

# Then God spoke, Pt. 2

Pastor Chris Baker //03.19.23 // Centralia FBC

Good morning, church! Kindergarten through third graders you're dismissed for children's church at this time. While they're heading out, turn with me to Exodus chapter 20. If you don't have a bible with you, today's passage can be found on page 64 of the black bible in the pew in front of you. If you're our guest, please know that we put those bibles out to be taken. If you don't have a copy of God's Word that you can read and understand please take that one with you, or if the one in your pew is showing some wear, there are some brand new ones back in the back. We want everyone to be engaged in God's Word on a regular basis and so if that bible will be a help to you in that process, consider it yours.

This is the second part of a two-part sermon on the 10 Commandments. We'll begin reading in Exodus 20:12 and read through verse 17. I invite you to follow along with me silently as I read out loud, then we'll pray and ask God to bless our time together in His Word.

## Read Exodus 12:12-17

### Pray

Former president Jimmy Carter, who at 98-years-old, is receiving hospice care at his Georgia home, has always been open about his faith. He taught Sunday school at Maranatha Baptist Church in Plains, GA for years.

In a book titled, *"Our Endangered Values,"* he wrote about experience he had while sharing the gospel with Spanish-speaking families in Springfield, Massachusetts. He was partnered with a Cuban-American pastor named Eloy Cruz, and they visited the poorest of the poor.

Carter spoke a little bit of Spanish, but he quickly realized that he wasn't fluent enough for some of fast-paced conversations Cruz was having with the locals, so he spent most of his time listening. As he listened, even though he didn't understand all the conversation he was deeply affected by Cruz's love for the people. In fact, Cruz's deep passion for those folks caused Carter to break down in tears.

He later asked Cruz what made him so gentle but effective as a Christian witness, and Cruz said he tried to follow a simple rule: ***"You only need two loves in your life: for God, and for the person in front of you at any particular time."***

With that, Eloy Cruz effectively echoed the words of Jesus Christ that we looked at last week in Matthew 22.

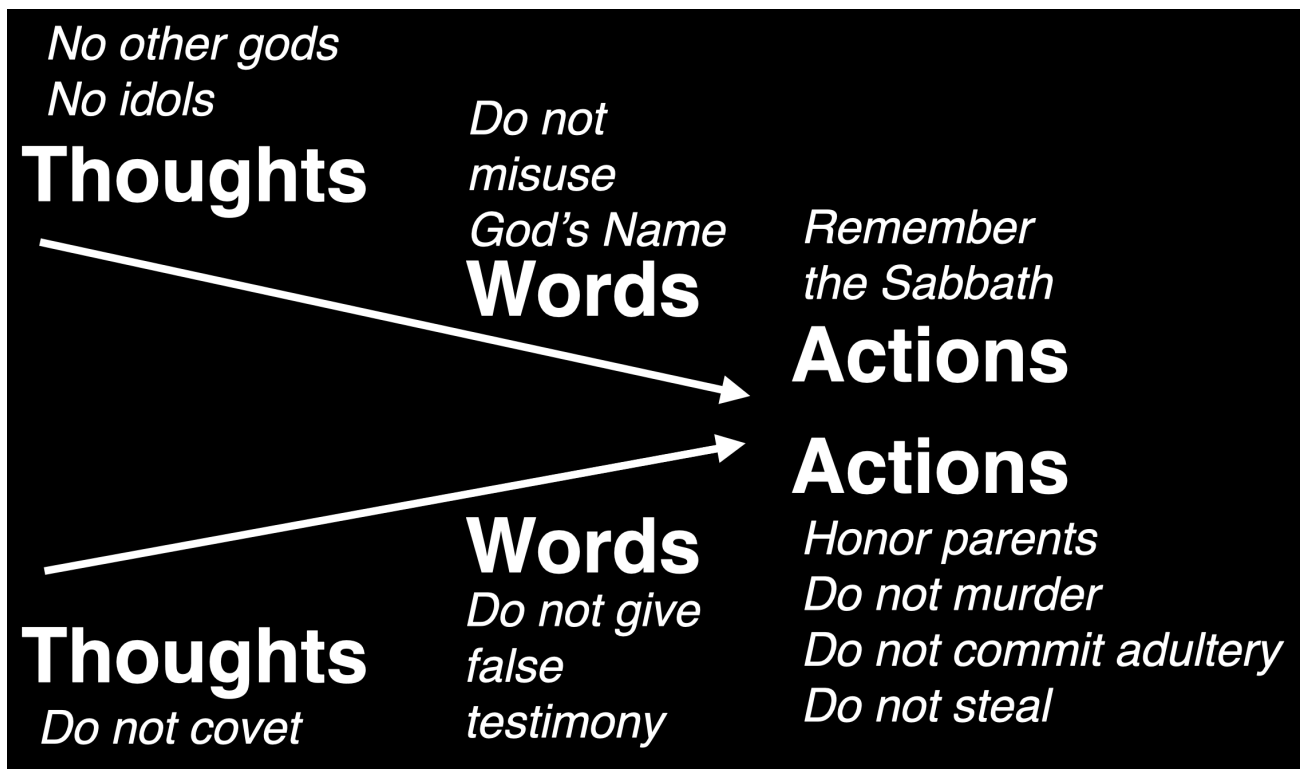
When asked by the Pharisees about the greatest commandment, Jesus said this:

