

***THE BEST WAY TO LIVE***  
**By Andy Manning**  
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The title of this sermon is “The Best Way to Live.”

Today we are kicking off a sermon series on the Ten Commandments.

**Mark Rooker** wrote, “The influence of the Ten Commandments on the Western world is beyond doubt. No other document has had such a great influence on Western culture.”

But why talk about the Ten Commandments?

They may have had a great influence on our culture, but they are ten rules that are over 3,000 years old.

Most people only know one or two things are the Ten Commandments.

They know that there’s a famous movie called the Ten Commandments starring Charlton Heston, and they know that there are ten of them.

The late **Ted Turner**, the founder of CNN (The Clinton News Network/aka the Fake News Network), in 1988 said, “We’re living with outmoded rules. The rules we’re living under are the Ten Commandments, and I bet nobody here even pays much attention to them because they are too old.” He even went on to rewrite his own ten commandments, calling them the Ten Voluntary Initiatives.

Atheist **Richard Dawkins** seems to think they’re not good for us. He said, “Do you advocate the Ten Commandments as a guide to the good life? Then I can only presume that you don't know the Ten Commandments.”

Really? So why should we study the Ten Commandments?

### **3 USES OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**

There are three uses of the Ten Commandments, or three purposes.

And these three represent the reasons that we need the Ten Commandments.

**1. The Ten Commandments show us how to live.**

The Ten Commandments are God's eternal laws for mankind.

They show us how to live.

This is called **the didactic use of the law**.

We live in a very immoral age.

The days are evil, as it says in Ephesians 5:16.

21<sup>st</sup> century America reminds me of the days of the Judges, when  
“everyone did whatever seemed right to him (Judges 21:25).”

As I see it, America now only has five values or morals, and they don't come  
from the Ten Commandments –

**tolerance** (or don't condemn anyone, unless they are condemning  
anyone),

**consent** (you can do whatever you want to another person as long as  
they allow it),

**equality** (of outcomes, not merely equality under the law), diversity  
(not of thought, but of race, gender identity, and sexual orientation),

and of course, **environmentalism** (don't hurt the environment).

In their book, ***The Day America Told the Truth***, James Patters and Peter Kim  
explain that today there is “absolutely no moral consensus at all.... Everyone is  
making up their own moral codes – their own Ten Commandments.”

They list what they call the “ten real commandments,” the rules that people actually live by today, according to their surveys.

These rules include the following:

- I don’t see the point in observing the Sabbath;
- I will steal from those who won’t really miss it;
- I will lie when it suits me, so long as it doesn’t cause any real damage;
- I will cheat on my spouse – after all, given the chance, he or she will do the same;
- I will procrastinate at work and do absolutely nothing about one full day in every five.

**David Brooks**, the former president of the Family Research Council said, “Sometime over the past generation we became less likely to object to something because it is immoral and more likely to object to something because it is unhealthy or unsafe. So smoking is now a worse evil than six of the Ten Commandments, and the word sinful is most commonly associated with chocolate.”

We live in an immoral, morally confused generation.

Today when most people think about laws, they assume restriction.

Laws are things that restrict our freedom.

Laws keep us from doing what we want to do.

Laws keep us from having fun.

Laws keep us from expressing ourselves.

**Al Mohler** said, “To live in this day is to live in an antinomian age, an age that is against all law. Western society is addicted to minimal law and maximum flexibility.”

The reason that people think of laws that way is that people have an incorrect view of freedom.

What is freedom? Freedom is not the ability to do what you want, but the ability to do what God wants you to.

**Benjamin Franklin** said that freedom is the right to do what is right.

We were not created to be our own masters, the creators of our own rules.

If you just do what you want, rather than what God wants, you will only find slavery and suffering.

This was illustrated in the TV show “Breaking Bad.” When it starts out, the main character, Walter White, is a normal American man; he considers himself to be good man; a high school chemistry teacher. He is married and has one son and one daughter. But Walter is not a Christian, and while he believes in being a good, he ultimately gets to define what good is. And as the show progresses, it becomes clear that Walter really only has one value, or one moral: Protect and care for his family. Other than that, Walter surprises himself and others as he finds that he is willing to break the law, lie, steal, and even kill in order to live by this one law. But what eventually happens is that because Walter ignores God’s law, he eventually destroys his family and ultimately destroys himself.

**G. K. Chesterton** said, “No man can break any of the Ten Commandments. He can only break himself against them.” Freedom from the God’s law is not freedom but slavery and suffering.

But when you live according to God’s laws, you find life and prosperity.

You find the *dolce vita*, the sweet life.

**J.I. Packer** calls the Ten Commandments the “blueprint for behavior.”

**William Barclay** calls them “the plain man’s guide to ethics.”

The Puritan preacher **Thomas Watson** wrote, “The moral law is the copy of God’s will, our spiritual directory; it shows us what sins to avoid, what duties to pursue.”

