
MARRIAGE AND THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

LIVING OUT THE MARRIAGE COVENANT

I sent an email earlier this week asking you to read [Exodus 19:1-20:20](#). How many did?

You might be asking, what in the world does the passage in the Old Testament that talks about the Ten Commandments have to do with marriage?

In [Exodus 6:6-7](#), God gives the Israelites four promises: **“I will bring you out.” “I will rescue you.” “I will redeem you.” “I will take you.”** These are also the four promises that a Jewish groom makes to his bride under the chuppah (the Jewish wedding canopy). The Jewish wedding is based off of this encounter on Mount Sinai. God Himself is the wedding canopy. The Ten Commandments serve as the ketubah (the written prenuptial agreement). God is the groom. Israel is the bride.

The Ten Commandments aren't just a dry list of do's and don'ts. Throughout the rest of the Old Testament, God goes back to these 'wedding vows.' He says of Israel that they, **“played the harlot”** in [Judges 8:33](#), [1 Chronicles 5:25](#), and [Jeremiah 3:6](#). In [Jeremiah 3:8](#), God even says that he gave Israel a, **“certificate of divorce”** for her adultery. This is all marriage language. Israel broke God's heart and yet God always loved. He always forgave. He was always faithful to her. He took His wife back and they turned their back on His Son. This is all marriage language.

We can relate to analogies. The best teachers relate complicated concepts through the use of analogies. If you look at Jesus' teachings, over and over again you will see Him use analogies to explain complex concepts and ideas. Anna Grace asked me yesterday why so many gas stations were out of gas. I used an analogy to explain the disruption of oil production in the Gulf.

Analogies help us get the big picture. Through the analogy of marriage, God communicates to us about Himself. He communicates that He is a lover and that He lived up to His promises of brining, rescuing, redeeming and taking.

During this study of marriage and the Ten Commandments, we'll see God's example of the ideal marriage. We'll see where we don't stack up, and we'll see where we're doing an OK job. I'll be drawing heavily from a book, *The Marriage Covenant*, by Samuele Bacchiocchi. He's got an entire chapter about the parallels between the Ten Commandments and marriage.

I'd encourage you to read the Ten Commandments with your spouse this week. Read them and discuss what you see as opportunities to build your marriage. I'm not big on homework, but this would be an easy assignment for a little marriage-building.

Next week, we'll look at a few of the commandments in great detail and see how we can better live out our marriage covenant by implementing the Ten Commandments in our marriages.

Today, we'll give a brief overview of the whole passage and put it in perspective.

Exodus 19 (NKJV)

1 In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came *to* the Wilderness of Sinai [pronounced, see-NAH-ee, meaning 'thorny']. **2** For they had departed from Rephidim, had come *to* the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped there before the mountain [or hill country].

3 And Moses [meaning, 'drawn'] went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: **4** 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. **5** Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice [notice the anthropomorphism?] and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine. **6** And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These *are* the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

7 So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the LORD commanded him. **8** Then all the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." So Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD. **9** And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I come to you in the thick [dark] cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever."

So Moses told the words of the people to the LORD.

10 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate [**prepare**, dedicate] them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. **11** And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. **12** You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Take heed to yourselves *that* you do *not* go up to the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. **13** Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot *with an arrow*; whether man or beast, he shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain."

14 So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes. **15** And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not come near *your wives*."

16 Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings [literally, **voices** and sounds] and lightnings, and a thick [a different Hebrew word meaning, 'heavy, oppressive, massive'] cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who *were* in the camp trembled. **17** And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. **18** Now Mount Sinai *was* completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly [with exceeding great force]. **19** And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. **20** Then the LORD came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

21 And the LORD said to Moses, “Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at the LORD, and many of them perish. **22** Also let the priests who come near the LORD consecrate themselves, lest the LORD break out against them.”

23 But Moses said to the LORD, “The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai; for You warned us, saying, ‘Set bounds around the mountain and consecrate it.’”

24 Then the LORD said to him, “Away! Get down and then come up, you and Aaron with you. But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the LORD, lest He break out against them.” **25** So Moses went down to the people and spoke to them.

Exodus 20

1 And God spoke all these words, saying:

2 “I *am* the LORD [Jehovah] your God [Elohiym], who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

3 “You shall have no other [different] gods [Elohiym] before Me [my face]. [God’s face comes first]

4 “You shall not make for yourself a carved image [idol]—any likeness [representation] of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth [that pretty much covers everything]; **5** you shall not bow down to them nor serve [work for] them. For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity [perversity, depravity] of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate [enemy] Me, **6** but showing mercy [chesed—lovingkindness] to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

7 “You shall not take the name [name, reputation, glory, fame] of the LORD your God in vain [empty], for the LORD will not hold him guiltless [innocent] who takes His name in vain.

