important for living today.
2. Does the Law no longer matter now that we are under grace? Why or why not?
3. What does the Law not do? What does it do? How is the Law our *paidagogos*?
4. Does thinking of God speaking the first commandment in the language of a wedding vow change the way you understand the first commandment?
5. When you are spiritually and emotionally hungry, where do you go for food? When you are hurting, where do you go for comfort? When you are tired, how do you find rest?
6. How do you live in obedience to the first commandment?

NOTES