

What Are Your Ground Rules? **Exodus 20:1-17**

Why did God give the Law? To save sinners? No! Israel was already in a covenant relationship with God, Gen. 15. The Law cannot save – Gal. 3:11; Rom. 3:20.

The reasons why God gave Israel the Law are as follows:

- 1 To reveal His glory and Holiness – Deut. 5:22-28
2. To reveal man's sinfulness – Rom. 7:7, 13; 1 Tim. 1:9; James 1:22-25.
3. To mark Israel as His chosen and to separate them from the heathen – Psa. 147:19-20; Eph. 2:11-17; Acts 15.
4. To give Israel a standard for godly living – Deut. 4:1ff; 5:29ff.
5. To prepare Israel for the coming of Christ – Gal. 5:24.
6. To illustrate in type and ceremony the Person and ministry of Christ – Heb. 10:1

Mankind has always been a society that wants to make his own rules. God cannot be trusted to guide us through a complex, postmodern society. His commandments are out of date and irrelevant. And they are miserable! Trust God's love and wisdom: Obedience is the way to a full and meaningful life.

The Law is:

1. A Mirror – James 1:22-25 – It reveals man's sins.
2. A Yoke – It brings bondage since the flesh finds it impossible to keep – Acts 15:10; Gal. 5:1; Rom. 8:3.
3. A Schoolmaster – Points men to Jesus – Gal. 3:23-4:7.
4. A Shadow – Contrasted with the reality and fulfillment found in Jesus – Heb. 10:1; Col. 2:14-17.

I. Worship the Lord Only Ex. 10:1-6

Ted Turner has declared the Ten Commandments obsolete, *"We're living with outdated rules. The rules we're living under are the Ten Commandments, and I bet nobody here even pays much attention to them because they're too old. When Moses went up on the mountain, there were no nuclear weapons, there was no poverty. Today, the Ten Commandments wouldn't go over. Nobody around likes to be commanded. Commandments are out!"*

Turner is wrong when he declares that the Ten Commandments are outdated. The Ten Commandments are as fresh as ever. He was right, however, when he says that nobody likes to be commanded. In fact, modern society mocks the truth and exalts the lie. We live in a time when right is classified as wrong and wrong as right. (Ill. Isa. 5:20)

Today, in America, many believe that there are no "moral absolutes." Many hold to a philosophy of "moral relativism." How many times have we heard statements like these: "What's right for you may not be right for me."; "If it feels good do it."; "Anything goes."; "Nothing is right or wrong, there are just different opinions?" All of this is the result of the feeling that there is no absolute truth. You are entitled to your truth and I am entitled to mine! A recent poll found that 67% of Americans do not believe in moral absolutes. Among "Baby Busters", those born between 1965 and 1983, the percentage was even higher at 78%. Even 62% of professing Christians said that there was no absolute standard of right and wrong. Today, that foundation is crumbling beneath our feet! James Madison, the 4th President of the United States said this, "We stake the future of this country on our ability to govern ourselves under the principles of the Ten Commandments."

II. Show Respect for the Lord Ex. 20:7-11

Little Mary, attending Sunday School for the first time one Christmas season, eagerly listened as her teacher told of the birth of God's Son. She thrilled to the story of the angels, wise men, the star, and the gifts. Then the teacher added, "And they shall call His name Jesus." She looked over at the person beside her and asked, "Why did they have to name such a sweet baby a swear word?" It was the first time that she had ever heard His Name used outside of a curse!

The Announcement Of God's Holy Name – (The importance of names in the Bible as opposed to now.) Names in the Bible usually revealed something about the person, his ancestry or his background. This is especially true in regard to the Name of God. In truth, God has chosen to reveal Himself to man through His Names.

1. LORD – When you see this word in the bible, it is the English rendering of the Hebrew word "Jehovah." It describes God as the self-existent, eternal One. It is the Name, "I AM." This is the name God used when He revealed Himself to Moses, Ex. 3:14. This Name is used to declare God's nature, that is unchanging and eternal – Mal. 3:6; James 1:17. In the Bible, Jehovah is coupled with other words to form compound names for God which reveal more about His nature and His attributes. Some Are:

a. Jehovah-Jireh – "The LORD will provide" – Gen. 22:14.

b. Jehovah-Nissi – "The LORD is my banner." – Ex. 17:15.

c. Jehovah-Shalom – "The LORD is peace" – Judges 6:24.

d. Jehovah-Shammah – "The LORD is there" – Eze. 48:35.

e. Jehovah-Tsebaoth – "The LORD of Hosts" – 1 Sam. 1:3

f. Jehovah-Rohi – "The LORD is my Shepherd" – Psa. 23:1.

