

Why Have the Ten Commandments?

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Why have the Ten Commandments? That's an interesting question. If we didn't have the Ten Commandments would life be easier? If we didn't have the Ten Commandments could we do whatever we pleased? If there were no Ten Commandments, how would God view us? Would God view us on our deeds alone? Would God even care what we did?

Let's take a look at why God gave the Ten Commandments. We need to begin to why there are commandments in the first place. That takes us to the Garden of Eden where it all began. There was only one commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve – not to eat of the fruit from the tree in the midst of the Garden. They couldn't keep only one commandment, so how could God expect us to keep ten commandments?

In the Ten Commandments we have two that cover what took place soon after the first commandment of God was broken. By the way, the first commandment (Thou shalt have no other gods before Me) was broken by Adam and Eve when they listened to the "serpent" rather than God.

The other two are the 8th and the 5th. The eighth says, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." When confronted with the act of disobedience, Adam said it was the fault of Eve and Eve said it was the fault of the serpent. It was the disobedient act of Adam and Eve that brought sin into the world. Both were guilty, but they tried to cast the blame onto others. Cain killed his brother Abel, thus breaking the 5th commandment. These two instances were not under the Ten Commandment Law since they Ten Commandments had not been given yet by God.

IT wasn't until the children of Israel were at the foot of Mt. Sinai that God instructed Moses to climb the mountain in order to receive the Ten Commandments.

Let's look at them. Turn to page 321 in the front of the Hymnbook to Luther's Small Catechism. I'll read the commandment and you read the explanation.

Martin Luther said this about the Ten Commandments: “Anyone who knows the Ten Commandments perfectly knows the entire Scriptures. In all affairs and circumstances he can counsel, help, comfort, judge, and make decisions in both spiritual and temporal matters. He is qualified to sit in judgment upon all doctrines, estates, persons, laws, and everything else in the world” (Luther’s Large Catechism).

It’s interesting that we cannot have the Ten Commandments displayed anymore in our courts when they are, as Luther implies, the very guideline for justice.

We, however, cannot perfectly keep the Ten Commandments. When any one Of them is broken, they all are affected. But, thanks be to God, our Lord Jesus Christ did perfectly keep them. Now, we are no longer under the Law that condemns, but under God’s grace that redeems.

Why have the Ten Commandments? There is a purpose. It’s called the third use of the Law. The Law has been given to us for three reasons:

- 1) to maintain external discipline against unruly and disobedient people.**
- 2) To lead people to the knowledge of their sin, and**
- 3) After they are reborn, to give them a definite rule according to which they should pattern and regulate their entire life.**

Since the Ten Commandments are a pattern that can regulate our entire life, we continue to teach them and learn them for our daily life. They are there to show us our sin and need for a Savior. The Gospel shows us our Savior and empowers us, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, to live our life according to God’s will.

When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, He replied, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind. And the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” The key to having the Ten Commandments as a pattern for life is to live our life with love – love towards God and love unto others. Love is the fulfillment of the Law of God.

So, let me give you the top ten reasons why we have the Ten Commandments in a David letterman style.

- 10 – We have the Ten Commandments because coveting another person’s spouse or workers just adds to all kinds of problems in life.
- 9 - We have the Ten Commandments because coveting our neighbor’s house may not be the best investment in these economic days.
- 8 - We have the Ten Commandments because it just doesn’t pay to tell a lie. Betrayal, slander, and defaming a person really doesn’t get you anywhere.
- 7 - We have the Ten Commandments because stealing may seem like an easy way to gain, but eventually you’ll get caught and thrown into jail.
- 6 - We have the Ten Commandments because having affairs outside of marriage just leads to removals from office, broken families, and a lot of heartaches. And furthermore, it doesn’t treat people with respect when you sexually abuse others.
- 5 - We have the Ten Commandments because without any protection from killing, this world would be in chaos.
- 4 - We have the Ten Commandments because father does know best and if mother isn’t happy, nobody is happy.
- 3 - We have the Ten Commandments because a day set aside to rest is what we need and besides, if we didn’t have a day set aside to worship God, when would we?
- 2 – We have the Ten Commandments because taking the name of the Lord in vain is just profane talk. You use to get your mouth washed out with soap when you profaned God’s name.

And, the # 1 reason why we have the Ten Commandments is that God is God and there is no other god and we are to only worship the one true God.

Amen.