

wiser it is to count our own blessings and rejoice in what we have!

God speaks to us, ‘... I give you Myself and that is your reward, you will have no inheritance in this land (world)’ (Numbers 18:20). For if we long for an inheritance in this world, then we have friendship with this world, making us an enemy of Yahweh the Almighty Creator (James 4:4).

**Reflection:** Do you recognise that God Himself is your greatest gift/blessing? Do you want more of God in your life? What should you do to have more of God in your life?

People today are spending all their might to persuade you to ‘buy’ your dream: a nice house, a nice car, a nice job, a nice family, a nice retirement, walking by the beach collecting shells, as the last chapter before you stand before the Creator of the universe, and to give an account of what you did: ‘Here it is Lord — this is my shell collection, clothes collection, my certificate, my house, car, boat, and money collection!’

Don’t waste your life; don’t waste it. What kind of collection, instead, would you present before God when you see Him face to face? What kind of collection is pleasing in God’s eyes?

**Prayer:** Lord God, You say that He (Jesus) alone is to be our exceedingly great reward and that we must not love or put anything before You. You want us to make an effort... to be holy; because without holiness no one will see Jesus (Hebrews 12:14). Come Holy Spirit, help us to acknowledge:

Information can’t transform a city – neither can Conferences, education or citywide ministry programs or large networks - without You. Only you God, only the presence of Jesus can bring transformation, and only when each of God’s people are willing to get down on their knees and pray will they become content and transformed because His presence will become the kindling for God’s fire!! "When You said 'Seek My face,' My heart said to You, 'Your face, LORD, I will seek'" (Psalm 27:8). We want to be content with your presence and on fire for you, transformed by you our Lord, our Saviour. Amen.

### Conclusion

These last several days, as we’ve focused our devotion series on the ten commandments, we’ve learned that these “rules” are not simply about qualifying for eternity in heaven, but they are the ‘plumb line’ of righteousness which help us grow closer to God and others. Without the Ten Commandments there would be no distinction between sin and holiness.

It’s a blessing to know that God-in Jesus loves us no matter how well we hold on to the commandments. It’s also a blessing to see how positively our lives and the lives around us are impacted when we live out the spirit of these commandments. The Bible helps us know God and helps guide us as we live our faith. Although discerning the meaning in some passages of Scripture can be tricky, what a treasure it is that God gave us such a tool!

**We only live once, so don’t waste your life! God Bless you all.  
Rev Josephine Soon**

## The Sacred Ten

This booklet revisits the sacred TEN – the Ten Commandments - with a sincere hope that this may lead us to value them more as well as enabling us to adopt decisive attitudes towards moral problems in our Christian lives.

The Ten Commandments were given in order that we should be able to obey them eagerly and freely, not because they are commands. This is similar to our lives today, during the COVID 19 Pandemic, where children are willingly and eagerly doing shopping for their parents. The parents do not need to command their children, parents only need to express their wish and desire for their children to leap to fulfil it.

Therefore, the sacred TEN are the Rules of Life for God’s Household to help the children ‘listen to’, ‘to give ear to’, the will of God. This is exactly what the word ‘obey’ means, it is rooted in Latin words ‘ob’ and ‘audire’ which mean ‘to hear’.

### 1. No other gods ‘Worship no god but me.’ (Exodus 20:3)

Some religions in the world promote worshipping several gods and goddesses of very different characters eg the ancient religions of Rome, Greece, Ancient Egypt and Babylon. The word ‘worship’ refers to ‘worth-ship’ ie what people hold to be of most worth and want to imitate.

If we worship a god of wealth we become greedy; if we worship a god of love, as Jesus taught us to do, we become loving in both our words and deed. If we worship several gods, some teach us to be greedy and cunning, others teach us love and compassion, then we will become a mixture of these things. This will be very unsatisfactory and sad to have our characters pulled in different directions at the same time.

Praise the Lord that through this very first commandment, our God is revealing Himself to us. He has called Himself our God and He is freely offering us a relationship with Him. You may like to take a moment now to thank God for this.

The First Commandment teaches us that God is to be our everything. Nothing is to come before Him – whether it is another god or something that we have turned into another god. We must confess to the Lord anything and everything that we have placed above Him this week.

Perhaps we have been tempted to trust in our own wisdom and ability to manage a situation instead of seeking Him and depending on Him. Could it be that you have valued the things of this world more than the glory of God? Let us confess whatever comes to mind and bring this to the Lord, knowing that He will forgive the truly repentant heart and that He still desires to be our God.