8 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy [set apart as sacred]. **9** Six days you shall labor and do all your work [business], **10** but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. **11** For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea [the same order as in verse 4], and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

12 “Honor [make heavy] your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

13 “You shall not murder [premeditated or accidental murder].

14 “You shall not commit adultery [used literally between a man and a woman and also figuratively of idolatrous worship].

15 “You shall not steal.

16 “You shall not bear [testify] false [lies, deceptions, disappointments, falsehoods] witness [testimony/evidence of things or people] against your neighbor [friend].

17 “You shall not covet [desire, delight, take pleasure in] your neighbor’s [friend’s] house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.”

18 Now all the people witnessed the thundering [voices], the lightning flashes [literally, ‘torch’], the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. 19 Then they said to Moses, “You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.”

20 And Moses said to the people, “Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.” [Moses knew that God had their best interests at heart]

What was your assignment this week? Read the Ten Commandments with your spouse (**Exodus 20:2-17**) and discuss what you see as opportunities to build your marriage.

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LIVING OUT THE MARRIAGE COVENANT

I stumbled across two books this week that I want to read: *The Marriage Covenant*, by Samuele Bacchiocchi and *Married for Good*, by R. Paul Stevens. I'm going to read both of these books and come back after I've had time to think about them and teach a longer series on marriage.

The second chapter of *The Marriage Covenant* is the basis for today's lesson. Diving into the Ten Commandments doesn't make much sense if we don't understand the marriage covenant. So, today we'll look at the marriage covenant, and in the next few weeks, we'll get to the Ten Commandments.

DEFINITIONS

I've already used a few words that need defining. I have a whole lesson on this concept, but today you'll only get the *Reader's Digest* condensed version. First, a definition of a covenant: a covenant is a legally binding **contract** (**Proverbs 2:16-17** and **Ezekiel 16:8** provide more detail on this concept). Next, a definition of marriage: marriage is a covenant of **companionship** (**Malachi 2:14**).

THE MARRIAGE COVENANT

Now that we've defined our terms, let's get into chapter 2 of *The Marriage Covenant*. Bacchiocchi says, "**From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible intertwines God's marriage covenant to His people with our marriage covenant to our spouses.**" This is the concept we discussed last week.

Switching to the New Testament, he says, "**In Jesus Christ, God says to us, 'I take you.' We are free to consent to become covenant partners by responding, 'We take you.' In a sense, our salvation is nuptial. It begins when we say, 'I do,' to Christ's marriage proposal. By accepting Christ's marriage proposal, we become engaged or betrothed to Him in this present life.**"

This concept of betrothal (or engagement) to Christ might be foreign to you. If it is, check out **2 Corinthians 11:2b: For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.** Paul is saying that since we are engaged, we will experience the completion of the marriage relationship with Christ one day. **Revelation 19:9** says that we will be part of a meal one day called the, "**marriage supper of the Lamb.**" Have you ever thought about your role as part of the **bride** of Christ? I must admit, it's hard for me to picture myself as a bride (especially with Gary referring to homosexual weddings as, 'bearded blushing brides'). However, we, as part of the body of Christ, are also the bride of Christ.

EXAMPLES OF THE FOUNDATION

Bacchiocchi says the foundation of marriage is the marriage covenant. A few examples . . .

1. **Rubber band**: Rubber bands enable movement, but only so far before it pulls on you. The marriage covenant doesn't act like a chain, but rather a flexible rubber band providing a reminder of the covenant when you move in certain directions too far. It helps protect us.
2. **Trapeze** artist **net**: Trapeze artists aren't born knowing how to perform certain skills—they must learn by practicing with a net. The marriage covenant is the net. The covenant lets us explore, be daring, take risks, open up and learn about each other by providing confidence that this relationship will make it no matter what. It helps invigorate us.

THE FOUNDATION OF MARRIAGE—THE COVENANT

With that being said, Bacchiocchi says this about the foundation of marriage, **“Marriage is like a house. If it is to last, it needs a solid foundation. The bedrock upon which the foundation of marriage must rest is an unconditional, mutual covenant that allows no external or internal circumstances to ‘put asunder’ the marital union that God Himself has established.”**

This, according to R. Paul Stevens (in *Married for Good*), is missing in marriages today. **“What is missing in most marriages today is what the Bible identifies as the heart of marriage: a covenant. Everything is superstructure. Understanding expectations, developing good communication (especially sexual), gaining skills in conflict resolution, discovering appropriate roles or creating new ones, making our marriages fun and free, becoming spiritual friends and sharing a ministry—these are the walls, the roof, the wiring, the plumbing and the heating. They are essential to the whole. But if there is no foundation, they will collapse with the whole building.”**

Does that make sense—the idea that the covenant is the foundation? Now, some of you are thinking, I thought Jesus was our foundation. If you remember your Old Testament, marriage is God's idea and the marriage covenant is made with God as the witness, so yeah, Jesus is present as well.

