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## Ten Beautiful Commands

Over 3000 years ago, after God delivered the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt, He gave them a set of laws or rules that we know as "The Ten Commandments." Many groups and individuals have numbered them in different ways over the many centuries, but it is very clear that, at the beginning of the list, God says, *"I am the Lord, your God. You shall not have any other gods besides me."*



Though these Commandments were first given to God's chosen people, the Jews, God's lordship was later extended to include the Gentiles — in fact, everybody — by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and by the ministry efforts of Paul, Peter, and many others, down to this day.

God said to Israel then, and He says to you and me now, *"I am the Lord your God. You may not, you must not, have other Gods besides me."* Not the world, with its temptations; not our sinful selves, with our fears and appetites; certainly not the devil and his evil, lying enticements.

I simplify this first Commandment as God saying, *"Look, people, I AM God. You need to respect me."*

Notice the way I have put this: God does not need our respect for Him; He can get along fine without it. But we certainly do need it. That's not explicitly stated in the commandment, but it is implied, and it is very true.

The Bible has a lot to say about "fearing God." The English Standard Version has 91 verses referring to fear of God or fear of the Lord. This verse is typical: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Proverbs 1:7)* In other words, if we have proper fear of the Lord, we are at least starting to be wise; if not, we are fools.

But what is that really about? Are we supposed to be shivering in fear, waiting for God to squash us like some bothersome bug? Which He could obviously do, if He wanted to. But He does not want to do that.

We must be aware of His power —how could we not? When we look at His creation, from the immensity of the universe to the invisible wonders within every living

cell, how can we not be in awe of Him? No evolutionist, no scientist, has ever come close to explaining Creation without the truth of the book of Genesis.

To "fear God" does not mean we should be afraid of Him, because He really loves us. In spite of our sins, past, present, and future; in spite of all of our character flaws, our selfishness, our rotten attitudes, He really does love us.

God doesn't want us to be afraid of Him. On the contrary, when we have sinned, that's when we most need to go to him, on our knees or face down on the ground, and ask for forgiveness, because we're sick, with a disease called 'sin,' and only God can cure us.

So what does "fear God" actually mean? It means:

- We need to acknowledge, and be in awe of, His power, creativity, artistry, and goodness.
- We need to believe that He loves us, as the Bible plainly says in so many places.
- We need to do our part to be in relationship with Him. We need to "come near" to Him, and treat Him with all of the respect that He deserves.
- What we must NOT do, as so many people do today, is just ignore Him, foolishly hoping that everything will be all right in the end, because their sins are "not as bad as some others."

Look at it this way: "Fear God" simply amounts to "Respect God," with a side of "Believe He loves us."

This is important: Respecting God is more than just giving a nod in His direction and saying, "Oh, yeah, God is real, and I believe He loves me. That's nice." The churches are full of people who will go that far.

We need to go way beyond simply confessing that "God is God." As Christians, You and I need to get to where we can say, truthfully, "God is my God."

In the past, a bride was supposed to promise that she would 'love, honor, and obey" her new husband. As a wedding vow, that's now deemed passé, old-fashioned — and I don't want to argue that point. But the Church is called "the Bride of Christ" in the Scriptures. As part of that bride-ship, we are certainly obligated to "love, honor, and obey" our divine Bridegroom, our God.

## Love, honor, and obey

Jesus said, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."* (Matthew 22:37-40)

Not merely acknowledge Him. Not even just obey Him. We need to love Him. And not just a little; we need to love Him with everything we have. Not only our words; also our attitudes, our actions, and our resources.

Loving God starts with our minds — it's a decision we make. If we mean it, and act accordingly — living in accordance with His will as much as we can; spending time with Him in the Word and in prayer; seeking and following the Holy Spirit's guidance — that love for God moves from our heads to our hearts. We can never love Him perfectly, as Jesus demonstrated, because by our very nature we are sinful — but with the Holy Spirit's help we can come close.



How do we know if we love God? When spending time with Him becomes something we want to do, rather than something we ought to do, then we have begun to love Him. And God doesn't become my God or your God until we begin to love Him.

Love, honor, and obey. We've now discussed loving and honoring Him. Now let's discuss obeying Him.

