

The Ten Commandments Series
**“Commandments 4-5: You Can’t Do Everything and
You Don’t Know Everything”**
Sermon on Exodus 20:1-12 (11/1 & 11/2/14)
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Two weeks ago I preached on Commandments 1-3 of the Ten Commandments: having no other God's before our God, not worshiping idols, and not misusing God's name. These three Commandments are all about putting God first in our thoughts, words, and actions...and they are so important because God puts *us* first – loving us, protecting us, and caring for us in a way nothing earthly can.

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As a unit, the Ten Commandments are sort of “household rules” for every family of faith. Every household that practices Judaism or Christianity really should consider holding the Ten Commandments as a way of life, as a way of living both within and outside of the nuclear family home.

That said, commandments four and five strike me as being particularly important for nuclear families – for our primary households. And I think that's because commandments four and five offer guidance for how we order our household *time* and for how we order our household *relationships*.

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As Christians, we may each have our own ways of understanding what “sabbath” means and what it looks like to “keep the sabbath holy.” But, for traditional, commandment-observing *Jewish* families, commandment number 4 – keeping the sabbath – is absolutely sacred: you work hard for six days, and then you made a *big* deal about honoring the Sabbath, or, as it is called in Hebrew, *Shabbat*.

For traditional Jewish families, Sabbath – *Shabbat* – begins each week at sundown on Friday and lasts until sundown on Saturday. Work is not to be done during this day of rest.

A gorgeous meal is prepared to welcome the sabbath, and then, once the meal is on the table and the sun is going down, candles are lit ceremoniously, the food is meticulously blessed, and you sit down – together with your family and sometimes with close friends – to enjoy nourishment and fellowship.

On the sabbath, a traditional Jewish family is to eat together, to pray and study Scripture together, to attend worship at their synagogue... and to generally enjoy being together that entire day.

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In Genesis chapter one, when God creates the heavens and the earth, God blesses the seventh day of creation as a day of rest.

Isn't it kind of fascinating that a day of *rest* is actually included as one of the days of Creation? We don't refer to the "six days of Creation" and then add, "Well, plus there's that seventh day tacked-on at the end where nothing really happened." *No.*

God created the seventh day specifically to honor the balance between work and rest – to acknowledge that work, while good and meaningful and important, is not the only thing...that after six days of good, solid work, there is need to stop, to rest, to be rejuvenated and restored...to be *re-created*. That's what "recreation" really is: *re-creation*.

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Shabbat. *Sabbath*. God tells us we're supposed to do it. That we *have* to do it. And when, through the Bible, God tells us we *have* to do something, it means something will be off-kilter in our lives if we choose *not* to do the thing God commands us to do. // Let me say that again:

When God tells us we *have* to do something, it means something will be *off* in our lives if we choose *not* to do the thing God commands us to do.

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Remembering the sabbath by keeping it holy is not an easy task. In this day and age, there are so many options for how we should spend our time: where we can *be*, what we can do, who we can be *with*. Our society makes it very easy for us to *forget to remember* the sabbath.

Now, I for one don't think we Christians need to be nit-picky about which day individuals and families choose as their day of rest, their sabbath.

Personally, after leading worship all weekend, I need my sabbath to be Monday, so I set very specific boundaries around my time...and most weeks I'm able to avoid work on Mondays. If, for some reason I feel like work "needs" to creep-in on a Monday, I feel free to compensate for that time and I'll try to take a few hours off later in the week.

So, for Christians, the *day* of sabbath is not critically important. However, there are things that are important for people of faith to *do* on their day of rest, or during their time of rest throughout the week.

When remembering the sabbath, people of faith would be wise to worship, to pray, and to do some Bible study together. Doing these things helps us to follow the first three of the Ten Commandments – putting God *first* in our hearts and lives.

When remembering the sabbath, families should eat together – or if, like me, you are by yourself in your household, spend some time with people who are important to you, people who fill your soul. When remembering the sabbath, people of faith should also do some spirit-lifting recreation...

whether it's a jog in the park, or playing frisbee with your dog, or responsible hunting, or playing board games with friends and family. Sabbath rest should include activities that bring you laughter and joy, that restore your bodies and minds – with people who matter to you.

Remembering the sabbath by keeping it holy takes a lot of intention. It means learning to say “no” to some things so you can say “yes” to others...things like worship, Bible study, prayer, recreation, family meals.