***37 He said to him, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. 38 This is the greatest and most important command. 39 The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. 40 All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands."***

Jesus took the 10 Commandments and He gave us the lens through which the New Testament church should view them. He gave us the heart behind the 10 Commandments. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. And love the person in front of you at any given time as yourself.

The first four commandments deal with our relationship to God. We're to love God with our thoughts, our words, and our actions—and that is the order God gave us the commands in. We love God in our thoughts by giving Him the right place in our hearts. By not having other little 'g' gods in our lives and by not re-making God in the image of any created thing. We honor God in our words by not misusing His name and we honor God in our actions by observing His law—especially when it comes to worship. That's what the Sabbath command is all about.

When we get to the commands about our love for other human beings in verse 12, we see that the love we have in those relationships grows out of our love for God. We're to love them in those same three areas. The structure forms what we call a chiasm, rhetorical device that helps us see what God is emphasizing here. I've tried to illustrate it for you on the screen and in the notes.



We're to love people with our actions, words, and our thoughts. We start with actions and we start in with what is designed to be the relationship that teaches more about God than any other. The parent-child relationship.

### **Honor your father and your mother**

Verse 12 Honor your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

The word for honor here means heavy. We shouldn't think of our parents lightly. When the Jews were translating the Old Testament into Greek, the Greek word they used for this word meant to prize.

God is concerned with how children prize their parents. This applies to the youngest person in the room and the oldest person in the room who still has living parents. You are to prize them. As long as you live under their roof, prizing them means obeying them. When you're no longer under their care, prizing them means respecting them, seeking their counsel, and being an encouragement to them. When they near the end of their lives, prizing them will likely mean caring for them.

And church, we need to see that God takes the parent-child relationship incredibly seriously. Deuteronomy 21 tells us that the penalty for neglecting this command is death. Church, that's how serious God is about rightly prizing the parent-child relationship.

Here's why. When the authority and structure of the family break down everyone suffers.

When parents don't honor the Biblical command to care for their children, the children suffer. The effects of that are pretty clear in our society today. That's an incredible problem, one we should work to address, but not the main point of this command.

When we as children don't live out the Biblical command to honor their parents, we're actually falling in our worship of God Himself. Look at how Jesus addresses this in Matthew 15. That's how we'll interpret these last six commandments, by the way. We'll see them in Exodus, but then we'll bounce over to the gospels and see how Jesus tells us we're to think of them today.

In Matthew 15 the Pharisees are trying to trip up Jesus again when it comes to the law. Here's what He says:

**4 For God said: Honor your father and your mother; and, Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must be put to death. 5 But you say, 'Whoever tells his father or mother, "Whatever benefit you might have received from me is a gift committed to the temple," 6 he does not have to honor his father.' In this way, you have nullified the word of God because of your tradition. 7 Hypocrites! . . .**

Here's what appears to have been going on. The Pharisees would outwardly keep this command, but their actions didn't match their heart. Instead of caring for their aging parents, they would claim they were instead taking their money and giving it to the temple. That got them out of the 'legal' responsibility for caring for their parents in the eyes of the other Israelites, but Jesus calls them hypocrites.