Wait a minute — we have to obey God?

Yes. If He is really our God, we do have to obey Him. Of course our selfish human nature rebels against that. The Bible calls us to be "slaves to Christ," but we don't want to be slaves, not even to our perfect God, who loves us and always wants only what is best for us.

What that obedience means is not always crystal clear. Sometimes, if we're following our own or someone else's ideas rather than the Bible and the Holy Spirit's guidance, what we think is the right and God-pleasing thing to do can turn out to be the wrong thing. The Bible says, *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.* (Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25)

But God's word also tells us what to do about that: *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths.* (Proverbs 3:5-6)

God the Father and our Lord Jesus have sent us the Holy Spirit to be our comforter, instructor, and guide. All we have to do is pay attention, and go where He leads us.

All of the above has to do with the First Commandment, doesn't it? If God is truly our God, then we have to — we need to — respect Him, love Him, honor Him, and obey Him. As Martin Luther put it, "that is most certainly true."

What about the other nine Commandments, or the rest of that list, however people may number it? For me it's very simple: the other Commandments, and every law or command in the Bible, are really only specific details about applying and obeying the First Commandment.



If God is our God, we won't be setting up idols or doing things to worship anything other than God. We won't be misusing His name. We will set aside "Sabbath" time for spending with Him.

We'll honor our parents, if possible; if we have children, we will do our best to be honorable and loving parents.

We will not murder anyone, or wish them dead; instead we will try to help keep people from dying early.

We won't commit adultery. If we are married, we will cherish and honor the spouse God has given us.

We won't be thieves — we won't steal from anyone, not even the government. We won't be liars — the devil is a liar; we choose not to be like him.

We won't waste time and energy wanting what someone else has. God knows what we need; often we actually don't.

We must realize, and we must always remember, that God's commands are not meant to deprive us of anything that we need, and not even things we want, if our wants are governed by His will as they should be. God's commands are a blessing that can be of great benefit to us, if we will obey them. Here's what the psalmist, King David, had to say about that: *The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; ...* (Psalms 19:7)

May you find Peace and Joy in respecting, loving, honoring, and obeying our awesome God! Amen.

Brother Roland

# Piano Players

Frontline Devotion for Wednesday, February 9, 2022, by Pastor Fritz Foltz

*(1 Peter 5:5-7) You who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.*

Our small community has celebrated Martin Luther King's birthday for 42 years now. It started small, very small. A handful of people gathered in the huge college chapel to worship with local talent. The congregation grew as nationally known figures such as Ralph Abernathy spoke and world class choirs such as Morgan State University sang. However, we have always included friends and neighbors.

One of my favorite stories of all time took place back when we were making the transition from small to large. Morgan State, under the direction of Nathan Carter, had started with three tremendous anthems. An elderly lady from one of our small Baptist churches stood to sing "He touched me". She was filled with the Spirit as she sang *a cappella*. However, she soon realized she was singing to a much, much larger audience than she had ever enjoyed. She began to fluster as she floundered off key.

I was on stage at the time, sharing her embarrassment. As things quickly got worse and worse, I began praying she would just stop and sit down.

But then I noticed Nathan very slightly nod his head in a motion to his piano player. The young man got the message and began playing, first softly as he led the elderly lady back on key, and then in crescendo as he raised her to the heights, the piano booming and the elderly lady singing as if she was lead soprano in the heavenly choir.

At the end the audience cheered and cheered, the elderly Baptist lady bowed and bowed, and the piano player, sitting on his piano bench, quietly smiled. He knew well what he had done but expected and received no credit.

I still remember the moment as a tribute to Nathan and the piano player, as well as a reminder that Christians are to be ready when God motions for us piano players to rescue the floundering.

Let us pray: Come, Lord Jesus, come and rescue our floundering world, save us from our self-destructive ways. Help us to remember all the piano players who like Dr. King have responded to your nod. Bring the Beloved Community, when enemies become friends, and war is no more, the Day of Plenty when all have enough, and poverty is long gone, the Day of Courage when justice prevails, and love determines all. Fill us with your Spirit and overcome our fear that we, too, might be ready when you nod. Amen.