**Prayer:** Lord God, you are God alone. There is no god besides you. You are exalted above all of creation in majesty, glory, and power. You never change, you never age, you never grow tired, you never fail your people. You transcend all created and temporal things. You alone are the one who is from everlasting to everlasting. You are uncreated and eternal, God over all. Amen.

## 2. No Idols

### **‘Do not make for yourselves images of anything...’ (Exodus 20:4)**

Some people misunderstand the second commandment; they combine the second commandment with the first. From the first commandment (there are no other gods but only One True God), we come to know WHOM we worship. The second Commandment shows us HOW we worship the True and Only God.

When people use pictures, images, or objects to REPRESENT God in their worship, are such use of arts a sin?

God had given these Sacred TEN commands through Moses with the purpose of helping His people to live a way of life which is as healthy and happy as possible. God’s people were surrounded by others who believed that God actually lived in images of wood and stone. Some of those images were beautiful and noble, but the majority of them appeared ugly and cruel. This way of worship misleads worshippers to think of God as only present in one specific place and form. Worshipping these lifeless images, often full of cruelty and evil deeds, demands the sacrifice of material/ physical

offerings such as money, animals or human bodies.

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them...” (Exodus 20:4-5).

We can feel sorry for people whose lives are clouded with fear because they idolise things that take them away from God. However, we must not forget that we, too, have our idols though they may not be shaped into images. Anything we honour or prefer to the will and spirit of God can easily become the thing we really worship in place of God.

It is impossible for us to make an image of God which is true to the reality of God. The Old Testament prophet reminds us to ‘take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure...’ (Deuteronomy 4:15-16). This forbids worship by any false means and rebukes the idolatry which surrounds our lives. But what about pictures or images of Jesus? Does this commandment prohibit depictions of Jesus?

Jesus’ words in John 4:23-34, ‘But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.’

him (John 8:44; 1 Tim. 1:10; 1 John 2:22; Rev. 21:8). Since we are created in the image of God, designed to reflect His character, we should speak the truth just as God speaks the truth.

It is very difficult to discern who is telling the truth. Being dishonest is almost a way of life these days. It seems that many try to balance the risk of being caught in a lie against the benefits of lying. So, it’s vital for Christians to be set apart from the surrounding culture as people marked by honesty, integrity, and fidelity. We must be people of our word, precisely because we are people of God’s Word.

**Reflection:** God reveals Himself as TRUTH (John 14:6), and Christ prayed that those whom the Father would call would be sanctified, or set aside, by the truth (John 17:17). If someone were to seek and follow truth they would ultimately have a relationship with God, for He is with those who walk in truth.

1. What does it mean that Christ is the “truth”?
2. How does truth sanctify a person?
3. Do the scriptures mention that we should not use oaths or swear at all? (Matthew 5:34-37).

**Prayer:** Dear God, I come to take a moment with you to think about the love and grace you shower on me. To think that I am created in the image of You. To think that I am Your dwelling place. Help me so that I may be aware I have the indwelling ‘Spirit of truth’ (John 16:13) so that I may realise that I have been transformed to walk in the Spirit and to obey your commandments.

Now, I can speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) and can put away lying (Ephesians 4:25). Thank you God. Praise your Holy name. Amen.

## 10. Contentment

### **‘Do not desire another man’s house... or anything else that he owns.’ (Exodus 20:17)**

Almost as important as the making of a nation as truthfulness (from yesterday), is this habit of contentment. Being content keeps people from envying and coveting the well-being of their neighbours.

Sometimes covet (desiring) is used in a good sense. ie. Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:31 says, ‘But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet I show you a more excellent way.’ But in the Tenth Rule, it is used in the bad sense: to desire so strongly as to be touched with ill-will. It is a spirit that may lead to the breaking of some of the rules given to us (the rule of self-control or the rule of honesty). It is an ungodly spirit that cannot rejoice in the prosperity and happiness of others. It is a wretched spirit which cannot see someone else’s beautiful garden without wanting it for themselves or saying unkind words about people who have been promoted to higher positions than oneself.

The danger is when we begin to desire – we start an appetite that nothing can really satisfy. When we have gained one thing, we want another and as soon as we obtain it, we grow discontented again. There is no end to this. Paul reminds us in 1 Timothy 6: 6-7, ‘But Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it...’ How much

It is to our benefit to remember that God is the source of every good gift that we have (James 1:17). God allows us to enjoy His blessings, and He only asks that we acknowledge Him with a tenth (a tithe) of what He provides.

