

INTRODUCTION

How you treat others reveals what kind of person you are. We often hear how some big corporations deprive their workers. They are stingy on salary, benefits and raise. But the executives pamper themselves with big pay-checks and other perks. Then there are some caring bosses. Gary Bertch is one of them. He is the founder of a cabinet company in Iowa. In December, 2016 the company surpassed its goals. Bertch graciously rewarded his employees. Normally, a nice CEO may give his workers a bonus to appreciate their hard work. Bertch shut down the company for a week and took his employees and their families for a vacation. All 840 of them flew on chartered planes and stayed at a 5-star hotel, then enjoyed a 5-day Caribbean cruise trip. Don't you want to work in a company like that? We may not have that financial capability to treat others so generously. But we encounter many people every day. God does not put us on an island or in a desert. We have our family, classmates or coworkers, and we also meet strangers on a daily basis. As Christians, how we treat others reflects our relationship with God. We resume our study on the Exodus as we look at the last six of the Ten Commandments. The first four Commandments deal with our relationship with God. We should love and honor God. In the rest of the six Commandments God asks us to show respect to others.

EXPLANATION

誠命 (五) : 恩慈 Commandment 5: Kindness

The Fifth Commandment tells us to treat our parents with kindness. God said in **verse 12**: “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.” The word “honor” means to make someone feel worthy. It is a commandment that carries a promise. God would bless us with long life if we obey Him. When Paul quoted this commandment in **Ephesians 6:1-3**, he expanded the scope of the promise. The passage reads: 1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 “Honor your father and mother” - which is the first commandment with a promise - 3 “that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” The promise did not only apply to the Israelites in the Old Testament but it also applies to any Christian. Obey God, honor your parents and you will live longer. Think about that. It works better than any diet or exercise. Notice also that in verse 1 Paul told us to obey our parents in the Lord. Treating our parents with kindness should not violate with our obedience to God. We should not rob a jewelry store to give mom a birthday gift. We love our parents because they are the representatives of God who exercise authority in the family. When we are still living in our parents' home we should submit to them. Sometimes when my kids have their own opinions, my wife would tell them: “Whatever daddy says, that is the final decision.” That makes me feel honored. I am not the boss, but I am the guardian in the family to whom God entrusts responsibilities. Ultimately, I am accountable to God. What if we already have our own family and our parents are in their senior years? We should still honor them. We can seek their counsel when making key decisions because they have more life experience than us. Call them often if they live in another city or country. We should find ways to take care of them when they are physically weak. We need to show patience because our aged parents may not think and act as fast as we can, or they may not catch up with technology like we do. Keep in mind that one day you will grow old too. Treat your elderly parents the way you want others to treat you if you are in their shoes.

誠命 (六) : 尊嚴 Commandment 6: Sacredness

In the Sixth Commandment God tells us to value the sacredness of life. **Verse 13** reads: “You shall not murder.” By definition “murder” means taking another person’s life on purpose. The commandment excluded capital punishment for those who violated God’s Law, killing a thief who sneaked into one’s house or killing enemies of war. God sees life as sacred. When the flood was over God told Noah and his family in **Genesis 9:6** – “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.” God prohibits murder because we are created in His image. We live in a weird world. If you kill a dog or cat there may be legal consequence. However, some people see a human life less worthy than a pet. Topics like abortion and euthanasia become political and legal matters, rather than moral and ethical issues. In the case of abortion people argue whether the lump of tissue in a mother’s womb is a life or not. Scientific evidence shows that the heartbeat of an embryo can be detected as early as five weeks into pregnancy. It is something that grows, circulates blood and will gradually develop external and internal organs. Please tell me if it is not a human life. Then people also defend their right to abort a baby. Some women say: “I can do whatever I want with my body!” It is like if you do not like a pimple on your face, then you just pop it. But we are talking a human life, not a zit! Of all the pro-life bumper stickers I came across I like this one the best: “Choose Life, Your Mom Did!” Then there is the issue of euthanasia. People debate if it is permissible to end a patient’s life when the doctor declares that the disease is incurable. The patient feels hopeless and does not want to endure the pain. This is very different from the situation where a patient is in a coma, and whose life is sustained only by machines. It is a very complicated decision to the patients and their families. We should show them compassion. Regardless of what we can contribute to the society, God sees us as sacred.

誠命 (七) : 貞潔 Commandment 7: Faithfulness

The Seventh Commandment relates to faithfulness in a marriage. God said in **verse 14**: “You shall not commit adultery.” According to the Bible any sexual behavior outside of marriage is considered adultery. For example, **Leviticus 18:20** forbids extra-marital affair: “Do not have sexual relations with your neighbor’s wife and defile yourself with her.” **Two verses** later it mentions homosexuality: “Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable.” Homosexuality is not a 21st century invention. It existed ever since the Old Testament times. Why does God see faithfulness in a marriage so important? When God created Eve for Adam, His design for marriage is one man commits to one woman. Not multiple partners, and not two persons of the same gender. When Jesus came He put the Seventh Commandment in the right perspective. He said in **Matthew 5:27-28** – 27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” God sees our mind as important as our behavior. This world entices people’s sensuality. With the convenience of the internet things just get worse. One click can take you to another place where you will later regret. We should guard our heart by filling it with things that are holy and righteous. This is especially critical when you are young and single. When is the last time you actually spend time to read the Bible? Do you have any godly friends? People who do not only watch movie or go to Starbucks with you, but friends who can motivate your spiritual growth. How do you use your free time? Don’t get lazy at home, or you may be tempted to sin. Come to church meetings, visit someone in need, serve in a ministry or volunteer for community work. One last tip on internet safety. There is a wonderful filter called “K-9 Browser.” After you installed it on your computer it will block access to inappropriate websites. Only the administrator can override the barrier. I

have it on all my computers at home. Guys: I dare you to get this amazing tool, and let your wife set the password. You can thank me later. By the way, do I mention that this software is free?