If you want to know how to live – how to please God, and how to love your neighbor, then look to the Ten Commandments.

## **2. The Ten Commandments restrain sin in society.**

### **The political use of the law.**

The Ten Commandments, not only with their commands, but also with their warnings of judgment, help people, even non-Christians, to live more virtuous lives.

The founders of America understood what Os Guinness calls the Golden Triangle of Freedom.

Freedom requires virtue; virtue requires faith; and faith requires freedom.

Notice the first part. Freedom requires virtue.

The reason for America’s greatness is that it is the land of the free. You have religious freedom, the freedom of speech, and a free market system which has allowed for more prosperity and more technological progress than any other society in history.

But America is an experiment in liberty. We’re only a little more than 200 years old.

Can human beings handle freedom?

Answer: Only if they live virtuous lives.

Only if they are responsible for themselves and respectful of each other.

In short, only if people live by the Ten Commandments.

If people slide into vice and immorality, then freedom will no longer be possible. If people cannot control themselves, then the government has to control them.

This means more laws, more restrictions, higher taxes, less liberty.

Eventually the government gets too big to sustain, and the people become too restricted in order to flourish, and a prosperous country turns into a third-world country like Mexico or Venezuela.

**James Madison**, the author of the Constitution of the United States, said this: “We have staked the whole future of our new nation, not upon the power of government; far from it. We have staked the future of all our political constitutions upon the capacity of each of ourselves to govern ourselves according to the moral principles of the Ten Commandments.”

**G. K. Chesterton** said it well, “If men will not be governed by the Ten Commandments, they shall be governed by the ten thousand commandments.”

In other words, either the people in our country will rule themselves by following the Ten Commandments, or they will have to be ruled by an all-powerful, all-intrusive government.

A very clear example is the current fight over the Second Amendment, the right to bear arms (picture). There are a growing number of people that want to take away the freedom to own guns. Why? Because of the rising immorality in our nation.

Freedom cannot thrive without virtue.

And the so-called virtues of equality, and diversity, and tolerance are not going to do the job.

America needs to return to the Ten Commandments, and it needs all ten.

**President Ronald Reagan** said, 'If the American people obeyed the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule we wouldn't have any problems.'

### **3. The Ten Commandments show us our sin.**

**This is the pedagogical use of the law.**

The Ten Commandments serve as a spiritual MRI – it lets us know that we are sick.

**Philip Ryken** said, "The law commands and condemns."

One of the reasons we need a deep understanding of the Ten Commandments is that it shows us how sinful we are.

Why would we want that?

Because we are sinful, but if we don't know it, then we won't reach out for a Savior.

If you don't have a deep understanding of God's moral law, then you might think that you are a pretty good person; you might think that you can actually be good enough to earn your way to heaven; you might think that you have more good deeds than bad deeds.

**Philip Ryken** said, "People who are ignorant of God's law never see their need for the gospel."

**John Bunyan** said, "The man who does not know the nature of the law cannot know the nature of sin. And he who does not know the nature of sin cannot know the nature of the Savior."

A low view of the law leads to a high view of self, and a low view of God. But a high view of the law leads to a low view of self, and a high view of God.

The more you understand the law, the more you will see how sinful you are, and that if you are treated as you deserve, you would suffer for eternity in hell.

**Augustine** said, “The usefulness of the law lies in convicting man of his infirmity and moving him to call upon the remedy of grace which is in Christ.”

**Donald Grey Barnhouse** said, “The law of God is like a mirror. Now the purpose of a mirror is to reveal to you that your face is dirty, but the purpose of a mirror is not to wash your face. When you look in a mirror and find that your face is dirty, you do not then reach to take the mirror off the wall and attempt to rub it on your face as a cleansing agent. The purpose of the mirror is to drive you to the water.”

So the Ten Commandments show us how to live, they restrain sin in society, and they show us our sin.

They are **a map** to show us how to live, **a muzzle** to restrain sin, and **a mirror** to show us our sin.

We need the Ten Commandments. I need the Ten Commandments. You need the Ten Commandments. Our nation needs the Ten Commandments.

## **19 FACTS ABOUT THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**

So let's dig in. This morning I want to begin with some background information on the Ten Commandments. Let's begin with some facts about the Ten Commandments.

1. The Ten Commandments are found in two places in the Bible, both in the Pentateuch, or the Torah, the first five books in the Bible, all written by Moses: Exodus 20:1-17; and Deuteronomy 5:6-21. This is the reason Deuteronomy is so named; it means the “second law.”
2. The Ten Commandments were given about 13 centuries before Christ, making them over 3,000 years old (between 1446 and 1270 BC).