The problem of stealing is a matter of the heart. The solution is found in our heart with Jesus. I wonder - have you not been honest (being a thief) or is there a pattern of stealing in your life (secret or respectable stealing).

There is a solution. There were two thieves on each side of Jesus. One of them recognised his own sin and 'ran' to the Saviour saying 'Remember me when You come into Your kingdom' (Luke 23). Jesus said to that changed thief, 'Today you will be with Me in paradise.'

**Prayer:** Our Lord and our God, we ask that You would teach us about our own sins and to run to the Saviour by trusting the commandments. Teach us how gentle and good Your commandments are. We want to trust in You, and You alone. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

### 9. Truthfulness 'Do not accuse anyone falsely' (Exodus 20:16)

Today's devotion seeks to revisit the Ninth commandment, which I hope helps us to develop a way of life which was intended by God: to have love and respect for others and for ourselves.

In the making of a new nation, which was the task assigned by Yahweh to Moses, it was important that the people of God should be warned of the danger of telling

lies about one another. This sin can break up a society and the widespread practice of untruthfulness means that people cannot depend upon one another, so therefore they cannot work together and all their common lives go steadily to pieces. We are called to be the Body of Christ but what might it look like for us, when we allow the practice of untruthfulness in our community?

The Ninth Rule does not refer to a particular form of lying (as in a Court of Law) but it includes exaggerations, overstatements, understatement, false statements, spins, cover-ups and disclaimers which fog the truth.

Most people lie in everyday conversation according to a study conducted by the University of Massachusetts psychologist Robert S. Feldman. 60 percent of people lied at least once during a 10-minute conversation and told an average of two to three lies!

Keeping the Ninth commandment is not merely a matter of avoiding false statements. The commandment also requires us to actively pursue and promote the truth in all our dealings with others because our God is 'the God of truth' (Isaiah 65:16) and 'It is impossible for God to lie' (Hebrews 6:18). The Lord hates lying because He is the source of truth—and truth describes His very character. Jesus has instructed us to simply let our 'Yes' be 'Yes' and our 'No' be 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one" (Matthew 5:37).

In contrast, Satan is the source of all lies (John 8:44). Being untruthful reflects the character of Satan and those who follow

Some Christians have images of Jesus or Mary or angels as visual representations of God. Others, develop theological formulations of God, using words and ideas of God. These may be helpful windows through which worshippers peer into a reality that is much more than the window itself.

All that we need both visually and words have already been given to us: Jesus Christ is the living visual representation of God and the Holy Bible is the living word of God. May the second commandment remind us not to let our human creations i.e. images, words, ideas, liturgy or tradition become idols that keep us from knowing the God whose greatness exceeds our comprehension.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, We thank you for the diverse art images and theological ideas which, like windows, help us to know you. Please help us not to become so in love with these tools that they become idols stopping us from worshipping you. May we always remember that you have given us a much better way to know you: Your Son, Jesus Christ Our Lord (John 14:6 & John 10:9). Amen.

### 3. Reverence 'Do not misuse my name' (Exodus 20:7)

Today's devotion helps us to develop a proper relationship with God by asking the question: what do you do with the God you have?

Our relationship with our parents (or guardians, teachers & elders) should mirror our relationship with God, our spiritual parent. This relationship is based on respect and love. We show our love for

God by honouring and obeying Him. Through this way of life, we worship God to the greatest of our abilities.

With the God we have, we should love Him by honouring and respecting Him and His name: 'You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain' (Exodus 20:7).

We love God by reverencing His name. He tells us not to only obey Him, but also to hold His name as holy. God's name need not be restricted to 'YHWH' (Exod. 3:15), but includes 'God,' 'Jesus,' 'Christ,' and the Holy Spirit. The name of God reflects who He is. We recite the Lord's Prayer, '... Hallowed be thy name...' for God is Holy and Sacred.

We love God by honouring His name and avoid taking God's name in vain. 'Vain' (lashawe in Hebrew) means empty, useless, false, unreal, and worthless. It refers to the abuse, misuse, blasphemy, cursing, or manipulation of the Lord's name.

As children of God who are made in the image of God, our way of life tells the world what kind of God we are following. We often make vows that we don't keep, for example, the vows we (both individually and congregationally) make in baptism and marriage services, or the prayers we ask in Jesus' name during times of trouble. We don't believe God can, and is, making the differences in our life. How many times have we heard Christians saying things like; 'God has told me to do this' when, in fact, we are simply trying to advance our own agenda? Indeed – we call ourselves disciples of

Jesus but do we always seek to honour God with our lives and our words?