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**Send Bible questions or updated address information to  
Brother Roland, PO Box 14, Fayetteville PA 17222**

Inmates -- include your name, DOC No., and SID with your address.

## Other Beautiful Commandments

From Jesus and the New Testament Apostles: Wisdom and Beauty from the Word of God!

### Puzzle:

D D M M F V U I N A L L Y O U R W A Y S I P T V T I I S U L I K  
I G D P U O Y E D I U G L L I W E H E R Y Q E M J N L S E H A J  
N H X G E J A B D D R O L E H T N I T S U R T F H E M G B K R O  
B G N C Q O D K C G O K V T D O N O T L E A N O N V N A C P W S  
Q D V R Y F H T R O F T I K A E P S M Z X I S Y L E X A B T U Y  
K Z Z W U W A C K N O W L E D G E H I M Z N I B L R S J E B O M  
P M D X I N H M T W O R S H I P T H E L O R D O K Y K S L U L F  
C P W A Y T F E A Y Z Y P R K R D V O K B D V H O T E I R D X H  
D F E E S E H S N M L N O U E Z V V K W Q E E U J H E O Z I T W  
O J N Y R Y E A Z Y K D Y U Y H E G G B Y U L M T I W T B N L W  
G Q S G C I O J L Q O E A C W T T V N O N O K N J N D B V T P I  
O W T N V G U U H L E U T L H I H O U I V S O E U G M M N H L T  
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R H M V C S U H T O U O U G T E I O F A O E O Y W V M N T V F L  
O A D J S A B V A R R L D R I U U H H I R D A M M E D J Q E Q L  
L L N Y B E Z S A D E W D G S R P U E S N W M W E T I H C N V Y  
G L A Z H C O U K T V F H H S T T T T V L D I L H H F G U I I O  
E Y M D Z T W G L H Y B J E A R R A F A R L H E M A T G I N N U  
V O M B F U H H N C O W L D Z V N E E P T E P I Z N X N D G O R  
I U O W Z O U U E R Q F P A J D E C N B W R S Q M K O L I Y G S  
G R C A E H T M D N R U M F I I I T D G O L P I I S T T R X E O  
B H T L B T Z V V H Y Z F N F O Z V H P T I Y G T O C O P E U U  
Q E S E E I E T Q Q M O G H J F L A H E M H N Q F K F N K L N L  
R A E H L W T S Q K A F U E T P N E D P M A R U M L P T X K W R  
H R T T Q Y M U M X G M R G L J T O F M M Q Y N L G H M B J U H  
U T A L Y A B D O C J A W U O S T E A A Z J Q I K E T U Z O O L  
F N E L T R A E H R U O Y N I T I E D I H J W K L H K I Y F K Y  
L R R A Q P M C I Q S J S G T W O S D Y V S U O S G A O A N N W  
L Y G D R O W S I H D A E R K B Z B L Q D T R O S A T O V Z D E  
R M T P E Q L K A J D B T S C D O C E O J D E H J O H C Z L Q I  
A L U C E L I M A R T X E E H T O G G D U N W H D Y E S K W P G

### Words:

LOVE THE LORD  
WITH ALL YOUR HEART  
WITH ALL YOUR SOUL  
WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH  
LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR  
AS YOU LOVE YOURSELF  
ALL THE LAW  
AND THE PROPHETS  
HANG ON THESE TWO  
GREATEST COMMANDMENTS  
DO TO OTHERS  
AS YOU WOULD HAVE THEM

DO TO YOU  
GO THE EXTRA MILE  
WORSHIP THE LORD  
SERVE HIM GLADLY  
READ HIS WORD  
HIDE IT IN YOUR HEART  
SPEAK IT FORTH  
IN THE MORNING  
WHEN YOU GET UP  
IN THE EVENING  
WHEN YOU GO TO BED  
TRUST IN THE LORD

DO NOT LEAN ON  
YOUR OWN UNDERSTANDING  
IN ALL YOUR WAYS  
ACKNOWLEDGE HIM  
HE WILL GUIDE YOU  
SEEK THE LORD  
YOU WILL FIND HIM  
GIVE GLORY TO GOD  
REJOICE ALWAYS  
PRAY WITHOUT CEASING  
IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS  
GOD'S WILL FOR YOU