

The Ten Commandments - Part 2 of 2 (Deuteronomy 5:16-22)

Expository Lessons from the Book of Deuteronomy

I. Background / Review

- a. **Deuteronomy** is a series of addresses Moses gives just before his death, at the end of the 40 years of wandering through the Wilderness. He is leaving them and future generations with farewell concerns and warnings for that generation (as they cross the Jordan under Joshua and begin the conquest of Canaan) as well as to future generations.
- b. In **Deuteronomy 5**, at the start of his second address to the Israelites in this book, Moses begins by recounting the story of the Lord initially giving the Ten Commandments, which was first told in **Exodus 19-20**.
- c. In the prior message, we covered the first set of commandments, which pertain to the worship of God. Those commandments, in **Deuteronomy 5:1-15**, included:
 - i. Have no other “gods”.
 - ii. Make no images of God (or of other “gods”).
 - iii. Don’t take the Lord’s name in vain.
 - iv. Maintain observance of the Sabbath.
- d. We discussed that there are actually more “commands” (imperative-type statements) than ten, and that rather than the popular term ‘Ten Commandments’, the expression occurring three times in the Law of Moses was more often translated in earlier times (from Hebrew, Greek LXX or even Latin Vulgate) as the ‘Ten Statements’, ‘Ten Words’, ‘Ten Matters’ or something similar.
- e. We also discussed that the Sabbath was Saturday (never changed), and that Christians observed the Lord’s Day (resurrection). Also, Gentile Christians from the beginning were not expected to observe the Sabbath, as Paul explained in **Colossians 2**.
 - i. The Law of Moses was like a tutor for a small child, leading people (temporarily, before they had become mature) toward Christ. Now that we are under Christ, we are no longer bound to follow circumcision, the Sabbath requirements, dietary restrictions, etc.

- ii. Those things were there for a reason. In many cases, they were foreshadowings of important spiritual concepts. For example, as **Hebrews 3-4** explains, we work now in anticipation of the final “sabbath rest” that will come at the end.
- f. In the prior message we considered the first set of commandments (4 by the most common method of enumerating), which relate to our worship of God. We now turn our attention to the remaining commandments, which pertain to our relations with one another.

II. The Commandments About How We Treat Other People

- a. Read **Deuteronomy 5:16-22**.
- b. The second group of commandments includes:
 - i. Honor your father and mother.
 - 1. A blessing is associated with following this command.
 - ii. You shall not commit adultery.
 - iii. You shall not murder.
 - iv. You shall not steal.
 - v. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
 - vi. You shall not desire your neighbor’s wife, house, material goods, livestock, servants, etc.
 - 1. Some groups split this statement into two separate commandments within the ‘Ten Commandments’, while others consider it one single commandment.
- c. Jesus repeated two of these commandments in the Sermon on the Mount. In both cases, Matthew follows the exact wording (same words, mood and tense, letter for letter) as in the LXX Greek.
 - i. “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder...’” (**Matthew 5:21**, NKJV)
 - ii. “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’” (**Matthew 5:27**, NKJV)
- d. Five of the commandments are repeated by Jesus in His words to the rich young ruler, in **Luke 18** (same Greek words, but different mood and tense)
 - i. “Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ So Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good?

No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not bear false witness,” “Honor your father and your mother.”” (Luke 18:18–20, NKJV)

III. Honoring Your Father and Mother

- a. Paul calls Christian children to obey their parents, referring back to this command.
 - i. “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.’” (Ephesians 6:1–3, NKJV)
 1. He reminds them of the blessing that will come from this.
 2. Of course, if someone is in a situation where their parents are ungodly and are calling them to do something sinful, that is a different matter altogether. Our love for God must be above all other loyalties.
 - ii. The Biblical pattern for a family features:
 1. The father is the head of the family and has primary responsibility for leading the family and also for spiritually instructing and disciplining the children. He is called to live in an understanding way with his wife and to treat her as Christ treated the church (willing to lay down his life for her).
 2. The mother who is called to help, submit to, and respect her husband.
 3. The children who are called to respect, honor, and obey their parents.
 - iii. The concept that children are to honor and obey their parents is a profoundly counter-cultural concept here in Massachusetts today. It is so out of step with most of the world around us that most parents striving to follow these principles have concluded that they need to protect their children from the worldly influences around them (including worldly schools, media, etc.) if they are serious about this.
 1. Especially today, in many places the church is called to be an oasis of sanity in the midst of a corrupt world that has lost its way regarding healthy family roles and relations.