It is this sin against reverence which this rule of life forbids. We must not be careless in our speech about God nor can we afford to injure our reverence for God. When we start treating God and His name with reverence, we are nurturing in our souls a reverence of God himself. We will then be justified as Jesus' disciples.

**Prayer:** Dear God, I want to learn to love you. Please help me to honour your name in all things. When I use your name, whether in prayer, in teaching, in writing, or in ordinary discourse, may I always do so with reverence and respect. All praise be to You, God Almighty, Yahweh! Amen.

#### 4. The Holy Day 'Observe the Sabbath and keep it holy' (Exodus 20:8)

Keeping the Sabbath, using the Sabbath in the way that God intended... Sabbath, literally means a time/space of rest, God wants us to do it every seventh day, seventh year or the jubilee year.

Keeping the Sabbath is important to our holy relationship with our Creator. Exodus 20:8-11 explains to us of our need to take this special time to draw closer to God:

'Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy... For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.' Here the Sabbath command is rooted in creation itself and the very nature of God. God rested; therefore, we should rest.

It is crucial for us to remember that we cannot make the Sabbath holy. Jesus said in Mark 2:27 that, 'the sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath'. It is God who sanctified and blessed it as a gift to us. We are to observe the Sabbath. We are not to use this gift for any other purpose beside to keep Sabbath in the way that God intended: to keep the Sabbath day 'holy' (Exodus 20:8).

Holiness has to do with being separated or set apart (consecrated) by God. The Bible applies holiness as a concept to people, places, and times of spiritual renewal. Sabbath is a unique opportunity for God's people to draw closer to our Creator; a time He designated for us to enhance our relationship with Him—for us to grow deeper in love, worship and relate to Him.

What does our Lord Jesus's personal example teach us about Sabbath observance? According to Luke 4:16, '... He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read'. Jesus used God's Sabbaths for their intended purpose—to help people to worship and develop a personal relationship with their Creator.

Acts 17 tells us the things the Apostle Paul did to observe his Sabbath day, 'Then Paul... for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures' (Acts 17:2) and, '... he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks' (Acts 18:4).

We can learn from both our Saviour and Paul that Sabbath days are sacredly set aside in voluntary gratitude for the purpose of worship and for ministry for

and can hardly bear for our brothers and sisters to handle anything of ours even for a few minutes!

This can become a very selfish attitude. If we are not careful, we can grow to be very mean. Nevertheless, such behaviour has its fine aspects. It shows that we understand how important it is that there should be a certain number of things in our life that we have to control and manage, and through which we can show what we are made of.

This does not mean, however, that anyone should have so much to the extent that other people cannot have anything at all. In our world, this kind of unfairness exists as a real threat to people who need the very necessities of life.

Therefore, if we want this Eighth Rule respected, we must avoid: the condition in which anyone can take anything or the condition in which somebody can take everything.

Simple living and strong self-control help to deliver us from the temptation to be dishonest. If we really believe in God's providence, believe that our neighbour is made in the image of God, care about the community more than we care about ourselves then we will never distrust God's providence so as to take from someone else something that does not belong to us. We will never steal from our neighbour to provide for our own nor do injury to our neighbour's welfare while knowing that our neighbour is made in God's image.

But we know that our culture struggles with this sin. Each year there are millions

of acts of theft and robbery in the UK alone. One of the most common yet saddest forms of stealing today is gambling. Gambling attempts to win a bigger sum of money from somebody else by the trifle which is sacrificed. Lottery or lucky draws which offer vast sums of money are tempting many people to this kind of sin. God's people need to be careful not be tempted into gambling because it is a rather polite form of stealing. Gambling is seldom a blessing to either the winner or the loser.

Historically, the Methodist Church's concern about both gambling and alcohol has sometimes been seen as a threat when its intent is to protect the moral, financial and spiritual well-being of the poor.

In conclusion, stealing can take many forms, including gambling and cheating someone or even delaying paying someone that you owe money to. Let us remind ourselves that the love of money is a great root of evil. The excitement of stealing or gambling can become like a drug to the soul, setting up a kind of lust for itself.

#### **Reflection: Stealing from God?**

God is the Creator of everything that exists. Therefore, God is the sole owner of the entire universe:

- "The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein" (Psalm 24:1).
- "Who has preceded Me, that I should pay him? Everything under the heaven is Mine" (Job 41:11).
- "'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the LORD of hosts" (Haggai 2:8).

wife. It is for all, even outside the people of God. The OT finds adultery a ready example of apostasy from the Lord and attachment to false gods (Isaiah 57:3; Jer 3:8-9, 13:27; Ezekiel 23:27, 43).

