

Pop quiz: What’s the first thing that comes to mind when you hear or read the 10 Commandments?

The Laws of Liberty – A New Look at an Old Code

Love is probably not the first thing you think of when you think of law, yet perhaps the most universal law is the need for love. It hints at a universal reality for every human being: the sense that we all are cut from the same cloth; that there is One who made us and we have life in common, that in spite of the deep flaws and failures which divide us, love is the only true hope to bridge the divide.

That is exactly what Jesus words are about in His *summary of The Law: Love God above all else and love others as oneself*. If it’s a universal summary of the laws God based in love, why does the church, and humanity as a whole, get so uneasy with The Law? On the one hand, we battle for the 10 Commandments to be placed in the halls of our schools and Courts of Justice, yet on the other hand we fear the possibility that God has placed obligation on us that we really don’t want.

So how do the 10 Commandments fit in with our world? Are they passé in the age of Jesus and the Gospel of grace and mercy? In an increasingly post-Christian culture in America, we need to have a foundation for why we cannot live without them in 2018 and beyond.

Deuteronomy 5:1-22

Four reasons for studying the Old Code.

Reason #1 - They keep us rooted in reality. Jer. 10:1-5, 12-16

In this passage, the prophet issues a challenge to the people of Israel who are following the ways of the tribes and peoples who occupied the land before them, filled with superstitions and bowing down to idols.

We don’t really see people bowing down to statues much these days, so when we read it in the

Scripture we tend to think, “How foolish! It’s just wood or stone, it would be like bowing down to a statue of George Washington in DC.” We know there is nothing there but metal, brick and mortar. But in the biblical period, it was far more than that. Look again at vs 3-5. What do you think a scarecrow was for in biblical times? _____

It had no life. The idol represented a belief system; it was considered a physical representation of a supernatural being exalted as a god or goddess. People counted on the gods of rain, storm or grain to protect them as represented by the image in the field. The scarecrow was a source of comfort and hope against the powers of nature which were believed to be controlled by the gods. It had no reality, except what the people gave it by their false beliefs.

That is what an idol does in people’s lives. Like the Scarecrow, it embodies **“any idea, viewpoint, or activity that seeks to draw us away from God or His truth to find meaning and fulfillment.”** What things do people seek today as alternate sources for meaning and fulfillment? Power, approval, etc.

We live in a world that is broken. That is not how God made it, but in giving humanity freedom, Adam and Eve chose to seek meaning and fulfillment apart from God. In essence, they tried to make their own reality. The culture around us tries to leverage us in subtle and attractive ways, into shaping alternate realities, whose concepts, ideas, and morals all seem logical in a world so distorted. We need Divine revelation and instruction to stay moored and anchored to the truth.

What are your Scarecrows? Who are your scarecrow’s? Where are you seeking meaning and truth in places that are contrary to the Creator God who created this world for your blessing and joy, if you walk with Him and fight against these idols?

The Law keeps us rooted in reality because it reveals the character of the God who created life according to a plan and pattern. Humanity seeks a

God who is love; behind all of His laws is the love that provides guidelines which instruct and protect us from damaging ideas, false perspectives, and destructive behavior.

Reason #2 – They show us how to relate to God and others. Matthew 22:37-40

When they asked about which of the commandments was the greatest, they were asking about more than the 10 Commandments. But Jesus summarized all Laws with quoting from Deuteronomy 6, which begins with, “Hear, Oh Israel” or *Sh'ma*. *Shema* means to hear with the intent to obey, to act on what is heard, or primed for obedience. Like a sprinter in the blocks waiting for the gun to sound. In other words, “Be quick to act on love towards God and others.” We are to view others, no matter their actions or how far from obedience they are, through the lens of love first, not correction or reprisal. What matters most is love and others. How often in our homes do we tend to look at our family members as obstacles to our own peace and harmony, rather than those to whom we must show love and grace?

What do the following two passages tell us about love? 1 John 4:17-21 _____
John 13:35 _____

The 10 Commandments tell us what that love looks like – first toward God, then toward others. Without those instructions, we don't know what love in action looks like. The countries, states and cultures which provide the best justice and morality, are those whose laws come from the Bible when they are applied honestly and fairly. Why? Because only the true Creator has spoken by revelation about the rules of the cosmos, and He recorded it in the Bible.

Reason #3 - Because they lead us to freedom. James 1:25, Gal. 5:17-18

Young people often say, “I hate rules. They put limits on me.” That is the common perspective about the Law and the 10 Commandments. But is that legitimate? Take this simple test:

Classify the following as either bound or free: the dolphin _____, the eagle _____, a mountain stream _____. Each of these, although limited

to water, air, and river banks, are truly free, *whenever they stay within their respective boundaries.*

Now how about these: a thief _____, a porn star _____. Are they truly free even though they profess to engage in total freedom? The thief is bound by fear of discovery or reprisal. The porn star, or for that matter, anyone who deviates from biblically affirmed sexuality, is not free but enslaved to one's passions. God created the boundaries of sexuality, and all temptation to deviate is a test of fidelity to God and actual reality, no matter what one's lure or lust is. No wonder James refers to the Law as the law of liberty!

Reason #4 – Because of their prominence in Revelation.

We often miss how significant these were in how God gave this part of His revelation. Consider these truths:

1. **They were given in demonstration of God's power,** (Exodus 19:9-15; 21-25), and **His purity,** (Exodus 19:16-20.)
2. **They were written by the very finger of God.** Exodus 31:18, Deuteronomy 9:10
We often overlook the fact that all other revelation was given either by voice or mediated through persons. God wanted to highlight the significance of these words.
3. **They had a unique placement in where they were kept.** Exodus 25:21,22
God's precepts which express his will for our moral lives contained on the tablets were placed in the Ark under the cover upon which the two angelic beings sat, and between which, the Manifest Presence of God was displayed. *God is saying by demonstration: If you want my presence in your life, you must follow my laws and moral will!*

A Final Thought: Live in such a way that you define God to the world, so that the world can find God!



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