

The Ten Commandments - Do I Need Them?

Ordinary people in our modern world struggle because they have no moral gauge to help them understand their behaviour or their emotional responses to their behaviour.

What is right and what is wrong?
 What is good and what is evil? Who gets to decide? How do we know?

Whether we live by them or not, there are moral laws in existence in our world just as there are physical laws. The law of gravity exists so I cannot jump from a 4th floor balcony and expect to not be hurt when I hit the ground simply because I first declare, "I do not accept the law of gravity as active for my life. I have chosen my own standards to live by."

Even when Gentiles, who do not have God's written law, instinctively follow what the law says, they show that in their hearts they know right from wrong. They demonstrate that God's law is written within them, for their own consciences either accuse them or tell them they are doing what is right.
 (Romans 2:14-15)

Throughout the Bible God clearly sets out for us what works in life and what doesn't. When we go against the plan that God describes we will injure or even kill ourselves as surely as if we try to live outside the law of gravity. The Ten Commandments are a simple summary of the basic laws that help us to live safely and avoid harm. If we are experiencing difficulty in our life, we might want to look at where we are operating in unsafe territory - outside of the boundaries God has set. They show us what kind of actions demonstrate love for God and love for others. We are far too self-centered to figure that out on our own.

None of us can live up to all of God's laws every minute of every day. One of the purposes of the Ten Commandments is to show us that we need a Saviour. We need to be in relationship with God through Jesus. God understands the human condition. We cannot live a completely loving life on our own. To know how we are not loving, we need to look at how we are breaking the Ten Commandments - either what we are doing or what we are failing to do.

If the law could have given us new life, we could have been made right with God by obeying it. But the Scriptures have declared that we are all prisoners of

sin, so the only way to receive God's promise is to believe in Jesus Christ. (Galatians 3:21-12 NLT)

Many of us have lived with guilt and shame for much or all of our lives. It steals our joy. It keeps us on edge. It can weigh us down and make us not dare to lift our heads and look someone in the eye. We try to stuff our feelings. We try to run from them. We try to cover them up with mood altering substances. We avoid them as much as we can but they just keep showing up. As we come into recovery, we are desperate to get rid of guilt and shame.

We need to sort out the source of our guilt and shame. In the same way we'd feel pain if we hit the pavement after a 4-storey jump, so we feel guilt when we break God's laws because they are written by the hand of God onto our conscience before we are born. Forgiveness completely removes the guilt and shame that result.

For if you just listen and don't obey, it is like looking at your face in a mirror but doing nothing to improve your appearance. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you keep

looking steadily into God's perfect law—the law that sets you free—and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.
 (James 1:22-25 NLT)

Any guilt and shame that remains after confessing our sin and receiving forgiveness is false. It is there due to things said or done to us that are not from God and we can reject it and simply throw it away. God will come with healing and encouragement as we dump all these lies from the evil one put on us by others through words or actions.

<i>The Ten Commandments</i>		
1	Worship no other God than me.	Worship and serve only the true God.
2	Do not make yourselves any idols. You must never bow or worship any objects or images.	Remember, God is invisible.
3	Do not use the name of God irreverently, nor use it to swear to a falsehood.	Always use God's name reverently.
4	Remember to observe the Sabbath as a holy day.	Let God energize you through worship.
5	Honour your father and mother that you may have a long good life.	Honor all God-given authority starting with your mother and father.
6	Do not murder.	Preserve, save and exalt all human life.
7	Do not commit adultery.	Enjoy the pleasure of sexual relations within a lifetime commitment.
8	Do not steal.	Receive God's blessing through his appointed channels – hard work, gifts, self-denial, and providence.
9	Do not lie.	Speak the truth in love.
10	Do not be envious of your neighbour's house, or want to sleep with his wife, or own anything else he has.	Be content with your lot in life. Take full advantage of your opportunities. Rejoice with others.
(From Exodus 20)		(Gil Stieglitz)

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. What commandments do I need to stop breaking?
2. What commandments do I need to start practicing?