Disloyalty leads easily to other forms of sin. It is selfishness that's hidden in this type of sin; a habit of following our own desires without reference to what they mean to others. However, we thirst for the loyalty of a friend or spouse who would stand by us through all ups and downs.

Loyalty means paying the price of giving up our own comfort and convenience. One not only requires taking a risk to enter upon exile with another person, but to persevere throughout all the ups and downs of the journey together. In a marriage, being faithful is not only being faithful in action but also in thought. Jesus expanded this commandment in Matthew 5:27-30,

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Jesus teaches in the NT that the evil character of adultery comes from the heart (Matthew 15:19 & Mark 7:21). Paul names adultery as one of the tests of obedience to the law (Romans 2:22), quoting the commandment (Romans 13:9) as an analogy of our relationship to God (Romans 7:3), and saying that adulterers ‘will not inherit the kingdom of God’ (1 Cor. 6:9).

The finest form of loyalty is forgiveness. God's call may come to us to find a way to

claim the ‘joy’ to forgive. Trusting that through forgiveness, we shall be called forth from our hidden and crushed self to a new life. For this is God's loyalty revealed to us through, and in, Jesus our Saviour. Jesus always loves us and never lets us go. He is loyal to God's sending. His friendship with us is loyal and never ‘adulterated’.

**Reflection:** In what way has God shown you His loyalty and faithfulness during the lockdown? When others have been unfaithful or disloyal or dishonest or even cruel to you, how may God call you to respond? What is your understanding of adultery? Is it mere sexual disloyalty or does it mean something beyond physical? For example, does it involve emotional and spiritual disloyalty? I wonder how often – in busy lives we put other god's before God and fail in our loyalty to God?

### 8. Honesty ‘Do not steal’ (Exodus 20:15)

This speaks of our respect for our neighbour's person and property. ‘Thou shalt not steal’ encompasses all the other commandments on the second tablet: Murder is the stealing of another person's life. Adultery is the stealing of another person's spouse. Giving false testimony is the stealing of justice. Coveting is the desire to steal what belongs to another person. This commandment is unique as it is the only completely open-ended commandment.

One of the joys in our earliest life as a toddler is to have things that belong to us and not to other people. ‘That's mine!’ Sometimes we say it angrily because someone has picked up our toy or book or food. We are full of the joy of possession

God on behalf of humanity's spiritual needs, for rest and restoration of the mind, body, soul, and spirit.

**Reflection:** For whom would the Sabbath commandment have been good news? Ourselves, others or both? The Sabbath day is a gift of God for us to keep. In what ways do we observe this gift and use it in the way that God has intended? What might you do differently for your future ministry? Most of us do not need to rise up early and go late to rest during the lock-down. May we remember God enjoys giving rest to those he loves, for it is God who gives sleep (rest) to his beloved (Psalm 127:2). How might you be intentional about claiming the gift of Sabbath? You don't take a day off from God. You worship! Worship puts life into perspective.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, Help us to make every Sabbath about you. Quiet our heart, give rest to our soul, and refocus our spirit, for true renewal comes only from you. Holy Spirit, help us to be intentional with our time and worship, encourage us to find rest in you alone. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Footnote:** we must acknowledge in today's culture that some of us have no choice but to work on Sundays. I wonder when your alternative Sabbath may be?

### 5. Gratitude ‘Honour your father and your mother...’(Exodus 20:12)

Today's devotions reminds us to honour our parents/guardians. As God's children, we can't get around it. While the world will debate what “honour” really means; we are to speak to and treat our parents

with gratitude, respect and dignity. Parents were given to us by God, and no matter how good or bad they raised us, we are commanded to honour them.\*

The Fifth Commandment forms a ‘bridge’ between the first four of the Ten Commandments (with reference to our relationship with God, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul’) and the last six (relating to our relationship with fellow human beings, ‘Love your neighbour as you love yourself’).

Our relationship with our God should be the foundation for us to build on our relationship with our parents. For God's instruction to parents: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Deuteronomy 6:5-7). The implication is clear: Only when we hold the right principles in our hearts can we, as parents, successfully install them in our children.

This relationship is based on respect and gratitude by honouring and obeying our parents. Through this way of life, we worship God to the greatest of our abilities. According to Matthew 15:1-9, when we neglect our parents, God considers our worship in vain and our teachings are merely human rules.