If we honor our parents, if our love of our parents is a reflection of our love of God, then it won't just be empty action but true devotion. It really will be honor.

And don't miss this—God just told Israel to have no other gods before Him. That He wants all their heart. Then He turns around and says to honor someone else. God isn't telling us to worship our parents. He's telling us that the way we treat our parents will be a reflection of our love for Him. It's an action that grows out of our thoughts.

And it comes with a promise. *So that you may have a long life in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.* To put it more simply—obey God and you'll be blessed. If you love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength and then your actions toward your neighbor will reflect that and the first relationship you'll see it reflected in is your relationship to your parents. Worship God by honoring your parents and you'll be blessed.

With obedience comes blessing, that's a truth taught all over God's word. That blessing isn't a bigger house or a new Chevy pickup or any of those things prosperity preachers will promise. It can be, but that isn't typical. The blessing is being in right relationship with God in this life and eternal joy in the next one. In obedience comes blessing. The application of this command affects all of us.

First, let me give challenge to those of you still living under the authority of your parents. Whether you're 18 years or 18 months or anything in between. Pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you to rightly prize your parents. That means being obedient to their rules and submitting to their preferences in such a way that you actually want to. There's a big difference in something small like cleaning your room when you do it because you want to versus doing it because you have to. There's naturally going to be conflict between you and your parents as you grow up in their home. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you do something that really is supernatural. That is to put your preferences aside, put your rebellion aside, and truly prize your parents.

Second, I know some of you do not have Godly examples of parents in your life. Some of you don't have parents present at all, but you're being raised by an aunt, uncle, grandparent, step-parent or someone else even. This command is theological not biological. It applies to whoever is doing the parenting work in your life. But even though that's true, the person occupying that role might not be occupying it in the way God intended. As long as they're not telling you to sin, or being abusive, or otherwise leading you in a dangerous manner then God is still calling you to honor them.

That's why one of the reasons this command is so important, church. The parent-child relationship is the first place we learn to respect authority, and some of you have to learn early, unfortunately, that we're often under unGodly authority. When Peter wrote that we should honor the government God has placed us under, it was a government that was killing Christians. And Peter said to obey in 1 Peter 2:13.

If whoever is parenting you isn't a believer, then this puts you in a really hard spot. We want to help. We have kids ministry and student ministry leaders who care deeply about you and if you struggle to know how to honor your parents, they want to help. Talk to Jerry or to Nicole or to whoever your student ministry leader is.

Lastly on this one, there are a lot of people within the sound of my voice today who have now become the caregiver in the parent-child relationship. The roles have reversed in practicality. I know it's exhausting, I know it hurts emotionally and even physically sometimes. But know that you're honoring God by caring for your aging parents. Sometimes that care means placing them in a facility where they can receive a level of care you can't physically provide. That doesn't mean you're dishonoring them. No, you still love them in that time by visiting them, providing for them socially and emotionally and spiritually when you can't provide what they need physically. It's a beautiful thing to see adult children care well for their aging parents. And know that this passage reminds us that it comes with a blessing.

In obedience comes blessing. That's going to be true of all these commands. Honoring your parents is a way we express our love for God by loving people. The second way we love through actions is found in a very simple command. Verse 13:

**Do not murder.**

If you think the 10 Commandments are a checklist, then you're probably loving this one. Finally! I'm nailing this one. I haven't killed anyone all week and I had to wait in line at the Walmart self-checkout.

The Israelites may have thought the same thing as they hear the Lord speak this command. It's very simple, no murder. The best definition of this word is no unlawful killing. Do not unlawfully or immorally take the life of another human being. I believe the Bible makes clear that killing in self-defense or as capital punishment or in times of war represent different circumstances. Catch me later if you'd like to talk more about that.