2. God – Elohim – Refers to the One Supreme, faithful, triune God. Literally, "The Strong and Faithful One!" This is the common word for God in the bible. It is used over 2,000 times in the Old Testament. In fact, when God stepped out of eternity to reveal Himself to man, this is the Name He chose. A Name depicting Himself as the Strong and Faithful One. The God who can be depended on!

3. There are many Names given to God in the Old Testament. Some are:

a. El – God

b. El-Shadday – God Almighty

c. Adonai – Lord

GOD'S NAME WILL BE VINDICATED

A. There Will Be Punishment For The Violator – (Guiltless – clean, pure, free, innocent.) God will deal with those who willfully violate the sacredness of His Name. (Imagine having to stand before God and defend your profane use of His Name!) The person who uses God's Name in vain can never be fully right with God and in position for His blessing until that sin is repented of.

B. A Path For The Christian – (After the Welsh revival of 1904, foul mouthed miners who had been saved returned to the mines and were faced with the task of retraining their mules. It seems that the animals were unable to understand the commands of the miners when there was no profanity used.) (One day a farmer arrived home much later than his wife expected him, so she asked him what had taken so long. His reply was this, "Well, I picked up the preacher down the road, and after that moment, those horses couldn't understand a thing I said to them.")

God's plan for His people is that we guard our tongues and that when we use His Name, we do so with reverence and respect. Christians have need to swear, or to attach an oath to their speech. God's plan is this: Matt. 5:37; James 5:12. (Ill. Some might be asking, "What can I say then?" The less said, the better off you will be when you stand before the Lord! – Matt. 12:36.

A Missionary to the Orient witnessed a 20 year old native approach a heathen idol. He bowed before it and quickly pulled out a knife and cut out his own tongue, placing it before the idol. Within minutes, the young man had collapsed in a pool of his own blood at the

idols feet. God doesn't want you tongue cut from your head, but He does want it consecrated and dedicated wholly to His worship, His adoration and His glorification. How are you using your tongue? Remember, God's last Name is not Damn!

George Hatch raised a large family of seven boys and five girls in the sandhills of northwestern Nebraska. One Sunday morning a neighbor rushed over to help the Hatches get the new-mown hay into the barn; clouds were rolling up in the West, and it was quite apparent that a rainstorm was imminent.

"Let's get your hay up before the storm hits!" exclaimed the neighbor.

"Thank you for your kind offer," said Mr. Hatch, "but this is Sunday, and I am going to take my family to church."

"But you'll lose your hay," pleaded the neighbor.

Yet the Hatches went to church, and the rainstorm did spoil the hay.

"See, I told you that you would lose your hay," said the neighbor.

"Yes," replied Mr. Hatch, "I lost my hay, but I saved my family." It is doubtful that the neighbor fully understood.

George Hatch did save his family. Today, down into the third and fourth generations, grandchildren and great-grandchildren are workers in the kingdom.

Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

III. Treat Others Right Ex. 20:12-17

An Elevation To Recognize – This verse makes it plain that parents are to be held in high regard by their children. Notice Eph. 6:2 – "Honor thy father and mother." Honor = "To give great weight to; to hold as valuable." Children are to hold Mom and Dad in high respect. They are not just two old fools out to ruin your fun. They have been placed in your life by the sovereign will of Almighty God to be your overseers until your reach maturity. In the early stages of life, while a child is maturing from birth to adulthood, they are to be in absolute subjection to their parents. Children are to offer unquestioning obedience to their parents! When a child refuses to obey his/her parents, they are in effect refusing to submit to the Lord, Col. 3:20!

A mother that had scrimped and saved to put her son through college sat in her son's graduation. She watched as he walked across the platform and received his degree with honors. As he walked down the aisle, instead of turning into the designated row, he kept walking; down to where his mother sat. The young man threw his arms around her neck, kissed her on the cheek, and as he placed his diploma in her hands, he said, "Here, Mother, you earned it!" The fifth commandment addresses that which many parents have earned.