3. The Ten Commandments are also called the Decalogue, meaning “ten words” in Greek. That’s because the Hebrew words for “Ten Commandments” literally mean “ten words.”
4. The Ten Commandments are called the Covenant. Exodus 34:28 says, “Moses was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did not eat food or drink water. He wrote the Ten Commandments, the words of the covenant, on the tablets.”
5. The Ten Commandments are in two sections: 1-4; and 5-10. The first section teaches about our relationship with God; the second teaches about our relationship with others. The first section reveals our responsibility to God; the second section reveals our responsibility to others. The first section teaches us reverence to God; the second section teaches us respect for others. The first section teaches us how to love God; the second section teaches us how to love others. The first section is vertical, relating to God, and the second section is horizontal, relating to people. The first section deals with doctrine; the section deals with ethics.
6. The term “Ten Commandments” is only found 3 times in Scripture. (Ex 34:28; Dt 4:13; 10:4)
7. The Ten Commandments were given to Israel at Mount Sinai, also called Mount Horeb, two months after they left Egypt.
8. The Ten Commandments are a summary of the entire law of Moses. The Ten Commandments are the general commands (20:1-17), and the more detailed laws are found in 20:22-23:33. There are 613 Hebrew letters in the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, and there are a total of 613 laws in the Torah.
9. The Ten Commandments are summed up by the Great Commandment to love God and love your neighbor (Mt. 22:37-40; Mk 12:29-31).
10. The Ten Commandments are the only part of the law of Moses spoken by God’s audible voice to Israel (Deut 5:22-29; 10:4; Heb 12:18-21). The rest of the law was communicated through Moses.

11. The Ten Commandments are the only part of the law of Moses that was written on the 2 tablets of stone. Some believe that each tablet contained the full text. One belonged to Israel, and the other to God, so that both parties in the covenant could have a copy (Dt 4:13; 9:9-15; 10:4; 31:18). We also know that God wrote on both sides of the tablets. Ex 32:15
12. The Ten Commandments are the only part of the law written by the finger of God (Dt 9:10), and the only part of the entire Bible written by the finger of God.
13. The Ten Commandments are the only part of the law kept in the ark of the covenant. **Jl Packer** wrote, “The placement of the tablets of the Ten Commandments inside the most holy article of the tabernacle/temple furniture, the ark of the covenant, indicates how special they were. The ark was made for the Ten Commandments.”
14. The penalty for breaking 7 of the 10 Commandments was death. Death is not the penalty for coveting, because coveting is a sin of the heart, and only God knows the heart. Death was not the penalty for stealing, unless you were stealing people (Dt. 24:7). Death was not the penalty for lying.
15. The only completely positive commandment is the fifth: Honor your parents. The rest are stated negatively, or both negatively and positively.
16. The phrase “the LORD your God” appears in each of the first five commandments.
17. The Ten Commandments contain three warnings:
  - Punishing the children for the fathers’ iniquity (Ex. 20:5)
  - The Lord will not leave anyone unpunished (Ex 20:7)
  - Shortening of life in the land (Ex 20:12)
18. Roman Catholics divide the Ten Commandments differently than the traditional Protestant view. They combine the first and second commandments into one commandment (Ex 20:3-6), and then divide the tenth commandment into two.

19. The Supreme Court of the United States has shown great confusion about the Ten Commandments.

- On the one hand, it seems to show great respect for the Ten Commandments.
  - They are displayed in several places at the Supreme Court building. They are displayed at the center of the sculpture over the east portico of the building; they are displayed inside the courtroom; they are engraved over the chair of the chief justice; and they are engraved on the bronze doors of the court.
- On the other hand, it seems to think that the Ten Commandments are unimportant and perhaps even dangerous.
  - In 1980, in the case of Stone v. Graham, the court decided that a Kentucky state law that required the posting of a copy of the Ten Commandments in each public-school classroom was unconstitutional, violating the Establishment Clause.
  - The court stated that the requirement that the Ten Commandments be posted “had no secular legislative purpose,” and was “plainly religious in nature.”
  - The court said this: “If the posted copies of the Ten Commandments are to have any effect at all it will induce the school children to read, meditate upon, perhaps venerate and obey the commandments; this is not a permissible state objective under the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.”

## **THE BACKGROUND OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**

Now before we close, let's do one more thing this morning – let's discuss the background of the Ten Commandments.

It's impossible to interpret them correctly if you don't know the context.

### **1. The Israelites were enslaved by Pharaoh.**

At the time the commandments were given, the Israelites, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had been living in Egypt for 430 years, and they were enslaved and oppressed by Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

The Egyptians were afraid that the Israelites were going to multiply and far outnumber and eventually overthrow the Egyptians, so they enslaved them; they oppressed them; they intentionally made their labor extra difficult; and then even attempted to control the Hebrew population by ordering the Hebrew midwives to kill all the Hebrew boys two years old and younger.