The marriage covenant enables spouses to **cleave** to each other no matter what happens—“for **better** or for **worse**.” Let's use that language, “for better or for worse,” on the four statements that God made in Exodus 6 when He was talking to the children of Israel about what He was going to do.

For better or for worse, **“I will bring you out.”** For better or for worse, **“I will rescue you.”** For better or for worse, **“I will redeem you.”** For better or for worse, **“I will take you.”** Do you see the security in that? Do you see the confidence you can have in your marriage when you have a covenant relationship? The covenant is the foundation of, “for better or for worse.”

We don't know the future. So, we can't know for certain that our marriages will work. However, my wife and I can share a common **faith** in God to know that He can take the covenant that we made to each other before Him and insure our marriage will last. Let me illustrate mathematically (two points on the graph moving away and closer to each other).

I hope that you have made this covenant with your spouse. Perhaps you didn't during your wedding ceremony . . . if you didn't, I'd encourage you do to so today (even if you have a good marriage).

THE COMMITMENT OF THE MARRIAGE COVENANT

We've looked at what a covenant is, how we're engaged to Christ, the idea that the covenant is the foundation and the idea that the covenant provides the security in our marriages. Let's talk about the commitment involved in the marriage covenant.

Let's read **Ephesians 5:25: Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.** Giving your life for someone else clearly demonstrates a **total** commitment. Giving your life implies that you hold nothing back. **Romans 5:8** says, "**But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**" Again, we see this total commitment. There was no half-hearted commitment on Jesus' part when He died for us.

Bacchiocchi says, "**When Christian couples enter into a marriage covenant, they are committing themselves to maintaining their marital union, no matter what. This total commitment is set forth in the marriage vows: 'for better and for worse, for richer and for poorer, in sickness and in health.'**" And remember, God enables us to do this, it's not of our own strength (see **Philippians 2:12-13** for more on this concept).

The concept of a commitment only works if it is a **continuing** commitment. Bacchiocchi writes, "**Time changes things, including our looks and our feelings. . . . I am thankful to God that the change in my looks has not caused my wife to change her commitment to me.**"

Jesus said in **Matthew 19:6b**, "**Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.**" The tense of the verb, "**separate**" is the present tense—implying there is no time where it is allowable to have anyone influence you to separate yourself from your covenant. This implies a continuing commitment on the part of both spouses.

Bacchiocchi says, "**A continuing commitment to our marriage partners is not accomplished once and for all. It must be reaffirmed each day, when we are healthy or sick, wealthy or poor, happy or sad, successful or failing. In all the changing moods of life, we must determine by God's grace to reaffirm our marriage commitments until death doth us part.**"

This is hard, so take some time today and practice. Tell your spouse that you are committed to making your marriage last. Now, the obvious question arises—what happens if our feelings change? Bacchiocchi answers that question by quoting another author who says if your feelings change about your spouse, change your **feelings**, not your **spouse**.

In conclusion, a committed marriage doesn't mean **easy** or problem free. Both spouses continue to be sinners that are in need of God's grace. Commitment causes **conflict**—by definition, being committed to one thing means you are not committed to other things. Just be aware that a commitment to your marriage covenant will cost you.

Now, as an introduction to next week, how did we do on our homework (as a reminder, your homework was to read the Ten Commandments as a couple and discuss what you see as opportunities to build your marriage)? I'd like to briefly hear from a few couples on this.

My work-load next week will severely limit my ability to prepare as I typically do. With that being said, I need some help. I need nine married couples to volunteer to help. Three couples will help me with the first commandment, three couples to help with the second, etc. You can email me your input or you can present it yourself next week—you make the call. I have some idea starters too.

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From Chapter 2 of *The Marriage Covenant* (by Samuele Bacchiocchi)

PART III: THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF A MARRIAGE COVENANT

Both the covenant between God and His people and the covenant between marital partners entail privileges and obligations. The privileges of the old covenant included God's choice of the Israelites as His special people, His promise to bless them, to give them the land of Canaan, to send them a Redeemer, to reveal to them His will and to make them His chosen instruments for the conversion of the world. The obligations consisted of the commitment of the people to obey the principles of conduct God gave to them in the form of commandments.