But, perhaps more than anything, when we take seriously the commandment to remember the sabbath, we are reminding ourselves that the world *will* keep turning even if we stop and rest for awhile. Commandment four reminds us that we *can't do* it all. And if commandment four reminds us we can't *do* it all, commandment five – honoring our mother and father – reminds us we don't *know* it all.

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I had my first actual boyfriend when I was a freshman in high school. His name was Chad and we “went out” for all of about three weeks.

He was a junior who was 17, I was a freshman who was 14...and my parents were not thrilled about their young, teenage daughter dating a guy who was a full three years older. So, while I was going out with Chad, I was not actually allowed to go *out* with Chad.

Now, Chad was a nice guy who was part of my extended circle of friends; I'm sure my parents could have trusted him to treat me well...but they didn't know that. And, while I sort of acted frustrated that my parents wouldn't let me go out on an actual date with him, in all honesty, I was secretly glad.

Though I had been giggly about boys for a few years at that point, I really wasn't ready for *all* that dating relationships entailed: holding hands, sure...hugs, yeah...but more than that, I just wasn't ready. My parents' rule actually helped me to feel “safe.” Since they wouldn't let me go anywhere by myself with Chad, I knew it was unlikely something would happen I wasn't ready for.

Of course, my parents' rule also made me feel young and immature – and, of course, I *hated* that...but, at 14, I *was* young and immature. My parents knew that, and so they set a household rule for me that was for my own good. This was one instance where “honoring my mother and father” was actually pretty easy.

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Now, many people struggle in their relationship with their parents – and even those of us who have good, strong relationships with our parents have to admit to some level of tension in certain areas, at certain times.

With that in mind, this week I was again very grateful for the work of Maxie Dunham and Kimberly Dunham Reisman. Like two weeks ago, you have in your bulletins a green insert full of quotes from their *Workbook on the Ten Commandments*. I found several of those quotes particularly helpful as they related to commandment five.

So, I'd like you to pull out your green, quote inserts and turn to the back. Toward the middle is a series of quotes on the fifth commandment. I'm going to read them...and, as I do so, just let the words sink into your mind and heart. Also, please know these are important for both parents *and* children to keep in mind...

“The biblical meaning of honor [is] to recognize someone's importance ... Holding our parents in high regard is not the call of this commandment. We are commanded to behave toward them in ways that reflect their status as parents. ... When we confuse loving our parents with honoring them, we set ourselves up for failure. Parents are not perfect.”¹

“Not all parents do a good job – sad but true. But another truth is that most parents earnestly try to do their best. As adults, honoring our parents often means accepting that they did the best they could ... When we are able to accept our parents as they are, forgiving their imperfections and lifting up their talents and abilities, we will have fulfilled in the deepest sense God's command that we honor our parents.”²

Then, in my estimation, the most important quotes are the last two: “As parents, our authority over our children is always tempered by God's direction in our lives. As children, obedience is the most basic activity of honoring.”³ And, finally...

“If our children are going to see what an honorable life looks like, we must at a minimum give them our deliberate attention and time. Honor must be modeled, and if we do not spend time with our children, the opportunity to provide that modeling won't materialize.”⁴

What I love so much about those last two quotes, is they seem to put both commandments four and five in complete and proper perspective.

Above all, parents must run their households first looking to God – our heavenly Parent – for holy guidance and wisdom. We humans most certainly do *not* know it all...not children, not parents. There is only One who knows it all: and it is to that One we turn *first*. That's what the first three commandments were all about.

And, if you are a person of faith, you run your household accordingly. With our loving, merciful God as the proper head.

1 pp. 86 and 88

2 p. 93

3 p. 91

4 p. 95

That will dictate how you spend your time – in both work *and* sabbath rest. It will also dictate how parents treat their children...and how children honor their parents.

God first. And then everything else falls into place. If you haven't yet, today's as good a day as any to begin trying to live that out: starting at home, and then into the world.

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If we think about the people who taught us what it might mean to put God first – in work and rest – and what it might mean to honor our parents, it's possible some of those people are no longer living here on earth. So, in many ways, it's very fitting for us to talk about the fourth and fifth commandments as we also celebrate All Saints.

As we now transition into Holy Communion, I invite you to locate one or more of those little remembrance slips. Take a moment to write down the names of some saints you are remembering today.

When you come up to take Communion, bring your remembrance slip: drop it into the basket and then receive the bread and the cup...