

Colleyville Presbyterian Church
Ten Commandments
Week 1 – Introduction to the Ten Commandments

Resources:

Westminster Larger Catechism
John Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*

Common concerns about the law of God - clarity, relevance, application

What do we believe regarding the Law?

Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 19: “Of The Law of God”

WCF 19.5. The moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof; and that, not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it. Neither doth Christ, in the gospel, any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation.”

Example of Andy Stanley - what is the problem with this approach? We need God to define for us what it means to love him and love others. Note that this is how Jesus summarizes the law.

Three kinds of law - civil, ceremonial, moral. How do they relate today?

Prooftexts: Matt 5:17: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” (Jesus’ sermon on the mount is actually a divine commentary on the law of God and explanation of how we are to keep them through Jesus - in union with him). 1 John 2:3, 7: “And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments...Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning.” (John emphasizes the commandment: “Love one another,” but he wants us to know that this is a restatement of the old commandment). Romans 3:13: “Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.” (The Ten Commandments are a summary of the whole moral law, which is upheld in the New Covenant).

WCF 19.6. Although true believers be not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified, or condemned; yet is it of great use to them, as well as to others; in that, as *a rule of life* informing them of the will of God, and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; discovering also the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives; so as, examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin, together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of his obedience.

Note that the law is actually a revelation of God’s character - who he is.

The law also opens our eyes us to know ourselves and our need for Jesus. It is the sins to which we are blind that we are unable to repent of - the law helps us to understand our sin. It is only as we truly understand ourselves to be great sinners that we will fully understand God’s grace and the righteousness of Jesus. As you walk with Jesus, you should actually sin less, but you should understand your sin better.

WCF 19.6 (continued) [The law] is likewise of use to the regenerate, to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin: and the threatenings of it serve to show what even their sins deserve; and what afflictions, in this life, they may expect for them, although freed from the curse thereof threatened in the law.

The promises of it, in like manner, show them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof: although not as due to them by the law as a covenant of works. So as, a man's doing good, and refraining from evil, because the law encourageth to the one, and deterreth from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law; and, not under grace.

There continue to be blessings connected to the keeping of God's law, and afflictions connected to the breaking of God's law - even for the believer. There are many reasons to keep the law, but one of the reasons is to receive the blessings of obedience and avoid the afflictions of disobedience. If we live contrary to God's moral law, there will be consequences. If we live in a way that is consistent with it, there will be blessings. Recognizing this is not "works-righteousness" - it is wisdom. But of course, we should ask - what does God mean by "blessings"?

7. Neither are the forementioned uses of the law contrary to the grace of the gospel, but do sweetly comply with it; the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do that freely, and cheerfully, which the will of God, revealed in the law, requireth to be done."

This emphasis - seeing the law as a positive thing in the life of the Christian - is a distinctive emphasis of Reformed Theology. We do not see a strong antithesis between Law & Gospel. Rather, the law and gospel "sweet comply" with one another - through the grace of God and the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit. The law is a part of God's fundamentally gracious word to us given in the Scriptures.

Calvin: "Men always delight in contriving some way of acquiring righteousness apart from God's word. Hence, among what are commonly considered good works the commandments of the law are accorded too narrow a place, while that innumerable throng of human precepts occupies almost the whole space... the best remedy to cure that fault will be to fix this thought firmly in mind: the law has been divinely handed down to us to teach us perfect righteousness; there is no other righteousness than that which conforms to the requirements of God's will."

Should we study the Law of God? The psalms encourage us to love and treasure God's law. The psalmist praises and lauds God's law. In this Jesus teaches us to love God's law.

Ps 1:2: "[Blessed is the man whose] delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night."

Ps 19:7-11: "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward."

Ps 119:47-48, 72: "I find my delight in your commandments, which I love. I will lift up my hands toward your commandment, which I love, and I will meditate on your statutes... The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces."

What is important about the context of the Ten Commandments?

Exodus comes before Sinai. God has delivered Israel from slavery, and as an act of his gracious love he *then* gives them his commandments. He does not deliver them because they are righteous, but he sets his affection on them, and he then teaches them how to honor and love him and honor and love one another. The Ten Commandments are God as Father speaking to his Son Israel and instructing his people how to live. In terms of redemptive history, Israel is like a young child when she receives God's law. God's law is not how we learn to make God love us, but an expression of God's gracious love *for* us.

What is the relationship between the Ten Commandments and Jesus' summary of God's law?

WLC 102: "The sum of the four commandments containing our duty to God, is, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind."

WLC 122: "The sum of the six commandments which contain our duty to man, is, to love our neighbor as ourselves, and to do to others what we would have them do to us."

What are some important principles to keep in mind to understand rightly the Ten Commandments?

WLC 99: For the right understanding of the Ten Commandments, these rules are to be observed:

1. That the law is perfect, and bindeth every one to full conformity in the whole man unto the righteousness thereof, and unto entire obedience forever; so as to require the utmost perfection of every duty, and to forbid the least degree of every sin.
2. That it is spiritual, and so reacheth the understanding, will, affections, and all other powers of the soul; as well as words, works, and gestures.
3. That one and the same thing, in divers respects, is required or forbidden in several commandments.
4. That as, where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden; and, where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded: so, where a promise is annexed, the contrary threatening is included; and, where a threatening is annexed, the contrary promise is included.
5. That what God forbids, is at no time to be done; what he commands, is always our duty; and yet every particular duty is not to be done at all times.
6. That under one sin or duty, all of the same kind are forbidden or commanded; together with all the causes, means, occasions, and appearances thereof, and provocations thereunto.
7. That what is forbidden or commanded to ourselves, we are bound, according to our places, to endeavor that it may be avoided or performed by others, according to the duty of their places.
8. That in what is commanded to others, we are bound, according to our places and callings, to be helpful to them; and to take heed of partaking with others in what is forbidden them.