LAW AS A LOVING RESPONSE

The commandments of the covenant were given not to restrict the Israelites' delight and joy in belonging to God, but to enable them to experience the blessings of the covenant. The Psalmist declares as "blessed" or "happy" the man whose "delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night" (Ps 1:1-2). The function of the commandments was not to enable the Israelites to become God's covenant people, but to respond to God's unconditional choice of them as His covenant people. The law is designed to spell out the lifestyle of those who already belong to God.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT (INPUT FROM DAVID BANDY, MIKE GARDENHIRE)

The First Commandment of the Sinai covenant summons the Israelites to worship only Yahweh who delivered them from Egyptian bondage: "You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3). In this commandment, God appeals to us to put Him first in our affections, in harmony with Christ's injunction to seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness (Matt 6:33). We can violate the spirit of the first commandment by putting our trust and confidence in such human resources as knowledge, wealth, position and people.

Applied to the marriage covenant, the first commandment calls us to *give exclusive loyalty to our spouse*. In practice, this means making our spouse the most important person in our life after God. It means not allowing such matters as professional pursuits, parents, children, friends, hobbies, and possessions to become our first love and thus take the first place in our affections which is to be reserved for our spouse. It also means not amending the commandment by making our loyalty to our spouse contingent on other factors, as when people say: "I am prepared to give priority to my spouse as long as it does not hinder my

professional pursuits." The first commandment, then, calls us to give unconditional and exclusive loyalty to our spouse.

David Bandy: If God is first in your life and in your spouse's life, then you will be drawn closer together. David commented that this commandment impacts our priorities.

Mike Gardenhire: This commandment can be applied in the areas of time and priorities. Mike commented that to keep their marriage a priority, he and his wife engage in a few marriage studies each year. Also, Mike mentioned that he and his wife have combined their hobbies in order to enjoy them together. Mike noted that this commandment prohibits families from coming first in earthly relationships, but rather that spouses come first in earthly relationships. Lastly, Mike noted that even church activities, when not properly prioritized, can interfere with the marriage covenant.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT (INPUT FROM TERRY BOLDEN, SHELBI GOBLE,
RAD & LAUREN DAVENPORT)

The Second Commandment of the Sinai covenant emphasizes God's spiritual nature (John 4:24) by prohibiting idolatry: "You shall not make for yourself a graven image . . . you shall not bow down to them or serve them" (Ex 20:4-5). The commandment does not necessarily prohibit the use of illustrative material for religious instruction. Pictorial representations were employed in the sanctuary (Ex 25:17-22), in Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 6:23-26) and in the "brazen serpent" (Num 21:8-9; 2 Kings 18:4). What the commandment condemns is the veneration or adoration of religious images or pictures since these are human creations and not the Divine Creator.

Applied to the marriage covenant, the second commandment enjoins us to be truthful and faithful to our spouse. Just as we can be unfaithful to God, we can also be unfaithful to our spouse by having false image of her/him in our mind. In practice, this may mean trying to shape our partner into our own image of an "ideal spouse" by nagging or manipulating threats or rewards. It may mean clinging to false images of love relationships with real or fantasy partners. It may also mean making an idol of social relationships outside marriage. This would include forming relationships with friends or relatives that are closer than those with one's spouse. The second commandment, then, summons us to be truthful and faithful to our spouse by not making idols of anything that can weaken our marriage covenant.

Terry Bolden: Terry noted that the idol could move from thing to thing during our lives and our marriages. Terry also commented that this was the only commandment with an associated curse.

Shelbi Goble: Shelbi pointed out that this commandment illustrates the concept of, 'keeping up with the Joneses.' Also, Shelbi's mother-in-law noted that even our spouses could become idols if put on a pedestal (as sometimes occurs with spouses that are in full-time ministry positions).

Rad & Lauren Davenport: Rad spoke from the guy's perspective and Lauren spoke from the gal's perspective. Rad said that sports figures could be idolized and as such would change our behavior about a sport or activity. Rad also pointed out that men shouldn't have an image of what our wives should be so that wives were forced to live up to an image. Lauren noted that sometimes a look can be idolatized rather than the spouse. Also, work can be idolatized and that could steal time from our spouses. One recommendation: spend 15 minutes of quiet 'talk time' a day with your spouse.

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From Chapter 2 of *The Marriage Covenant* (by Samuele Bacchiocchi)

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT (INPUT FROM CHRIS ARNOLD, ERIC & KELLY JO
BOOKER, ANONYMOUS)

The Third Commandment builds upon the preceding two commandments by inculcating reverence for God: "You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain" (Ex 20:7). Those who serve only the true God and serve Him not through false images or idols but in spirit and truth will show reverence to God by avoiding any careless or unnecessary use of His holy name.