誠命 (八) : 正直 Commandment 8: Uprightness

The Eighth Commandment deals with uprightness of our hearts. God said in **verse 15**: “You shall not steal.” Stealing means taking possession of what does not belong to you. Why do people steal from others? It may be because of poverty, or simply out of temptation. We will not carry a gun to rob a bank. But we may steal in some other ways. I once heard a student stealing rolls of tissue from a public bathroom in the dormitory. Recently, someone forwarded me a video clip showing a lady taking extra produce plastic bags and paper towels from a grocery store. A lot of them! Have you seen that one? Have you done something similar? Does any of you steal office supply from your work place? Besides stealing from people, a more serious sin is stealing from God. In **Malachi 3:8** God confronted the Israelites: “Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, ‘How do we rob you?’ In tithes and offerings.” Some Israelites withheld the contributions that should be given to God. We need to ask ourselves if we are being good stewards of the blessings God gives us. I do not know and I do not even want to know how much you offer to our church. It is something between you and God. I agree with many pastors that your monetary offering should support the ministries of your home church first. If the Lord blesses you with extra resources then you may consider giving to outside ministries. Besides stealing money, we may steal others’ credit. Have you ever bragged about your input to a project in front of your boss or your professor, when you only did a small part of it? Other than stealing people’s credit we may even steal God’s glory. When God helped you solve a big problem, do you end up giving glory to others? You told people that you met a great doctor to cure your disease, you found an experienced lawyer to settle a legal matter or your relative was generous to lend you money. Did you forget seize the opportunity to give glory to God in front of people?

誠命 (九) : 誠實 Commandment 9: Truthfulness

Now we come to the Ninth Commandment. Let us look at **verse 16**: “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.” From the wordings we can think of a court setting. If the witnesses are not giving truthful testimonies it will lead to a wrong verdict. Two possible scenarios are outlined in **Exodus 23:1-3** – 1 “Do not spread false reports. Do not help a wicked man by being a malicious witness. 2 Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd, 3 and do not show favoritism to a poor man in his lawsuit.” We should not follow a wrong crowd. A majority does not necessarily mean it is the correct opinion. On the flip side, one cannot assume that a poor person must be innocent and the victim. The lack of truthfulness can lead to injustice. Truthfulness is also important in our personal relationship. Paul said in **Colossians 3:8-9** that: 8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices. In the context, Paul said that since we have become a new person in Christ, we should not go back to our past sinful lifestyle. Two items in the list regarding truthfulness are slander and lie. A lie is something untrue. If you say: “Pastor Choi has a million dollars in his bank account,” then it is a lie. But it may not cause any serious damage. But when a person uses lies to slander against others, then it will lead to far-reaching destruction. If someone spreads a rumor, saying: “Pastor Choi has a million dollars in his bank account because he has some illegal business as a side-job,” then people will question my credibility and reputation. I just make up a hypothetical situation as an illustration. But you get the point.

We know the power of slander in the political circle, in personal relationship or even in the church. People tend to go with the majority, or believe in their good friends, without even bother to investigate the facts. As God's people we should be truthful to each other.

誠命 (十) : 感恩 Commandment 10: Gratefulness

Finally, we come to the last Commandment. God told us that we should be grateful for what we have. **Verse 17** reads: "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor." We covet when we are discontent with what we have. Nowadays we may covet others' wealth and material possessions. We like to compare with others how big our houses are, the cars we drive and what colleges our kids attend. The result is either pride that we are better than others, or self-pity that we are inferior. **Ecclesiastes 5:19** teaches us: Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work - this is a gift of God. The Cantonese have a saying: work hard and eat with ease. There should not be any guilty feeling when you enjoy a big feast or an exotic vacation while many people are starving in Africa. But do remember this: all you have is from God, and He delights to see how you bless others what He has given to you. Hoarding of wealth for yourself is a sin. Paul said in **1 Timothy 6:9-10** that: 9 People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. Money itself is not evil. But the love of money is a sin. The pursuit of wealth can stray us from our faith. If we can make certain amount by working 8 hours per day or 5 days per week, how much more we can earn by working 12 hours per day and 7 days per week! See the temptation there? Sadly, many people fall into the trap thinking that money is a good tradeoff for their health and family. We should not covet what others' have. Rather, we should be grateful for what God gives us. We trust that God knows our needs and He always provides the best He has for each of His children.

CONCLUSION

How we treat others reflects our relationship with God. The last six commandments are closely related to the first four. If we say we love God, we should also love others. The apostle John summarized it in **1 John 4:20** this way: If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. The way we treat our parents, spouse, other family members and people in the society are all extension of how we see our relationship with God. Our faith in God is not only a personal thing that confines what we do on Sunday, but it should also permeate into our daily life. It should shape our value system and our conduct as we live as children of God.