- iv. Our goal is not to control our children's behavior but rather to protect them from destructive influences that they are not ready to encounter.
 - 1. Later in **Deuteronomy**, Moses warned about a great danger: when in Canaan, the Israelites would eventually conform to the practices of the pagan nations around them in Canaan.
- v. **Challenge to Children:** This call to honor your father and mother applies to you!
- b. Jesus applied this command to how adults treated their own elderly parents.
 - i. Read **Matthew 15:3-6**.
 - 1. "He answered and said to them, 'Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, "Honor your father and your mother"; and, "He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death." But you say, "Whoever says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God'—then he need not honor his father or mother." Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.'" (**Matthew 15:3-6**, NKJV)
 - ii. Paul also taught that this was extremely important in the eyes of God (taking care of elderly parents in need).
 - 1. "Honor widows who are really widows. But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God. Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. And these things command, that they may be blameless. But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, *he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*" (**1 Timothy 5:3-8**, NKJV)
 - a. I cannot think of a stronger curse in the New Testament that is applied to a practicing Christian.
 - b. Consider the significance of what Paul is saying here. He says that person is *worse than an unbeliever*!
 - iii. This teaching has become unpopular in our culture, especially over the past two generations. Putting this into practice can come with a great cost. However, according to Jesus and Paul, this is how we put our faith into practice and repay our parents.

iv. Challenges associated with this can include:

1. We have a fairly robust, tax-funded 'social safety net' in countries like the U.S., but we can't leave this to the government.
 - a. This was much more of an expectation in prior generations (which featured stronger families, less disposable wealth, living closer together with extended family, and a culture more supportive of making sacrifices in personal comfort or commercial success to take care of one's parents).
 - b. I knew how my grandmother sacrificed to take care of her parents and other sick and elderly relatives when she was able. Then I saw my mother do the same for her mother.
2. Our parents may live far from us, be difficult to get along with, or be stubborn. In many cases we may have had painful experiences in the past with them.
3. Parents who need a great deal of support physically, financially, and medically.
4. We even need to 'honor' our deceased parents. Hold our tongues, don't complain to others, be grateful. Realize that some had physically, emotionally or even sexually abusive parents, or were abandoned by their parents in some way.
5. This is an important part of the Christian life that should characterize our own distinctive Christian culture, even as it is becoming more and more counter-cultural compared to the world around us.

IV. You Shall not Commit Adultery, Murder or Steal

- a. Order of these three varies, depending on manuscripts, and in some cases between **Exodus 20** and **Deuteronomy 5**.
 - i. The version I am used to from my youth puts "murder" first, but many LXX have "adultery" first; also see **Luke 18**.
- b. Of course, Jesus would expand the meanings of the commandments related to murder and adultery in the Sermon on the Mount, in **Matthew 5**.

- i. Jesus expands the significance of the commandment against murder to hating someone in your heart (in the Majority Text and KJV/NKJV it adds, “without cause”). (**Matthew 5:22**)
- c. Regarding the command against adultery, bear in mind that under the Law of Moses:
 - i. Polygamy was allowed. A man could have more than one wife.
 - 1. Consider examples of men in the Old Testament who had multiple wives, such as Jacob, David and Solomon.
 - ii. Divorce was allowed but regulated (**Deuteronomy 24**); remarriage after divorce was permitted.
 - 1. Jesus said this was tolerated “because your hearts were hard”. Several have made the point that if Moses had banned remarriage except in the case of the death of a spouse, some unhappy marriages would have ended by the sudden, mysterious death of the wife!
 - 2. For example, Theophylact, writing c. 1100 in his *Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to Matthew* (pp. 162-163), commenting on **Matthew 19:7-9**, wrote:
 - a. “For the Israelites, being cruel, would have murdered their wives if they were constrained to keep them. So Moses provided in the law for a writ of divorce to be given to those wives who were hated by their husbands.”
- d. Jesus also says that lusting after a woman is “committing adultery in your heart”. (**Matthew 5:27-28**)
 - i. Plus, anyone who divorces his wife (except for the cause of adultery) is guilty of adultery. (**Matthew 5:32**)
 - ii. And anyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery. (**Luke 16:18**)
 - iii. And anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery. (**Matthew 5:32, Luke 16:18**)
- e. Various aspects of stealing to consider.
 - i. This commandment is based on the concept that people own their own property. It assumes a system of private property, in some form.