Applied to the marriage covenant, the third commandment *summons us to respect and honor our spouses in public and private*. In practice, this means respecting our spouses by showing them deference and courtesy both in public and private. It means avoiding belittling our spouses, or cutting them off before the children or on social occasions. It also means not taking our spouses' presence for granted as though they were just another person. The third commandment, then, enjoins us to show respect toward our spouses by avoiding words or actions that can belittle them and thus weaken our marriage covenants.

Chris Arnold:

Exodus 20:7 (NIV): You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

Exodus 20:7 (NASB): You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

Cross references:

Leviticus 19:12: You shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the LORD.

Deuteronomy 6:13: You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name.

Regarding Husbands, Wives, and the Church

Ephesians 5:22-33: 22 Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord, 23 for the husband is head of the wife as also Christ is head of the church. He is the Savior of the body. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so wives should [submit] to their husbands in

everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as also Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 to make her holy, cleansing her in the washing of water by the word. 27 He did this to present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and blameless. 28 In the same way, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hates his own flesh, but provides and cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, 30 since we are members of His body. 31 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. 32 This mystery is profound, but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 To sum up, each one of you is to love his wife as himself, and the wife is to respect her husband.

Thoughts:

It appears that, at least on the surface, it would simply be common respect for the Lord to refrain from taking His name in vain. God reminds us that he is Holy and is deserving of our respect. He doesn't remind of everything He has done for us. He simply reminds us who He is (the Lord our God), and that he deserves our respect (God will not leave unpunished or guiltless those who use his name in vain). The two passages notes in cross reference help reinforce the earthly authority of God's name (We shall fear ONLY the Lord our God, and shall worship Him. We shall not profane the name of the Lord) and also re-establish that only God is to be worshipped. I really see the third commandment as a reinforcement of the first commandment. Separate, yet equal, in authority and meaning.

Taking this a step further, it is not a huge leap to state that God is reminding us of his place in the hierarchy of things. God is to be paramount. The Only thing we should worship and fear (read: Love, respect, and honor above all things) is God. Failure to do so renders of guilty and God has promises that there is a punishment for the guilty of sin. (A further reinforcement of the Justness and Righteousness of God, but that is another series of classes.)

How does this play in to the marriage covenant? It is really rather simple. God retains his place at the top of the hierarchical food chain. He brooks no disrespect because He alone is worthy to be placed on such a lofty pedestal. He is the Gold Standard by which we are to judge our lives. Just as Christ gave himself for us, Husbands are to give of themselves to their respective wives. Just as we respect and honor God, Wives are to respect and honor husbands.

But as man and woman cleave together to become one flesh, we become a single entity, comprised of separate yet symbiotic parts, that has the Biblical charge to exemplify the purity, self sacrifice, and submissiveness of Christ, being willing to sacrifice ourselves for our spouses, while also showing honor and respect to our spouses.

To hearken back to the third commandment, however, we must be CERTAIN that we are not worshipping our spouse. While we are charge to be Christ-like and therefore emulate the purity and Holiness of the Lord, we are NOT to place ourselves above the Lord. There is only one God, who has set Himself up as our example and our prize. Because of who He is, He demands and deserves our respect. In our journey to become more like Him, we will earn the respect of our spouses. By showing respect for our spouses, we exemplify the type of respect that God demands that we show for Him. Anything that we truly respect and cherish, we will not profane by mockery.

The trick is just keeping the perspective.

Eric & Kelly Jo Booker: Eric noted that in today's society, we often hear God's name taken in vain (cursing). Eric also noted that when we were saved, we took on the title of Christian. When Eric & Kelly Jo were married, they were advised in counseling to seal their vows by the use of the phrase, "in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Kelly Jo pointed out that just as God does not hold those guiltless who take His name in vain, we are not held guiltless when we act in a manner that shows that we are taking our vows in vain.

Anonymous

Titled, "The 10 Commandments and my marriage. A perspective from my heavenly Father."

Exodus 20:7: You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

Men, that a woman actually gave up her name for you is significant. She didn't have to but she did, just as you willingly chose My name when you became a Christian. And by the way, think of each other's names with love. Say it: "This is my wife, Missus _____." And, ladies, remember to respect the man you married, who you are now one in name. Your husband and children, your friends and acquaintances, will know whether you truly despise, or cherish, the name you so willingly took. They—and I—will treat you accordingly.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT (INPUT FROM DAVID BANDY)

The Fourth Commandment calls us to honor God by consecrating the Sabbath time to Him: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God" (Ex 20:8-10). The first three commandments are designed to remove obstacles to the true worship of God: the worship of other gods, the worship of God through false images, and the lack of reverence for God. Now that the obstacles have been removed, the fourth commandment invites us to truly worship God, not through the veneration or adoration of objects, but through the consecration of the Sabbath time to God. Time is the essence of our lives. The way we use our time is indicative of our priorities. By consecrating our Sabbath time to God we show that our covenant commitment to Him is for real. We are willing to offer Him not mere lip-service, but the service of our total being.

