

Moses 4- Ten Commandments- A Guide To Better Living

- I. How many of us use google maps or the like religiously? I know some individuals who literally won't go across town without it. Not to mention any names but our youth pastor for one. But here is the thing. I think all of us at some point or another have ended up more lost than less depending on google. One example that made the news world-wide is the following. You see this beautiful site? **(image)** These are the famous Preikstolen cliffs. A well beloved natural site in Norway, kind of like our Grand Canyon. But for many an unfortunate traveler depending on google maps, they ended up here instead. **(image)** Kidding. Actually it's here **(image)** The village of Fossmork . Not bad place to end up as its scenic and all but it's about 20 miles away from the cliffs as a crow flies and a hour away via a very narrow dangerous mountain road. A local resident says that they would have 15 to 20 cars show up a day full of disappointed out of towners looking for the cliffs a day...much to the amusement of the locals and the not-so amusement of the tourists. Not all see saw this necessarily a bad thing. One long time Fossmork resident a Mr Bo enjoyed meeting the wayward travelers. Before he nary saw an outsider but then he met people from all over the world including China and Japan. He even met an American who decided to buy a cabin in Fossmork as he liked the laid-back vibe. Now that is an extreme example but I think most of us can agree that although google maps is better than our husband or wife or friend serving as navigator with an old school map, is not 100 percent. I remember not too long ago where google led my family and I to a restaurant in a not so nice part of WS. We found the restaurant all right but it looked like it burned down 10 years before. While google or apple maps might not be 100 percent God does provide us with some life direction that never fail. The Ten Commandments and if we follow them they can steer us right every time.

- II. Today, we continue with our story of Moses. You might say that Moses is to the Old Testament that Jesus is to the New. If we miss Moses and his story it's impossible to understand the Jewish story and I would say very difficult to understand the Christian story as well. It's like trying to understand Bucci Ball without the ball. And in the New Testament Jesus is the new Moses...our teacher, redeemer and deliverer, the untarnished lamb of God that died so we may be free. That makes sense if you were with us last week but maybe not today. But that's okay. There is always our podcast or you can read along in Adam Hamilton's book that this series is based. So last week we explored the ten plagues. After the final plague, the death of the firstborn, the Pharaoh finally came to his senses and let the Israelites go. But he had a change of heart soon after. He chased them down with his army which was the most feared at the time with its high-tech weaponry such as the war chariot **(image)** and a bronze battle axe **(image)**. As we left it last week the Israelites were between a rock and hard place, the most feared army in the world on one side and a body of water on the other. Let's see how one film maker depicted this part of the story. **(movie)**

- III. Let's pick up the story at **Exodus 19:1-6 NIV**. Let's look at the map. **(image)** We see how the Israelites are leaving Egypt and go through either the Red Sea or as some scholars suggest, the Reed Sea which is the literal translation of the original Hebrew. The Reed Sea was one of the lakes prior to the construction of the Suez Canal. Either way, they make it down to Desert of Sinai which is located in either modern day Egypt or as some suggestion modern day Saudi Arabia. They come to what is considered not any mountain but "the" mountain. The Mountain of God which is either Mt. Sinai or Mt. Horeb which may or may not be the same place. Can you tell there is much debate over these issues in the bible? If you have two biblical scholars you will invariably have three opinions on the same topic. So the Israelites make camp at the base of the mountain and stay here for 10 months. Gives them time to recover from their journey, time to regroup and more importantly give them time to work on their tan. And it is here that Moses is called by God to come up the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments. **(video-46 secs to end)**
- IV. Now let's just pause for a moment. When you hear the word "commandment" what comes to mind? If you are on the younger side, you might think of your parents... commanding you to go clean your room or go brush your teeth. If you are my age, you might think about a boss commanding or demanding that you to increase your sales. Or if you are like me and served in the military a command might remind you of your commander...that is what commanders do, right? They command. Go dig that fighting position, go take that hill or go clean that latrine. But my guess is that when most of us especially those who grew up in the buckle of the bible belt think of commandments we think of God's commands. And if we are honest with ourselves, commandments especially God's commandments don't always have a positive vibe. We think of rules. Things we shouldn't do but sure would like to. Or things we shouldn't have done but did. And if we see God's commands like this, it makes God seem like a cosmic buzz kill. Like He just wants us to feel guilty or to keep us from living the good life. I had a relative like that. Growing up when we visited her in the mountains of TN. If my brother and I said we were going to go target shooting she would tell about the time her brother accidentally shot the family dog so we best not. Or if we were going to go fishing, she would tell us the fish weren't biting and we would have a better time if we went target shooting instead. It seemed to us she was simply try to squash all of our fun. I think she wasn't happy person and wanted to share the misery. Some might feel the same with God and His commands especially the big ten.
- V. **But what if God gave the Israelites and us these rules not to keep us from the best things in life but rather the opposite? To actually guide us to a better one?** Let me use the FDA Guidelines to healthy eating as in illustration. I understand this is now up for debate but I think some of the basics are still true. **(image)** Eating more broccoli and apples are for the most part better than eating double stuff Oreos and handfuls of white bread. Now the FDA is really not trying to stand in the way of us and a free for all at Ben and Jerry's because they want to keep us from enjoying a gastronomic delight. Instead they are trying to steer us away from such so we don't end up dropping dead from a heart attack by the time we

are 46 or becoming obese and developing all sorts of health threatening conditions. Likewise, the Ten Commandments that God presented to Moses and who then passed them down to Gods people had the same idea. **Rather than the Ten Commandments being about repression that our modern era seems to make of them they are about liberating us to act in a way that is best for ourselves and those around us.** Let's read them in order.