The most important thing for us to see here is what Jesus does with this command over in Matthew 5:21 and the first part of verse 22:

**21 "You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, Do not murder, and whoever murders will be subject to judgment. 22 But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment.**

The pattern of the 10 Commandments has already revealed to us that our actions and our words flow out of our thoughts. Jesus affirms that. Murderous acts grow out of murderous hearts. We have to guard our hearts, guard our thoughts against violating the command to love one another. We can and do break this commandment often without doing it physically.

That's another truth the 10 Commandments cement into the foundation of our hearts. We're at the level of actions here, but actions flow from thoughts. God is just as concerned about our inward attitude as He is the actions of our hands. That's affirmed in the next two commands.

### **Do not commit adultery.**

Jesus steps this commandment up from the physical realm to the mental realm. Matthew 5:27,

**27 "You have heard that it was said, Do not commit adultery. 28 But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.**

No one rolls out of bed one morning and decides to have an affair. The urge for adultery doesn't hit you like the urge to eat ice cream after dinner. Adultery begins in your thoughts. James tells us the temptation to sin comes from within—so it's not the guy or girl you're looking at that causes you to sin. The sin begins inside you. So it's not enough to abstain from outward sexual immorality. God wants your heart just as much as He wants your actions.

Jesus does the same things with both of these commands. He takes them out of the hands and applies them to the heart. Don't give yourself over to unjust anger and don't give yourself over to impure thoughts.

Church, if there are two more prevalent temptations for the people in this room then I don't know what they are. Outrage is a marketable commodity in our culture. It's very possible that you and I have probably violated the command to not murder in regard to someone we have never met just in the past 48 hours. We get angry at people and politicians and personalities that we'll never even meet. How much more do we get angry at the people we love the most? And God says that's the same in His eyes as killing them.

And lust, my goodness. Sexual temptation is quite literally at your fingertips every day if you own a smartphone or a computer. Church, as Paul tells the church at Corinth: Flee sexual immorality. If you're here and you're regularly engaging in sexual activity outside of marriage or pornography, get help today. If you're engaging in pornography, get help before you leave this church. It will absolutely ruin your life, it will wreck your marriage, it can cost you your job. You're not struggling alone whether you're a man or a woman. There are other people right here that have the same struggle you do and we have resources available to help. Please, repent and get the help you need today.

Church, just like honoring our parents is a training ground for learning to honor God, upholding covenant loyalty to our spouse or our future spouse is an expression of how we uphold our covenant loyalty to God Himself. All these commandments are interconnected in beautiful ways only God could create.

Our sin causes us to seek out affection that doesn't belong to us. It also causes us to take things that don't belong to us. Verse 15:

### **Do not Steal**

Do not steal, literally do not take anything by stealth in the original language. Don't take something that isn't yours.

God comes back pretty quickly and applies this one. Exodus 21:16, Whoever kidnaps a person must be put to death. Don't steal people. Don't steal stuff either. Exodus 22:1

*"When a man steals an ox or a sheep and butchers it or sells it, he must repay five cattle for the ox or four sheep for the sheep. 2 If a thief is caught in the act of breaking in, and he is beaten to death, no one is guilty of bloodshed.*

Israel had the same home defense policy as the state of Texas. It's not just an Old Testament condemnation on stealing, though. 1 Corinthians 6 names thieves among those who will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Fundamentally, if we take something that isn't ours, we're not loving our neighbor as ourselves. We're loving ourselves more than our neighbor. So we take what they have because we want it.

And don't allow your sinful heart to trick you into thinking there are victimless crimes when it comes to stealing. Walmart won't miss a few little things here and there. My employer won't know if I sneak in a few personal copies or if I goof off on company time and steal a few dollars of my paycheck here and there.

When David sins with Bathsheba and he's confessing His sin in Psalm 51, he says to God 'against you—and you alone—have I sinned.' God is the victim when we steal.

You see, like we talked about last week when God's people who bear God's name do not live in God's way, we tell the world a story about God that isn't true. God's people are not a rebellious people who dishonor their parents. They are not an angry people, they're not an adulterous people, and they're not a thieving people. When they are those things, their life tells a lie about God.