Applied to the marriage covenant, the fourth commandment invites us to show our love to our spouses by setting aside a regular and special time for them. In practice, this means learning to put aside our work or personal pleasures on a regular basis, in order to listen to, to enjoy, to celebrate and to cultivate the friendship of our spouses. It means, especially, using the climate of peace and tranquility of the Sabbath day as an opportunity to draw closer to God and to our marital partners. It means taking time, especially on the Sabbath, to walk together, to relax together, to read together, to appreciate good music together, to meditate together, to pray together, to visit together, to bless our spouses in every way their need to be blessed.

David Bandy: David noted that when comparing our marriages to the Ten Commandments, all marriages fall short. Also, while there never seemed to be enough time for his own marriage, perhaps adherence to the first, second, and third would enable more time for the fourth as they are stepping stones to the fourth.

MARRIAGE AND THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

LIVING OUT THE MARRIAGE COVENANT

From Chapter 2 of *The Marriage Covenant* (by Samuele Bacchiocchi)

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

Exodus 20:12: Honor [to make heavy] **your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.**

Let's break down the verse before we make any applications:

1. The Hebrew word for honor is *kabad*. It strictly means, 'to be **heavy**.' The grammatical way it's used in this verse is with the Piel stem and it means, 'to **make** heavy.' It implies intentional action. There is nothing passive about this word.
2. The second thing we notice is that we see that we are to honor both father and mother **equally**. Neither gets more honor than the other. This is important as Israel at this time was a very patriarchal society—it was male driven and lead. The concept of honoring your mother equally to that of the honor which you'd make for your father may have been a new concept—maybe not, but it's worth noting that this was a patriarchal society. A quick aside—since you and your spouse are one, your parents are her parents and your parents are his parents.
3. The third thing we notice is that this is the first commandment that has a **promise** attached to it. Now, I like promises. I like positive promises. I like promises that talk about me living a long time. In my book, that's a good thing. So, this commandment stands out to me in that it gets my attention by giving me something to look forward to.
4. The fourth thing to notice about this verse is that the promise involves **three** parts: (1) our days are long, (2) in a particular place (not necessarily where we want to be, but where God wants us to be), and that (3) God is the source of the promise (it's not up to us to live a long life, that's up to God).

So, now that we've broken down the verse, let's step back and ask a simple question: Why should I do this? Why should I honor my parents?

1. **Long life** (the obvious answer)
2. **Continuity between generations**. There are things that I need to know that can best be taught in an environment of honor. I know when I'm trying to teach Anna Grace and Caleb something, it works must smoother if they're honoring me—if they're giving weight to my words and my presence—if they see me as significant. The same works for our parents—there are many things that I still need to learn and apply that I can learn best and apply easiest if there is an environment

of honor. So, continuity between generations is important—but let's put that concept in Exodus 20 and beyond—think about what happened in the Scriptures when one generation did not follow in their Godly parents' footsteps.

3. **Advice and counsel** (if your parents are alive and walking with God). I find that I do this less now than I used to, but I still ask my dad for his opinion and perspective on things from time to time. I even asked for his input on this lesson (as someone who has experienced this commandment from both perspectives—parents who were married (to both each other and other people) and children who are married). His input was: Speak positive of your in-laws, invite them to be a part of your life, and talk of them before your children.

So that's my input on why I should honor my parents. What do you think about applying this commandment to marriage?

Here's what Samuele Bacchiocchi thinks:

The Fifth Commandment enjoins us to honor and respect our parents The way we respect and obey our parents is indicative of our obedience and respect for God and for those placed in authority over us.

As married persons, we assume responsibility for our parents rather than to them. In practice, this involves welcoming our respective parents to our home without allowing them to control our home. . . . It involves seeking our parents' counsel, without allowing them to dictate their ideas. . . . The fifth commandment, then, enjoins us to rightly relate to the parents of each spouse by respecting and supporting them without allowing them to interfere in our marital relationship and thus weaken our marriage covenant.

Question: How are we doing in respecting our parents? If you had to grade yourself (as an individual if you're not married or as a couple if you are), what grade would you give yourself?

Question: Would you want your children to respect you the way that you respect your parents? What about when they're not around? (moving on to the next commandment)

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

Exodus 20:13: You shall not murder [premeditated or accidental murder—this is not the more generic word for kill].