A Definition Of Murder – "The unlawful and malicious or premeditated killing of one human being by another." *Webster's New World College Dictionary*. That is what murder is. Now, what are the various ways it can be committed?

Description of Murder

1. Physical Murder – This is the killing of another human being. Murder has a history as long as that of the world itself. In Genesis 4:8, The first murder is recorded. In this verse, Cain deliberately and with malice, took the life of his brother Abel. It was not a killing of self-defense, it was pure murder.
2. Personal Murder – We call this act suicide. I know that some lives in this room have been impacted deeply by the suicide of a loved one. It leaves emotional scars that never fully heal. Therefore, I want to handle this portion of the message with extreme tenderness. When a person is driven to suicide, it is often the result of circumstances just getting out of hand. They feel overwhelmed and unable to cope any longer with their lives and they decide to end it. When they do this, they leave in their wake other destroyed lives. It is a selfish way to leave the world. Not only is it selfish, it is also sinful. Just as no man has the right to murder another, no man has the right to murder self. These things are the sole right of God Himself. We live in a time when every 90 minutes a teenager tries to take his/her life. Every 30 minutes one succeeds! When a person resorts to suicide, they are failing to avail themselves of the grace of God. They are refusing to allow the Lord to give them the support and the comfort they are in need of.
3. Physician Assisted Murder – Here I am referring to what is called Euthanasia or "mercy killing." This form of death has been brought to the public's attention by the activities of a Dr. Jack Kavorian, also known as "Dr. Death." It seems that Dr. Death will help terminally ill persons, or those who are in extreme pain, end their lives. He does this with the aid of a "suicide machine." The "patient" presses a button, and a lethal dose of chemicals is injected into their bloodstream, which causes death. Most of us hear this and think it is horrible and outrageous. I find it amazing that they can't seem to convict this madman.

4. Pre-natal Murder – I am referring to abortion! According to the Bible, life begins at the very moment of conception, Psa. 139:13-16; Jer. 1:5; Luke 1:41. Yet, our society seem to view the unborn human as just so much waste material to be thrown away at the mother's convenience. Since abortion on demand was legalized in the US, there have been over 37 million abortions performed in this country. Somewhere around 4,300 per day, or 1 every 20 seconds! (III. The Awful procedure called "partial birth abortion.") Pro-death advocates claim that the mother deserves the right to choose. In my opinion, she made her choice when she decided to have sexual intercourse! Abortion is murder! It ends a human life, and that is the domain of Almighty God. When a country refuses to respect and protect the lives of it's most helpless citizens, no one is truly safe.
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What can we do to avoid the trap of adultery? There are five steps which can be taken that will safeguard your life against this horrible sin.

1. Walk With God – Gal. 5:16 – If we are doing this daily, we will have the ammunition available to be able to stand when temptation arises – Eph. 6:10-17.
 2. Avoid Suggestive Activities – Remember the words of Psalm 100:3. Never allow your eyes to behold things that will cause you to stumble. Keep a clean life!
 3. Avoid Flirty Relationships – Stay far away from the person who is flirty, watch out for that "friendship" which could lead to other things. Beware that you never just "play around" with someone who is not your spouse! Often, simple flirtation leads to big time adultery! No one just wakes up one day and says "I think I'll go out and commit adultery today." It is always the result of things building up on top of other things that leads to that point. If you can stay from those little things, the big one will never happen to you!
 4. Count The Cost – Take a minute to look at the incredible damage that can be done to your spouse, your Lord, your children and your own life. Nobody, however great the body, is worth what you can potentially lose!
 5. Love Your Mate Only – Proverbs 5:15-21.
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Stealing

As An Employee – Employee theft costs companies billions of dollars every year, somewhere in the neighborhood of \$120 billion. According to USA Today, 48 % of all American workers took something from an employer last year. People do this by taking things home, selling things without their employers knowledge and pocketing the money, taking kickbacks, falsifying time records, wasting time while at work, etc.