The primary way that we honour our parents is by obeying them. Obedience is becoming a lost art in our culture. Yet

scripture says that we learn obedience at a very young age. God places the prime responsibility for teaching children the basic principles of life i.e. obedience and respect, directly on the shoulders of parents. In order to teach children how to honour you as a parent, the first thing we must do is teach them how to honour God. The most important thing to do is we have to model behaviour that honours God. Children – especially very young children – learn their behaviour by modelling what other people do.

**Reflection:** Jesus said, ‘Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...’ (Matthew 5:44-45). In what ways are we able to honour parents who have mistreated us or whose example we cannot respect?

**Prayer:** Dear God, in your loving kindness hear my prayer for my parents. Give them long lives and keep them well in body and spirit. Bless their labours; keep them always in your care. Lord God, you are our ultimate Parent. You have given us the commandment to honour our father and mother. May you give us also the willingness to surrender our lives to Christ, trusting and obeying His Word. Please fill us with the transforming power of Your Spirit. Remove our rebellious heart and replace within us a new heart that will honour our parents. Please renew our heart that has been hurt and damaged by our parents, who have neglected us. Grow inside us a new heart that is loving and forgiving. Grant that, through your grace, I may always be their support and comfort. In Jesus’ name, Amen

**\* FOOTNOTE:** Sadly, for far too many people their experience of parents has included neglect, injustice and even abuse.

This commandment assumes that both parent / guardian and child are seeking to fulfil all the ten commandments. Therefore, even though we are called to honour our parents / guardians, this is set in the context that they are also seeking to fulfil their role and place as parents according to God’s way. Now none of us are perfect as both parents and children. The question becomes what happens then? The answer from Christ on the cross is clear. If we as children or parents/guardians make a mistake we must first recognise it, own it, say sorry and mean it and seek forgiveness, turning away from our inappropriate / sinful behaviour and back to God. This is the very definition of repentance and only in this manner can move forward together, honouring imperfect but repentant parents.

Parent/child relationships involve an imbalance of power and it is rare that a young child would be able to call a parent to account. SO if parents fail in their duty of love and care AND do not call themselves to account, if they are neglectful, abusive and unrepentant when they fall short - then honouring and obeying them is both wrong and dangerous.

Whatever your growing up experiences may have been – our prayer is that you may you know the deep love and comfort of our perfect Mother and Father God. Amen

## 6. Self Control

### ‘Do not commit murder’ (Exodus 20:13)

Jesus uses the term ‘murder’ in quoting the Commandment in Matthew 19:18. Murder is the actual act of forcefully depriving another of the means of life, by violent measures with malicious intent. Murder takes away a person’s very life, all possessions and future hope. Murder is an act against God’s will; God’s will is to give life. ‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life’ (John 3:16). God’s plan is to give every human being a chance of real life through repentance (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9).

Many readers may think, ‘this Commandment is not for me. I am not likely to murder anybody!’ I do not suggest that you may, of course! But, we do need to remember that every murderer was once a child and perhaps an innocent or a good person. We do need a compassionate heart for people who, for various experiences of their life, have turned to be a murderer. The very beginning of these experiences may be ungovernable passion or emotion or a selfish anger growing into greed.

Jesus says in Matthew 5:21-22, “You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire.”

Perhaps, the meaning of this commandment for us is that we should be watchful of the beginning of the things that lead us to this sin: we need to guard our heart and mind when we wish somebody out of the way.

It is a sad thing to see friendships broken because of bad tempers. Teachers with hot tempers could have murdered the mind of their students. Leaders with bad tempers have sometimes murdered the creative talents or the noble characters of their followers. Anger is the real sin.

**Reflection:** Have you ever hated or been angry with another human being in your heart? Has your hatred or anger blinded your eyes to your duty of love and honour of God’s Creation and creatures? I wonder what you think about the preciousness of human life and when that life begins?

**A Prayer:** We thank you God, for the gift of life, which offers us a relationship with you as well as relationships with one another. We thank you, Lord Jesus, that you love us so that we may love. Help us to love you with all our hearts, mind, soul and strength. Help us to love one another in unity. Keep us, Holy Spirit, not only from the acts of murder, but also from evil and sinful thoughts against others—which may be the causes of murder. Help us to be willing to serve and to love others even when they may not seem worthy of it to us. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

## 7. Loyalty

### ‘Do not commit adultery’ (Exodus 20:14)

From the earliest times (Genesis 26:10), adultery meant the sin of disloyalty in a special relationship between husband and