Fairly straightforward, right? Not so much as it's interpreted by Jesus in **Matthew 5:21-22a: You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry** [literally, **provoked** to anger] **with his brother without a cause** [without purpose, or in vain (for a reason without weight—for an **empty** reason)] **shall be in danger of the judgment.**

So, Jesus takes this seemingly abstract commandment (I mean, I've never actually taken someone's life either on accident or on purpose, so from a frequency perspective, for me, this one is fairly easy to obey), and increases the difficulty level significantly. I don't think that many of us struggle with literally murdering someone on a frequent basis—obviously sometimes the thought crosses our minds, but certainly not to the same degree that we probably struggle with anger.

Jesus implies that when we call each other names and belittle each other, we are just as **guilty** as if we had murdered someone. Notice that Jesus does not equate anger with murder—he just says the consequences under the Law are the same. He’s getting to the heart of the sixth commandment.

The Sixth Commandment orders us to respect others by not taking their lives. Jesus magnified the meaning of this commandment to include anger and hate.

So, let’s apply this one to marriage (not too hard, eh?).

1. Don’t **murder** your spouse. You do this and you totally missed the point.
2. Don’t be angry without a **cause** at your spouse—without a cause—for an empty reason.

What other applications could we make?

Question: How are we doing in our marriages on this commandment? If you had to grade yourself (as an individual if you’re not married or as a couple if you are), what grade would you give yourself?

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THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

Exodus 20:14: You shall not commit adultery [used **literally** between a man and a woman and also **figuratively** of idolatrous worship].

Jesus magnified this commandment to include not only the physical act of adultery but also any kind of impure act, word or thought (**Matthew 5:27-28**). The seventh commandment summons us to be faithful to our marriage covenant by refraining from illicit sexual acts or thoughts. . . . The seventh commandment, then, calls us to honor our marriage covenant by being sexually faithful to our spouse both **mentally** and **physically**.

Let's hear what some of the great commentators have to say about this verse:

Adam Clarke: The act itself, and every thing leading to the act, is prohibited by this commandment; for our Lord says, Even he who looks on a woman to lust after her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Geneva Study Bible (1599): But be pure in heart, word and deed.

David Guzik: The New Testament clearly condemns adultery: Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication uncleanness, licentiousness. (Galatians 5:19).

David Guzik: Jesus carefully explained the heart of this commandment; it prohibits us from looking at a woman to lust for her, where we commit adultery in our heart or mind, yet may not have the courage or opportunity to do the act (Matthew 5:27-30) - we aren't innocent just because we didn't have the opportunity to sin the way we wanted to!

Matthew Henry: our chastity should be as dear to us as our lives, and we should be as much afraid of that which defiles the body as of that which destroys it

What's your input?

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

Exodus 20:15: You shall not steal.

The Eighth Commandment enjoins us to respect others by not stealing what rightfully belongs to them. . . This commandment forbids any act by which we dishonestly obtain the goods or services of others. We may steal from others in many subtle ways: withholding or appropriating what rightfully belongs to others, taking credit for the work done by others, robbing others of their reputation through slanderous gossip, or by depriving others of the remuneration or consideration they have a right to expect.

Applied to the marriage covenant, the eighth commandment summons us to live in true community . . . one spouse must not control the finances so that the other feels dispossessed. It means that we must not hold back any security from our partner as a safety measure or bargaining chip. It means that no sacrificial demands must be made of our partners in order to please our personal desires or whims. It means that we must not "steal" the individuality, dignity, and power of our spouses, by making decisions for them.

What do you think about that? Do you agree or disagree?

Adam Clarke: A state that enacts **bad** laws is as criminal before God as the individual who breaks **good** ones.

So if we are not to steal, let's look at this from an opposite standpoint . . . what's the opposite of stealing? Giving, right? So, how does that work in marriage?

Thoughts?

David Guzik: This command is another important foundation for human society, establishing the right to personal **property**. . . Ephesians 4:28 gives the solution to stealing: **Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.**

So what does that have to do with marriage?

Thoughts?

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THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

Exodus 20:16: "You shall not bear [testify] false [lies, deceptions, disappointments, falsehoods] witness [testimony/evidence of things or people] against your neighbor [friend]."

The Ninth Commandment enjoins us to respect others by speaking truthfully about them. . . . This commandment is violated by speaking evil of others, misrepresenting their motives, misquoting their words, judging their motives, and criticizing their efforts. This commandment may also be broken by remaining silent when hearing an innocent person unjustly maligned. We are guilty of bearing "false witness" whenever we tamper with truth in order to benefit ourselves or a cause that we espouse.

Applied to the marriage covenant, the ninth commandment enjoins us to be faithful communicators with [and about] our spouses. In practice, this involves . . . learning to understand not only the words but also the feelings behind the words of our spouse. This enables us to interpret their thoughts and feelings more accurately. We can bear false witness against our spouses by projecting on them what we think they say or mean by certain actions. The ninth commandment, then, enjoins us to be faithful communicators with our spouses by learning to accurately understand, interpret and represent their words, actions and feelings.