After F. E. Marsh preached on this subject, a young man came to him and said, "Pastor, you have put me in a bad fix. I've stolen from my employer, and I'm ashamed to tell him about it. You see, I'm a boat builder, and the man I work for is an unbeliever. I have often talked to him about Christ, but he only laughs at me. In my work, expensive copper nails are used because they won't rust in water. I've been taking some of them home for a boat I am building in my backyard. I'm afraid if I tell my boss what I've done and offer to pay for them, he'll think I'm a hypocrite, and I'll never be able to reach him for Christ. Yet, my conscience is bothered." Later when the man saw the preacher again, he exclaimed, "Pastor, I've settled that matter and I'm so relieved." "What happened when you told your boss?" asked the minister. "Oh, he looked at me intently and said, 'George, I've always thought you were a hypocrite, but now I'm not so sure. Maybe there's something to your Christianity after all. Any religion that makes a man admit he's been stealing a few copper nails and offer to settle for them must be worth having.' Anytime we take things that are not ours from an employer, we are guilty of stealing. Whether it is time, or materials, the result is the same! Notice what God has to say to employees – Col. 3:22-24; Leviticus 19:35-36; Deuteronomy 23:13-16.

To lie or give false testimony

I remember reading of a woman who was guilty of gossiping about her pastor. She was convicted and went to him to apologize to him and to try and make restitution for her wrongdoing. The pastor graciously accepted her apology and then told her that if she wanted to make it all right again, that she should take a chicken, kill it, pluck it, carry its feathers to the top of the highest building in town and cast its feathers to the four winds. When this was done she was to return to the Pastor. She carried out his directive and returned to him. He looked at her and said, "Now go and collect every one of those feathers." She replied, in horror, "That is impossible!" He said, "So, it is impossible or you to take back all those things you have said about me."

Another Pastor was having trouble with a gossip in the church. Every time she would see his car parked anywhere strange, she began immediately to spread the word that their Pastor was having an affair. There was no truth to her rumors, but she kept it up until the pastor, in an effort to stop her mouth, left his car parked in front of her house, day and night for a week. That cured the problem.)

T - Is it True?

H - Will it Help?

I - Is it Inspiring?

N - Is it Necessary?

K - Is it Kind?

When archeologists were unearthing the ancient city of Pompeii, where 20,000 died during the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, they uncovered the bodies of many of the dead. Among them, they found the well preserved bodies of people who were caught totally off guard by the explosion of this powerful volcano. People were found sitting at their dinner tables, their food still on their plates. Others were found in their beds sleeping. One woman, however, stands out from among all the victims of Pompeii. When the scientists uncovered her body, they found clutched in her hands 10's of thousands of dollars worth of precious stones. It seems that as death rained down from the mountain above, she risked her life trying to save a couple of handfuls of her wealth. Now, 2,000 years later, those things she tried so vainly to hold onto, are the property of another!) So it is with the covetous person in our day! In the end, those things we deemed so valuable, will be absolutely worthless. Don't allow a covetous spirit to dominate your life.

According to zookeepers, two reptiles will sometimes grab different ends of the same piece of food. Sooner or later their struggle for that last bite brings them nose to nose. But then comes the surprise. The snake with the widest bite will keep right on going and actually swallow the other.

Man may think that he can control his covetous urges, but he will quickly find that they will swallow him alive and will destroy his usefulness for the Lord.)

You've probably heard of the court battle over the million dollar Pepsi cap. It seems that one woman left a Pepsi bottle behind when she left her job for the day. Apparently, she didn't want it and just forgot to discard it. A coworker, however, was always looking at Pepsi caps trying to win free drinks. When she saw this Pepsi sitting there and inquired about it, she found that no one knew who's it was and she was told to throw it away. Before she did though she looked at the cap and discovered that it was a winning cap worth one million dollars.

Now it seems that the first lady, the one who left the drink behind for another to throw away, is suing the second lady for all the money. It didn't mean a thing to her until she found out it was worth something.

Our problem is not that we have too little, nor is it that we possess too much. Our problem is that we want more than we need. Epicurus has written, "If you want to make a man happy, add not to his possessions, but take away from his desires." How true! We need to search our hearts this evening and see what motivates us. Are we always talking about money? Are we always feeling jealous because someone has something we think we need? Are we guilty of going after things instead of the Lord? Do you need to come to this altar and confess to the Lord that you are guilty of the sin nobody will admit to? If you have a covetous heart, it will be your downfall, unless you make it right with God.