In the same way, the Bible says that apart from Christ, we are slaves to sin, and Satan, and death. We are under the control of Satan; and because of our sin, we are separated from God, and when we die we will be punished in hell for eternity.

## **2. God sent a savior to rescue the Israelites.**

The book of Exodus says that God heard the Israelites groaning and crying out to Him about their oppression, and so God sent a savior to rescue them.

That man was Moses. God spoke to Moses from a burning bush, and told Moses to demand that Pharaoh release the Israelites so that they could go and serve the Lord.

In the same way, God also sent a Savior to rescue us from our slavery to sin, Satan and death.

That Savior is God's son, Jesus Christ. Jesus came to earth to die on the cross for our sins, in our place, as our punishment, so that we could forgiven and reconciled to God, and have eternal life.

When God called Moses, Moses said, "What if the people don't believe that You have sent me?"

So God enabled Moses to do miraculous signs and wonders in order to prove that Moses was by God.

Moses could turn his staff into a snake, and back into a staff again.

He could put his hand in and out of his coat, and it would be covered in leprosy, and then stick it in and out again, and it would be clean.

And he could take water from the Nile river and pour it on the ground and it would be blood.

In the same way, God enabled Jesus Christ to do miraculous signs and wonders to prove that He was who He said He was.

Jesus healed the blind, the deaf, the mute, and the lame; He cast out demons; He turned water into wine; He calmed a storm; He walked on water; He fed thousands of people with a few pieces of bread and fish.

But His most impressive miracle of all is the reason we are celebrating today.

After Jesus died, He rose again on the third day.

That's what makes the resurrection so important. The fact that Jesus rose from the grave proves that He is who He says He is.

Jesus claimed to be God. Anyone can make that claim, but Jesus backed it up by predicted His death and resurrection, and then by actually rising from the grave and by appearing 12 different times over a period of 40 days to more than 500 eye witnesses.

### **3. God saved Israel through the blood of the lamb.**

When Moses went to Pharaoh, Pharaoh refused to let God's people go. He wasn't used to someone telling him what to do.

So God sent 10 plagues to punish Pharaoh into submission.

The plague of blood, frogs, gnats, flies, livestock, boils, hail, locusts, and darkness.

After the first nine plagues, the land of Egypt was decimated, yet Pharaoh still would not submit and release the Jews.

So God sent one last plague, the death of the firstborn. God killed the firstborn sons and firstborn of the cattle in all of Egypt.

But God gave His people a way to escape the plague. He told Moses that each family had to slaughter a lamb or goat at sunset, and then smear the blood on the outside doorframe of their homes. And that night, as God came to each house, when He saw the blood of the lamb on the door, He would pass over, or spare that home.

And so all the firstborn sons of Egypt were killed, but none in Israel died. Finally, after this tenth and worst plague, Pharaoh let the Israelites go.

God saved us in a similar way.

The Bible says that Jesus is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Because of our sin, we deserve the wrath of God to be poured out on us.

But when we put our faith in the blood of Jesus, when we turn from our sins and believe in Jesus as God's payment for our sins, God spares us; He saves us and forgives us and adopts us into His family and gives us eternal life.

#### **4. God gave the Ten Commandments to Israel to teach them the best way to live.**

Finally, two months after the Jews left Egypt, when they came to the base of Mount Sinai, God gave them His law.

God told Moses that the people had two days to get ready.

They were to put boundaries around the mountain, and nobody was touch or ascend the mountain except for Moses and Aaron, or they would die.

On the third day, in the morning, God descended on top of Mount Sinai.

There was thunder and lighting, a thick cloud, and a very loud trumpet sound that caused the people to shudder. The mountain shook violently.

The people went and stood at the base of the mountain.

And there God spoke audibly for the entire nation to hear and gave them the Ten Commandments.

Why? The Ten Commandments taught Israel what God was like, and how they were live in order to please Him, and to flourish.

And that's why God has given the Ten Commandments to us. They teach us about God's character, and they teach us the best way to live.

**Jl Packer** said, "God's law fits human nature. As cars being made as they are, only work well with gas in the tank, so we, being made as we are, only find fulfillment in a life of law-keeping. This is what we were both made and redeemed for."

What are these Ten Commandments?

- I. Do not have other gods besides me.
- II. Do not make an idol for yourself.
- III. Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God.
- IV. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
- V. Honor your father and your mother.
- VI. Do not murder.
- VII. Do not commit adultery.
- VIII. Do not steal.
- IX. Do not give false testimony.
- X. Do not covet.

I hope you'll join us over the next couple of months as we dig deeper into each one.