Question: Where do you fall short in the application of that commandment (toward your spouse if you are married, toward your friends if you are not)? Discuss at your tables.

Last week, I talked about how the Geneva Bible's commentary encouraged doing the opposite of each commandment's prohibition. Using that logic, what is the opposite of this commandment? Speaking truth about your friend/spouse, right? Colossians has something to say along those lines:

Colossians 3:9: Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds

Now, the obvious question arises: are we living our lives so that if someone spoke the truth about us, it would be a help to the cause of Christ or a hindrance? (that was a rhetorical question)

"How very strange that we have ever come to think that Christian maturity is shown by the ability to speak our minds, whereas it is really expressed in controlling our tongues."

(Redpath) Now, every once in a while we mix this up. Some of you think that I'm mature because I

speaking about Biblical truth. My maturity level should be measured just like everyone else in this room—by my obedience to Biblical truth.

"What a startling revelation it would be if a tape recording could be played of all that every church member has said about his fellow members in one week!" (Redpath) Now, let's pretend for a moment that statement also covered our thoughts. Oh my!

So, how serious is disobedience to this commandment? David Guzik looks at it from a Jewish legal perspective in this next quote. **Satan is always there to encourage a lie (John 8:44; Acts 5:3); and Jesus Himself was the victim of false witness (Mark 14:57); in some ways, we might say this was the sin that sent Jesus to the cross.**

The tenth commandment cuts to the heart of humanity's greatest sin—pride.

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

Exodus 20:17: "You shall not covet [desire, delight, take **pleasure in] your neighbor's [friend's] house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."**

The Tenth Commandment supplements the eighth by attacking the root from which theft grows, namely, covetousness. . . . This commandment differs from the other nine by prohibiting not only the outward act but also the **inner thought from which the action springs. It establishes the important principle that we are accountable before God not only for our actions but also for our **intentions**.**

Applied to the marriage covenant, the tenth commandment enjoins us to be content [with] and grateful for our spouses. In practice, this contentment is expressed in different ways:

- refraining from comparing our spouses' talents or performances with those of other spouses;
- welcoming and rejoicing over our spouses' achievements, gifts, and experiences without coveting them for ourselves;
- learning to express gratitude to God every day for giving us the spouses we have;
- maintaining the proper reserve toward persons of the opposite sex and reserving expressions of special affections for our spouses;
- avoiding making unreasonable demands on our spouses to force them to become like real or fictitious spouses we covet.

Take a moment to discuss at your table which one you like the best that your spouse or friends do.

The tenth commandment, then, enjoins us to be content with and for our spouses, by resisting the temptation to look for "greener grass over the other side of the fence."

This commandment, in my mind, is the ultimate in internal **discipline** and governing one's emotions and desires (with the help of God). The first nine can all deal with some external behavior, but this one is purely internal. No one knows how well you obey this one but you and God.

Hebrews 13:5: Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." This almost implies that covetousness is a failure to recognize that God is with us and that he is not going to forsake us. Could it be that we covet because we are not satisfied with God and with what God has given us?

David Guzik: This last commandment is closely connected with the first commandment against idolatry. Interesting how God comes full circle back to Himself.

And just in case we aren't fully clear on how serious God takes covetousness, He threw **Ephesians 5:5** in the Bible. **Ephesians 5:5: For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.**

David Guzik: The purpose of the law was not to give us a standard we could achieve, and then be counted righteous before God. The purpose of the law was to show us God's perfect standard, and how it is impossible for any of us to obey that standard.

What would our world look like if everyone adhered to the tenth commandment? (I don't think we'd recognize America)

CONCLUSION

Christian marriage, to be stable and permanent, needs to be built upon the foundation of an unconditional, mutual covenant commitment that will not allow anything or anyone "to put asunder" the marital union established by God.

PAUL STEVENS (A SUMMARY OF THE ENTIRE SERIES)

Covenant Between Israel and Yahweh

1. No other gods
2. No graven image
3. Not taking the Lord's name in vain
4. Remembering the Sabbath day
5. Honoring father and mother
6. No murder
7. No adultery
8. No stealing
9. No false testimony
10. No coveting

Covenant Between Spouses

1. Exclusive loyalty to my spouse
2. Truthfulness and faithfulness
3. Honoring my spouse in public and private
4. Giving my spouse time and rest
5. Rightly relating to parents and parents-in-law
6. No destructive anger/uncontrolled emotions
7. Sexual faithfulness; controlled appetites
8. Community of property with the gift of privacy
9. Truthful communication
10. Contentment and gratefulness