- ii. When a society loses this sense of private property, or when basic property rights are no longer enforced, it results in the breakdown of that society. The idea of working, saving, buying, selling, etc. is all based on the idea that when people own things, they have a right to them.
 - 1. It appears that we are starting to see this concept of private property being challenged in some cities and states in the U.S.
 - 2. Marxism is based on destroying the concept of private property and personal ownership. It should be no wonder that Marxists are almost always among the strongest opponents of the Bible and Biblical concepts of justice and the family structure.
- iii. Various forms of stealing
 - 1. Taking or using something that is not yours, that you are not authorized to use.
 - 2. Violating someone's right to intellectual property (documents, videos, etc.).
 - a. While living in Albania in the early 2000s (a poor and relatively lawless place at the time), we saw people stealing things one does not typically think of as stealable. That included drinking water (from high-pressure water mains), electricity (from high-voltage power lines), telephone service, and even manhole covers on the streets.
 - 3. Returning things you borrow, when you say you will. Honoring the property of others. Let us all strive to maintain good consciences in these areas of righteousness!

V. You Shall Not Bear False Witness

- a. This is a hard command: to always tell the truth.
- b. Christians can get caught up in the relatively fine points of Jesus' commandments and doctrines and the historic faith and miss this big one.
- c. Read **Psalm 15** (designated **Psalm 14** in the LXX), on the one who will dwell in the presence of the Lord. His ways are characterized by:
 - i. Maintaining a righteous way of life
 - ii. Speaking the truth in his heart

- iii. Not deceiving others with his tongue
- iv. Keeps his commitment to his neighbor (keeping his word to others)
- d. Read **Psalm 33/34:7-17**. (Much of this is quoted by Peter in **1 Peter 3**.)
 - i. The Angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him.
 - ii. The Lord hears the prayers of the righteous, who fear Him. He provides for them and sees them through times of affliction.
 - iii. Do you want to understand the fear of the Lord? Start *by keeping your tongue from evil, and your lips from practicing deceit*.
 - 1. **Challenge:** Start by committing yourself to going through one whole day without practicing any deceit at all.
- e. The spiritual battle around us is between two kingdoms. The ruler of one always tells the truth. It may be difficult to hear, but is the only thing that will set us free from bondage.
 - i. In contrast, consider Satan, the great liar and father of lies.
 - 1. “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?” (**John 8:44-46**, NKJV)
 - ii. “Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ And He said to me, ‘Write, for these words are true and faithful.’ And He said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, *and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone*, which is the second death.’” (**Revelation 21:5-8**, NKJV)
- f. Special challenges in being honest and avoiding deceit.
 - i. When the consequences of telling and revealing the truth will bring problems into our lives.
 - ii. When we are motivated more by fear of men than by fear of God.

1. For those who grew up in households where there was a lot of fear of severe negative parental reactions, many learned at an early age that they could avoid major drama by lying and being deceitful.
 2. For those from such backgrounds, it will be harder to be committed to speaking the truth and avoiding deceit 100% of the time. However, that is what all of us are called to do. Being deceitful will make us enemies of the Lord.
 3. Being liars, for whatever reason, will send us to the fires of hell. We must overcome in this area, love the truth, and speak it at all times!
- g. Recall that there have always been liars who have made their way into the church; even into prominent positions.
- i. Consider the story of Ananias and Saphira, in **Acts 5**.
 - ii. Paul warned the Ephesian elders, in **Acts 20**:
 1. “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.” (**Acts 20:28–31**, NKJV)
 - iii. Later, one of the things Jesus would commend the church in Ephesus about, in **Revelation 2**:
 1. “To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, “These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: “I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;”” (**Revelation 2:1–2**, NKJV)
 - a. Despite the shortcomings of the church in Ephesus that Jesus addresses in this chapter, He does commend them for exposing liars among those who claimed to be apostles.