And when we move from actions back up the chain to words (**show slide a second time**), we see that just like our actions should tell a true story about God, we need to speak true words with our mouths.

Verse 16:

**Do not give false testimony.**

Do not give false testimony against your neighbor.

False testimony means deceitful words. Stealing is deceitful taking. False testimony is deceitful talking. 1 Samuel 29:15 says, 'the Eternal One of Israel does not lie.' And His people shouldn't either. But this is more specific what most people consider lying.

Prior to testifying in court, a witness will have to swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and what? That should be standard operating procedure for God's people. Because when it isn't, you're no longer loving your neighbor or rightly bearing God's name. Instead of uniting God's people, lying divides God's people.

As you speak, specifically as you speak to others within the church, do you speak in such a way that the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth coming from a gracious heart?

Do you take Jesus' words about this command in Matthew 5:37 seriously? He said *But let your 'yes' mean 'yes,' and your 'no' mean 'no.'*

According to Jesus, your speech is either a witness to the work of God in your heart or a witness to the work of Satan.

Jesus makes it clear that all of our speech is said in the sight of God, and therefore all of that speech—especially speech about our neighbor—must be truthful and designed to build up our neighbor.

Strive to make Ephesians 4:29 your normal pattern of speech:

**29 No foul language should come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear.**

I'd love to say a lot more about that, but we need to move on to the last of the 10 Commandments, our sixth point for today.

**Do not covet.**

This command shows us that obedience to all the other commands begins in the heart. This command shows us that true obedience is not complete without 'heart obedience'.

Notice that neighbor is mentioned three times in this command. That is vital, because that helps us to understand what is being forbidden here. Coveting is desire in the context of failing to consider our neighbor's best interest—putting ourselves ahead of our neighbors, being jealous about what our neighbor has, that we don't have; seeking wrong ways to get what belongs to our neighbor. And so, the very mention of your neighbor three times helps you to understand what's being forbidden.

Church, covetousness is a dangerous sin. There is no sin in all the Ten Commandments more dangerous than covetousness, because it is hard to discern. You are usually the last person to know that you are

coveting. It is dangerous because it affects the whole soul. It allows your whole soul to be focused on worshiping something that is not God. It's dangerous because it's a radical sin, it is a root sin, it is a sin that leads to other sins.

It allows a believer to profess faith in the lord Jesus Christ, to say that he loves God above all else while, while in reality pursuing something other than God, or doing it at the same time. It's a dangerous sin.

In some ways, it's the root of all six of the commandments we looked at today. And you just might be feeling the wight of those six commandments right now. God's Law can feel heavy sometimes.

I always want you to leave here encouraged, but for that to truly happen at the heart level I think you need to look at these six commands, pair them with the four from last week, and understand that—let's face it—you're a failure.

James 2 tells us that if stumble at just one point in God's law, we're guilty of breaking it all. Jesus himself said in Matthew 5:20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.

The scribe and the Pharisees were the best of the best. Think of the Godliest person you know. Jesus is saying you have to be better than them or you're not going to make it.

Church, the point of the law is to reveal our need for grace. The law hold us up a mirror to our failure. That's why we need the Jesus. His righteousness *did* surpass everyone else's.

So I want to ask you today, if you're moral, if you're upstanding, you've never done some heinous crime like murder in cold blood, do you realize that when Jesus points to your heart, He reveals that you've fallen short. Every person in this room from the professing non-Christian to the person who has been a Christian the longest, you've broken these commandments.

Maybe studying these verses has revealed that to you for the first time. I have broken God's law, I have earned punishment, and I need grace.

Maybe the reason that your relationships are broken, that you are so angry all the time, that you do desperately want those things other people have is because you don't know the grace of the Jesus Christ and you need to find it. The gospel teaches us where to find that grace.

Or maybe it's because you are a Christian and you're not living out God's commands. You're bearing God's name wrongly.

Church, we can't consider this word without seeing that it's not just about them out there. It's about us in here. And it's about me in my heart. Have you failed to honor your parents? Are you angry, lustful, deceitful, lying, and covetous? Let God's Word lay your heart bare this morning. Repent, and you'll find rest.