

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Commandment 1

Ten suggestions? NO!!! Ten considerations? NO!!! Ten recommendations? NO!!! So, let's try for Ten Commandments?? YES!!!

Let's look at the difference. According to dictionaries, (such as *Webster's*), a suggestion is a proposal, and idea, a plan. A consideration is something which would be carefully thought about, or regarded. A recommendation is something that is presented or suggested as appropriate, or beneficial. Each of these would probably be represented in our everyday lives, but none of these contain the idea of what God gave to Moses.

So, what is a commandment? A mandate. An order given by one in authority. (And, no authority is higher than God.) The Ten Commandments were not given so that the people of Israel would be good and thus would be God's people; they were given to help God's people continue to be God's people. When the Israelites came out of Egypt, they were undisciplined and would be inclined to follow lust and idolatry. So, a mandate was necessary.

Each commandment is given as an imperative----'thou shalt' or 'thou shalt not'---meaning that they are mandatory. (The use of 'shall' presents or expresses a command; the use of 'will' would have made it as an expression of desire or wish.)

In this lesson, I would like to look at the first commandment. In future lessons, we will consider the others.

Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 present the record of the Ten Commandments, but for this lesson I will be quoting from the verses in Exodus.

Exodus 20:1 reminds us that these words came 'direct' from God. Of course, God used Moses, but the commandments were God's.

Exodus 20:2---God declares His covenant relationship with Israel. He had delivered them from the bondage of slavery. He states, 'I am the Lord thy God...' He was their only God, in contrast with the many gods which were worshiped by heathen.

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Exodus 20:3 "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." And, this begins what we know as the Ten Commandments. This first commandment concerns the object of our worship, Jehovah. He states that we should worship no other gods. This is not allowing for the people to worship God first, and other gods next. Instead, it means they were not to have any other gods at all. Why would this be given as the first commandment? Possibly because many evils would result if this commandment were broken.

What happens as a result of idolatry? People:

1.) forget God (Deut. 8:19--- '...if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them and worship them...you shall surely perish.' Jeremiah 18:15--- 'Because my people hath forgotten me...')

2.) defile the sanctuary (Ezekiel 5:11---'...saith the Lord God; Surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all they detestable things...') A question. Have many of our sanctuaries been defiled by our allowing the world to infiltrate the church?

3.) forsake God and His ways (II Kings 22:17---'Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods...therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched.')

4.) depend upon idols for deliverance (Isaiah 44:17---'...he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshipeth it, and prayeth unto it...') Many people question why Christians can worship a God that we cannot see. My question, however, is "How could I worship a god which I could see?" It seems odd to me that I would make an idol with my hands, and then worship it and expect it to respond. (The Scripture has many references to the fact that idols do not see, nor hear, etc.)

Note: an idol does not have to be something that we made with our hands. We can set up idols in our hearts, also. I have heard it said that anything that comes between you and God is an idol. Material things, personal relationships, vocations, and even service to God may be ways a Christian may be guilty of idolatry. Whoa, wait a minute!! Did I just say that service to God could become like idolatry? Yes, as unlikely as it seems. As we work for God, we must remind ourselves that service to God must not replace our fellowship **with** God. Can we get so busy that we leave God out of His own business? It would seem so. If a person is involved in God's work (helping others, visiting, etc.) and yet misses the joy of communion with Him, this is truly tragic.

In I Kings 18:21, the question is asked concerning the ability to 'limp' (or halt) between two different opinions. We must choose, as Joshua did, whom we will serve. (Joshua 24:15) Some people seem to approach worship as they it is a 'cafeteria of beliefs', and they can pick and choose what fits their desire for the moment.

Perhaps our prayer could be: "Thank You because 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.' (Isaiah 26:1). May I always remember that You and only You are deserving of worship. Amen."