

All I Ever Needed To Know About Living With Others, I Learned From The Ten Commandments

Franklin Church of Christ
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Introduction:

One of the most interesting essays I have ever read was entitled “All I Ever Needed To Know I Learned In Kindergarten,” by Robert Fulghum. It is simple and yet, surprisingly profound. As Mr. Fulghum can say he learned all he needed to know in kindergarten, I believe I can say, “All I ever needed to know about living with others, I learned from the Ten Commandments.” The first four commandments teach us some enduring principles about living with God. The last six give us basic guidelines to live successfully with others. My statement may sound simplistic. I believe, however, all other instructions are merely further explanations of these basic principles.

Discussion:

- I. Mom and Dad are important (**Exodus 20:12**).
 - A. The people who have had the greatest impact on my life are not the people I watch on TV or the people who run our nation’s government. They are my parents. These two people have had the greatest impact on my life, not because I have not been greatly influenced by others, but because without them, I would not even exist. Therefore, I must honor them. God regulated the family relationship before He regulated any other, demonstrating its importance. The fact is, if this command is instilled in our children, the others will follow.
 1. Note, this command is given without reference to age.
 2. Note also, this command is given without reference to what kind of parents you have.
 - B. Experts tell parents the responsibilities they have to children. However, few tell them what to expect from the kids. Remembering **Isaiah 55:9**, we are not surprised to discover the modern philosophies regarding child rearing are backwards from God’s philosophy. The fifth commandment speaks of the child’s responsibility to his parents, not vice versa.
 1. The parents’ responsibility is to train children to honor and obey (**Ephesians 6:1-2**). Today, most parents do not train or expect their children in this. Instead, they wish and hope their kids will honor them. They beg, plead and threaten their kids to obey them.
 2. Children are not born knowing to honor and obey their parents. That is why we must train them as early as possible. Since God commanded this, we have every right to expect it of them. The cop out that they are only children is merely an indication of parents who are unwilling to take the time to train their children.
- II. Don’t hurt others (**Exodus 20:12, 16**).
 - A. God told the Israelites not to murder. However, this did not mean they could do whatever they wanted up to the point of murder. Rather, the principle was, under normal circumstances, they did not have the right to inflict physical harm on others.
 1. This command is given without exception. In other words, no matter what anyone does to me, I am not at liberty to retaliate by harming them.
 2. Remember the “Golden Rule” of **Matthew 7:12**, “Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them” (ESV). Instead of inflicting harm and violence, live at peace with all men (**Romans 12:17-21**).
 - B. The ninth commandment takes this point a step further. Not only must I refrain from physical harm, I must refrain from verbally hurting others as well.
 1. **Ephesians 4:29-31** says to put away unwholesome speech, refraining from bitterness, wrath, anger, malice and slander. **Galatians 5:15** forbids biting and devouring one another.
 2. Instead of harmful speech, **Ephesians 4:15, 29** encourages us to speak the truth in love, speaking only those things which are good for building others up.
- III. Honor my commitments (**Exodus 20:14**).
 - A. Aside from your commitment to serve God as a Christian, the greatest commitment you will ever make is in marriage, committing yourself to one man or woman for the rest of your life. Let’s face it, a lifetime is a long time to be with one person. Therefore, this is not a commitment to take lightly. God says in no uncertain terms, “Do not break this vow. Do not commit adultery.”

1. The proverbialist also teaches us to keep our marriage commitment in **Proverbs 5:15-23**.
 2. As with the other commandments, this one contains no exceptions. It does not matter how your spouse has treated you. It does not matter whether you love your spouse any more or not. It does not matter if you have fallen in love with someone else. It does not matter how unhappy your marriage is or how happy someone else makes you feel. Do not waste your breath or brainpower trying to justify to yourself, to me, to God or anyone else why your situation is different. God said, "Do not commit adultery." Sex outside of marriage is sin.
- B. The marriage commitment is not the only one God expects us to keep. When we make any commitment, we must honor and keep it. We need to be people of our word. If we say we are going to do something, we should do it, whether our commitment is to God or to others.
1. Only those who keep their vows, even when they hurt, will dwell with God (**Psalms 15:1,4**).
 2. Lest you fall into the Pharisaical trap that you only have to keep your word when you back it up with phrases such as "I Promise," remember **Matthew 5:37**.
- IV. Respect other people's property (**Exodus 20:15**).
- A. When something belongs to other people, we do not have the right to take it. It is theirs, not ours. This command is also given without exception. Even in our Disney movies today, we are taught by Aladdin, "Gotta eat to live. Gotta steal to eat." God does not provide authority to steal because you are hungry. Rather, **Ephesians 4:28** says we should not steal. We should work.
1. However, I do not believe this command teaches us to do what we want with someone else's property as long as we don't take it. The point is we do not have the right to use someone else's property in any way other than what they authorize. It is theirs, not ours.
 2. This means when others have authorized us to borrow something, we should maintain it how they instruct us, returning it in at least as good a condition as when we received it.
- B. I believe this is one of the most forgotten principles of interpersonal relations today. Many people believe they have the right to whatever they can lay their hands on. They believe they have the right to use it however they see fit. We must regain the principle of respecting other people's property in our society.
- V. To keep the other commandments, I must control my thoughts (**Exodus 12:17**).
- A. I am always surprised when people claim the Old Law was a physical law, dealing with action but the new law is spiritual, dealing with the heart. Many turn to the Sermon on the Mount to make this unfounded distinction. The Law of Moses was just as much about the heart as the Law of Christ. The tenth commandment proves it. God said, "Control your thoughts."
- B. Controlling my thoughts helps me keep the other commandments. If I do not covet my neighbor's house, I will not kill him (cf. **I Kings 21**). If I do not covet my neighbor's wife, I will not commit adultery (cf. **II Samuel 11**). If I do not covet my neighbor's possessions, I will not steal them. If I do not covet my neighbor's reputation, I will not lie about him.
1. The Sermon on the Mount, far from explaining differences between the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ, demonstrate a law is not kept just because the explicit action is not committed. I must control my thoughts as well. I am not allowed to hate a man as long as I refrain from murder (**Matthew 5:21-22**). I am not allowed to lust as long as I do not commit adultery (**Matthew 5:28**). We are commanded to keep our thoughts in check.
 2. We must follow Paul's advice in **Philippians 4:8**, thinking on pure things. As a friend of mine once said, "You cannot keep birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from making a nest in your hair." Just so, we may not be able to keep fleeting thoughts from entering our minds. But we can keep from dwelling on them.

Conclusion:

All I ever needed to know about living with others, I learned from these commandments. If we allow these principles to guide us, we will have successful relationships with other people. Again, I understand we are not under the Law of Moses. Rather, we are under the Law of Christ. However, I hope throughout this sermon I have demonstrated that each of these commands contain principles that endure eternally and are mandated by Christ's law as well. Let us learn to love one another as ourselves, living according to these principles.