2. Christians tend to be trusting people. After all, doesn't it say "love always trusts" (**1 Corinthians 13:7**) ? On the other hand, Jesus says we need to be "wise as serpents" (**Matthew 10:16**). Paul warned the Christians repeatedly that bad people would come into the church, even among the top leaders. And here Jesus commended the church for testing those who claimed to be apostles, but who were in fact liars!
3. **Lesson for Us:** Satan is working to destroy the church. We are called to be "wise as serpents, innocent as doves". Jesus commended those *who tested and uncovered liars within the church*. Let us also be wise!
4. Over the years, I have encountered liars within the church many times. Sometimes, it took me a long time to see the pattern of deceit. Some were liars from the beginning. Others started covering up sin, and it just became worse over time. We need to HATE this sin and root out all forms of lying and deceit.
 - a. *Deceit* can involve telling true facts but deliberately leaving out important parts of the story to deliberately mislead the other person.
 - b. This sin attacks churches of all types, including Catholic, Protestant, Anabaptist, Orthodox, and Restoration Movement (such as Churches of Christ) churches. Over the years, I have encountered some '*championship-level*' deceivers among church leaders. Sometimes, it took me years to realize what was going on, and sometimes, the insight came to me in the middle of the night. Watch out!
- h. Concluding thoughts on this point.
 - i. Let us hate lying and deceit, and do whatever it takes to root this horrible sin from our lives and the lives of our friends.
 1. Undealt with, this sin will send those who practice it to hell.
 - ii. Don't be surprised when find this sin within the church, even among top leaders.
 1. When you discover it in the church, have the courage to deal with it. Do not just look the other way and pretend you did not see it!

VI. You Shall Not Covet

- a. I have heard many people say that the Law of Moses was only concerned about outward things, while the new covenant has expanded that to address what is in our hearts.
 - i. **Questions:** Is that true? Partly true? Not true at all? What do you think?
 1. **Answer:** In my opinion, that statement (that the Law of Moses was only concerned with outward things) is not true. At best, it is a gross oversimplification. Those who understood the Law in that way were missing the essence of the Law, according to Jesus.
 2. Jesus said that the two greatest commandments of the Law of Moses were to love God with our whole heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves.
 - a. “But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, ‘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.”’ (Matthew 22:34–40, NKJV)
 3. Also, consider the close to the Ten Commandments.
 - a. Read **Deuteronomy 5:21**.
 - b. This is all about what is in your heart. The only one of the “ten” where you can’t always tell on the outside if someone is keeping the commandment.
 - b. While the OSB here follows the KJV and traditional “You shall not *covet*...”, I believe a more literal translation is “you shall not *desire*” or “you shall not *lust after*”, based on how this same Greek word is translated elsewhere in Scriptures (in the New Testament and in the LXX).
 - i. “You shall not desire your neighbor’s wife; you shall not desire your neighbor’s house nor his field nor his servant nor his female servant nor his bull nor his draught animal nor any of his livestock nor anything that belongs to your neighbor.” (**Deuteronomy 5:21**, LES)

ii. The same Greek word, in another New Testament passage:

1. "Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not *lust after* evil things as they also *lusted*." (1 **Corinthians 10:6**, NKJV)
2. "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to *lust* for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."
(**Matthew 5:28**, NKJV)
 - a. Note that in the LXX, we see the same word woman/wife as in the 10th Commandment (or the 9th Commandment by some numbering conventions).
 - b. Here, we also see the same Greek word covet/desire/lust after as in the 10th (or 9th) Commandment in the LXX.
 - c. Although rendered differently, Jesus is here repeating what was said at the end of the Ten Commandments. You shall not *lust after* the *woman/wife* of your neighbor. Lusting after your neighbor's wife was already prohibited by Moses. Jesus tied that previous commandment to adultery, referring to it as "adultery of the heart". And since he ended polygamy and remarriage after divorce, lusting after ANY woman (not just the wife of another man) was now prohibited.
 - d. So while lust was prohibited already under Moses, Jesus expanded that commandment and tied it back to adultery, to underscore the seriousness of this sin!
- c. Under the Law of Moses, we also can't be lusting after the possessions of others. People tend to ignore this part of the Ten Commandments, but it is an important and hard commandment to follow. It is all about the heart!
 - i. **Question:** Do you struggle with lusting after things that others around you have?
 1. Their houses
 2. Their automobiles
 3. Their property, land
 4. Their jobs, careers, salary
 5. Their educational opportunities

6. Their talents or other possessions.
- ii. **The Challenge and Antidote:** Be grateful and thankful for what we do have in this life.
 1. Read **Proverbs 5:15-19**.
 - a. Rejoice in the wife of your youth. Be grateful for the wife you have been given!
 2. “Now godliness *with contentment* is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” (**1 Timothy 6:6-10**, NKJV)
 3. “...I have learned in whatever state I am, *to be content*: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (**Philippians 4:11-13**, NKJV)
 - a. The challenge is to be *content with what we have been given*. This is not an excuse for laziness. We are called to be hard workers, and to share with others. However, like Paul, we need to learn how to be content with what we have.
 - b. And let us not fall into lusting after what we see that others around us have.