- VI. **(Image)** As we read the Ten Commandments what we find is that there are broken into two main groups. The first four deal with our relationship with God. The other six guide us on our relationship with other people. Let's just focus on the first. **(same image)** Now since we are modern people or postmodern depending how we define it, like we talked about last week it's unlikely we are going to be found worshipping the god of thunder or the god of the sea. But **worship can be defined as giving something ultimate value.** We might say well, "of course Ron we value God most." But our words must be backed by action. For example, what or who guides our decisions? How we use our money? How we use our time? How we respond to people that offend us or wrong us? If Jesus and His teaching on love, on money, on caring for the poor, on forgiveness, on sexual behavior and so on are not at the root of our decision making, we need to come to the realization that we are breaking the first commandment or guide to better living. We might say, "well, how will the first command help us live better? I understand it might tick off God for not giving Him his due, but how might it impact my life? Since we live in America where many commentators both Christian and secular have said that we are a people that worship the mighty dollar let's say for argument sake that money-making it, saving it and spending is what we give ultimate value aka worship it. I know that is not the case for any of us here but again just for argument sake 😊 Let's talk about just one area of our lives and how money worship this might impact it. Our relationships. Let's say we worship money but our spouse doesn't? What is going to happen? Either our relationship begins to sour or the marriage ends. Think I am over exaggerating? Money is always the number 1 or 2 reason couples say why they ended up getting a divorce. Money worship can kill our most important relationship. But if God is at the center of your life it doesn't have to. Let me share a personal example. I am going to brag on my wife. She called me the other day and said "Ron, I was fueling up our car and ran into someone who didn't have any money for gas. So I filled their tank too. Hope that was ok." Now if money is my god what guides my decisions, I would have been ticked. But instead, I said "It's okay honey...you did the right thing...but now you can't eat tonight or buy that lularoe dress you wanted." Kidding. But if we worship money not only will it negatively impact our marriage but our relationship with the rest of our family. As a pastor, I cannot tell you how many times adult brothers and sister end up never talking again because of an issue over their parent's inheritance. And if money is our god in a way as twisted as it may be, it makes sense. If my brother cheats me out of my half of the loot, my "god" with the little "g" he has committed in my eyes the unforgivable sin. So good riddance.

VII. Do we see how if we ignore or break this command how it can end up causing unbelievable pain and anguish...and possibly a very lonely and miserable life? Please hear me, there is nothing wrong with money in its proper place. But its proper place is not the throne room of our lives. That should be reserved for God and God alone. But let's look at one other commandment this time relating to our relationship with each other. I think it doesn't take anyone with a masters in theological education to see how committing murder or adultery can negatively affect our relationship with those around us. Does anyone want me to explain that? 😊 And the commandment of honoring our mother and our father should be fairly self-explanatory as well. Jeopardizing a relationship as foundational as the one with our parents is going to have a profound impact on the quality of our lives. But how about the 9th? **(same image)** What is the deal with that? Now if we notice the language here is legal as referring to the context of a courtroom. Just like in our day, the ancients such as the Israelites had trials as well. The judges were not elected officials but typically elders of the community. And this verse is specifically talking about those who testify falsely either because they are taking a bribe or have a personal vendetta against the accused. Such an action in their time and ours could lead to an innocent person being punished possibly to death. Now most of us would never do such a thing. But as many commentators have interpreted this command I believe rightfully it includes lying itself and I would add specifically to harm another. No we might not ever give false testimony in a court but have we ever told an untruth about someone we didn't like? Perhaps at the office we exaggerated or just outright lied how our boss reacted when we didn't meet quota just to make him or her look bad? Maybe at school we suggested to a friend that a fellow student was promiscuous just because we were jealous? Maybe we told a fabricated story about a neighbor just to get some cheap laughs at their expense? I don't know about you but in my 46 years of living I found when I have bared false witness it always comes back to bite me. Maybe we lose a close friend, maybe we miss a job promotion, but we always lose trust and our integrity...something that is so hard if not impossible to gain back. Like the time when I was 11-year-old and went around collecting money for the Red Cross but in reality, it was going for my go cart fund. My neighbors never trusted me again. This goes for a witness in a court of law, for a student at middle or high school, employee at work or a president of a company or our country. Breaking the 9th command always and every time leads to a "less than life" rather than a better one.

VIII. When my daughters were toddlers we would take them to the indoor playground at the mall...aka the mall microbe factory. If you ever want a good dose of the stomach bug or strep throat take them there. Anyway, McKenna being older could do all the activities including climbing on the slide and the little plastic house. Molly as much as she wanted couldn't just jump in with the rest of the kids. She would have got trampled on by the mass of larger children. So I would have to physically restrain her. I am sure she thought at the time "my daddy wants to just cramp my style. Why is he holding me back from all the delights of the slide? Doesn't he love me? Why restrict me then?" When in truth it was that very love that caused me to hold her back. Same reason God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. Not to make our life less joyful or restrictive but more joyful and

liberating. Free to experience the life God wants us to live. So in the end, even google can steer us wrong at time as good as it maybe. But God and His commands will always, every time in all situations keep us heading towards a better and fulfilling life and away from getting lost and causing pain to those we love most.